

Review of *The Buccaneers*, Apple TV+

Suzanne Ferriss, Nova Southeastern University

Abstract

On 8 November 2023, Apple premiered an adaptation of *The Buccaneers*, created by Katherine Jakeways. The series revives the nineteenth century using lush production and costume design to comment anew on class division, race relations, and, above all, gender imbalances. Inevitably compared to Netflix's smash Regency romance, *Bridgerton*, the series is more like Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*, for it incorporates deliberately anachronistic music and contemporary speech to emphasize that the romantic and familial struggles of its characters resemble those of contemporary women. While it alters and embellishes Wharton's original narrative, it retains the novel's insistent critique of social rigidity and, surprisingly, introduces welcome nuance. In its own way, it follows Wharton in imagining a more modern existence of female freedom and solidarity.

Keywords

The *Buccaneers*, Edith Wharton, Katherine Jakeways, adaptation

Edith Wharton attracted a new audience of young women at the height of the “chick” culture phenomenon in the 1990s–2000s, with film adaptations of her best known novels—*The Age of Innocence* (Martin Scorsese, 1993), *Ethan Frome* (John Madden, 1993), *The House of Mirth* (Terence Davies, 2000)—and nods to Lily Bart in the CW series *Gossip Girl* (2007–12). *Sex and the City* author Candace Bushnell cast herself as Wharton's inheritor, proclaiming in the introduction to her 1996 novel, “Welcome to the Age of Un-Innocence. The glittering lights of Manhattan that served as backdrops for Edith Wharton's bodice-heaving trysts are still glowing—but the stage is empty” (2). Just as Jane Austen's works seem to be “rediscovered” for entertainment and commercial exploitation by each new generation, so it is now with Wharton. She is “everywhere,”

as Emily J. Orlando put it in her introduction to *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Edith Wharton*. Her works “speak to us more powerfully than ever before” (18).

The HBO series *The Gilded Age* (2022–), for instance, has been described as “essentially Wharton fan fiction from the creator of *Downton Abbey*” (Gilbert). In her review for this journal, Parley Ann Boswell compellingly argues that Wharton “haunt[s]” the series and she “has brought other writers with her, including Henry James” (51). Writer-director Sofia Coppola announced in 2020 that she would create a limited series for Apple TV+ based on *The Custom of the Country*. Production paused when Apple executives complained Undine Spragg was “too unlikeable” and withheld the financing Coppola needed to realize her vision (Buchanan). They failed to see Undine as “a Gilded-Age Kim Kardashian,” as “a reality TV star, influencer, or both” (Orlando, “Most Unlikeable Woman”). According to Jia Tolentino, “If Undine Spragg . . . were alive today, she would have a million followers on Instagram and be a Page Six legend.”¹ In Coppola’s version, she would have been played by Florence Pugh in a production befitting a contemporary celebrity, with each of its five episodes supported by a *Marie Antoinette*-size budget. (Coppola’s 2006 biopic had a budget of \$40 million.)

Instead of Coppola’s take on Wharton, on 8 November 2023, Apple premiered *The Buccaneers*, created by Katherine Jakeways. Eight episodes of the first season are currently streaming, with a second season in production. It has been described as “Wharton on TikTok” (Gilbert) or “Wharton Meets *Bridgerton*”—with (or without) the bodice ripping, depending on the reviewer (Berman; Strecker).² Like Netflix’s smash Regency romance, *The Buccaneers* revives the nineteenth century using lush production and costume design to comment anew on class division, race relations, and, above all, gender imbalances. But it takes its cue less from *Bridgerton* than Coppola’s *Marie Antoinette*, incorporating deliberately anachronistic music and contemporary speech to emphasize that the romantic and familial struggles of its characters resemble those of contemporary women. While it perhaps inevitably alters and embellishes Wharton’s original narrative, it retains the novel’s insistent critique of social rigidity and, surprisingly, introduces welcome nuance. In its own way, it follows Wharton in imagining a more modern existence of female freedom and solidarity.

Left unfinished at Wharton’s death, *The Buccaneers* invites others to try their hand at finishing it. It has already been updated twice: when it was “completed” by Marion Mainwaring in 1993 and then adapted for British television in 1995 with Carla Gugino, Alison Elliott, Mira Sorvino, and Rya Kihlstedt as its heroines. BBC Books commissioned Angela Mackworth-Young to write

a companion book based on Maggie Wadey's screenplay. As biographer Hermione Lee has described, together they "sentimentalised its characters, added in some banal emotional emphases, and gave it a thunderously romantic conclusion" (727). Jakeways has said she relied solely on Wharton's 1938 text, which breaks off partway through chapter 29, admiring its characterization and writing (Jarvey; Sporn). As a result, she has introduced far more inventive alterations to Wharton's existing chapters.

The basic outline of the plot is still in place: in the 1870s, three wealthy American mothers—Mrs. St. George, Mrs. Elmsworth, and Mrs. Closson—seek suitable matches for their daughters: Annabel "Nan" St. George (Kristine Frøseth), Virginia "Jinny" St. George (Imogen Waterhouse), Elizabeth "Lizzy" Elmsworth (Aubri Ibrag), Mabel Elmsworth (Josie Totah), and Conchita Closson (Alisha Boe). Since their fathers amassed their fortunes in business, the girls are shunned by old New York society and, instead, travel to London where British aristocratic families are willing to make matches for their titled sons in exchange for access to American fortunes. Conchita is the first to marry—in "indecent haste" (185)—uniting with Lord Richard Marable (Josh Dylan), the son of the Marquess of Brightlingsea, and the others gain entrance to aristocratic circles through her. The action centers on the remaining girls finding husbands of their own, as well as the complications marriage brings. In the interest of narrative and logistical economy, the series jettisons minor characters (such as the intermediaries Jacky Marsh and Lady Churt), sidelines others (primarily the British parents, rather than the Americans, as in Wharton's novel), and restricts the action—for the most part—to England. (In fact, the series was filmed in Scotland, with Glasgow substituting for New York and Edinburgh for London.)

Unavoidably, lost in the transition from page to screen is Wharton's deft exercise of point of view. The engine of much of the novel's satiric critique comes from the unfiltered musings of its characters, from those who embody the desperate social pretensions of the newly rich Americans and the intransigence of British aristocratic tradition to those of the younger generation who embrace modern ideals of freedom and individual agency. The novel, for instance, opens from Mrs. St. George's perspective, as she bemoans the decampment of the racing set from Saratoga to Newport, while criticizing contemporary fashion and comportment:

Everybody wore what they pleased, and it was as difficult to look like a lady in those tight perpendicular polonaises bunched up at the back that the Paris dress-makers were sending over as in the outrageously low

square-cut evening-gowns which Mrs. St. George had viewed with disapproval at the Opera in New York. The fact was, you could hardly tell a lady now from an actress, or—er—the other kind of woman; and society at Saratoga, now that all the best people were going to Newport, had grown as mixed and confusing as the fashions.

Everything was changed since crinolines had gone out and bustles come in. Who, for instance, was that new woman, a Mrs. Closson, or some such name, who had such a dusky skin for her auburn hair, such a fat body for her small uncertain feet, and who, when she wasn't strumming on the hotel piano, was credibly reported by the domestics to lie for hours on her bedroom sofa smoking—yes, smoking—big Havana cigars? (124–25)

Wharton skewers Mrs. St. George's old-fashioned taste, manners, and casual xenophobia—all by registering her thoughts, rather than through critique voiced by a third-person narrator. By contrast, the screen version opens from Nan's perspective, on a pan following her progress from a New York street into a Fifth Avenue mansion bedecked for a wedding. To convey her thoughts, it resorts to voice over—"I was never intended to be the main character"—a bold declaration of the shift from the novel to its decidedly contemporary take. "Girls are taught to believe that if a story isn't a love story, it's a tragedy," Nan continues, "and I had no interest at all in being involved in either one of those."

In other words, the series initially takes a definite "chick" turn, focusing on a young female protagonist and employing the first-person perspective to underscore her individuality and independence in declaring her resistance to the marriage market, a strategy familiar to viewers of *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001), *Sex and the City* (1998–2004), and other chick-lit-derived adaptations of the 2000s. Of necessity in a visual medium, Nan's rebellion assumes physical form: she scrambles down the outside of the building to retrieve a lost earring. A "meet cute" with a dashing single man undercuts Nan's declaration and places the series firmly into rom-com territory, particularly as the later action finds our heroine torn between two eligible bachelors. Cue the contemporary title track—a cover of LCD Soundsystem's "North American Scum" by Emily Kokal—with its lyrics: "We are North American Girls." If the surface visuals—the period costumes, architecture, décor, horse-drawn carriages—sustain the novel's 1870s setting, the music, acting, and dialogue convey the series' drive for contemporary relevance.

But such departures are, for the most part, extensions of ideas latent in Wharton's novel. Consider, for instance, the casting of biracial Norwegian actress Alicia Boe as Conchita, product of a marriage between a Brazilian

divorcée and an American speculator. Informed of her son Richard's impending marriage to Conchita, his mother, Lady Brightlingsea, cables, "Is she black"? In the novel, the answer comes back, "no, but comely" (212). By contrast, the series highlights Conchita's racial difference, adding additional layers to the prejudice she encounters from Richard's family: as a woman, as an American, as part Brazilian, and visibly other. The "free and easy Americanism of this little band of invaders" is registered on screen as color—from their skin to their clothing, their vibrant jewel-toned gowns as loud as their voices and as bold as their movements. "They're not still," one Brit grumbles. "They toss about." Conchita complains that men get to go out—to ride, to shoot, to gamble—while women stay home. Instead, her band of buccaneers defiantly dances, runs, climbs, and has snowball fights.

Similarly, alterations to Mabel Elmsworth's character may be mistaken as simply nods to political correctness. She is given an expanded role with a love story centered on lesbian sexuality. Instead, the change extends the indictment of society marriages already in Wharton's text: "under its frothy surface is a harsh exposure of society marriage as form of prostitution and gambling, mothers trading their daughters, sex as a threat and a bargain, marital sadism and neglect, and several kinds of prejudice and racism" (Lee 726). Mabel and Honoria (Mia Threapleton), Lord Richard's sister, can only play act at having children and an estate. Their commitment to resist marriage and find a way to remain together is the logical extension of the girls' loyalty to each other as friends. It equally indicts the monied classes' commitment to keeping up appearances at all costs for, as Mabel says, their "whole lives are pretending."

The series does, however, depart from Wharton's text significantly, with mixed results. The "marital sadism" of the novel is tempered to grant the male characters greater complexity and depth. Conchita does not become estranged from Richard Marable owing to his determination that she "behave" as his wife; instead, they seek to preserve their sexual attraction and sustain her infectious exuberance. Absent (in the first season, at least) is the Duke of Tintagel's insistence that Nan fulfill her part of the "bargain" (448) and produce an heir. Instead, all patriarchal domination is distilled into one character: James Seadown (Barney Fishwick), Richard and Honoria's brother, who engages in devious extremes of sexual humiliation, psychological torment, and physical violence against both Lizzy and his wife Jinny.

A curious departure involves Laura Testvalley, the Italian-British governess with family ties to Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She anchors the thematic counter in the novel to American rapaciousness and British aristocratic entitlement:

the arts. Imagination is the enemy of staid thinking and tradition. Testvalley introduces Nan to poetry and painting, passions that link her to Guy Thwarte and his painter-father. The pre-Raphaelite subtext, with its foundations in the written word and static art forms, does not lend itself to easy representation on screen, but Testvalley's revised role is puzzling: rather than an educator of spirited, creative girls, she is the older woman responsible for Richard's sexual initiation at fourteen, behavior he blames his mother for enabling. Is this intended to amplify the faults of the aristocracy? To further demonize the titled matriarchs as unfeeling?

Mother-daughter relationships are prominent in the early sections of Wharton's novel: Mrs. St. George and Mrs. Elmsworth jockey for social standing in New York based on their daughters' place in the British social hierarchy through marriage, Nan's ascendance as a Duchess trumping Lizzy's status as wife to Hector Robinson, heir to a knighthood and an aspiring politician. The series, however, introduces a subplot about Nan's illegitimacy, throwing her relationship to her own mother into crisis—and adding suspense to her possible marriage to the Duke of Tintagel. (Presumably in season 2, we will learn the identity of her real mother, thus sustaining the series' engagement with mother-daughter dynamics.)

Significantly, the series prolongs the courtship between Nan and the Duke (named Theo rather than Ushant), shifting the drama (in the initial season, at least) from Nan's desire to escape from her confining marriage to whether she will choose Guy (Matthew Broome) or Theo (Guy Remmers), who, in this version, are childhood best friends. The choice between two men, of course, is a staple of rom-coms, where the heroine is initially attracted to the bad boy and eventually realizes she should pick the good one.³ Here, though, the series toys with the audience, with the two men taking turns occupying each role. Misunderstandings and misdirection make us question their motives: is Guy plotting with his father's encouragement to woo Nan for her money or does he actually love her? Is Theo genuine when he declares her illegitimacy has no bearing on his desire to marry her or is he, instead, acting out of jealousy, wanting only to prevent her from choosing his best friend? The series pivots toward melodrama in its later episodes with a soap-opera-ish tendency to dramatically expose secrets and lies. Or, as Nan would put it, the love story becomes a tragedy.

Charitably, one could argue that this tonal shift—from the satiric initial episodes to the dramatic final episodes—mirrors the disconnect in the “completed” novel between Wharton's chapters and Mainwaring's additions. One

reviewer argued that “Under her pen, the narrative loses its ironic torque, the Prince of Wales strolls in, and the story, lobotomized and docile, becomes a blueblood infatuated gush” (Powers). However, Jakeways restricted herself to Wharton’s chapters. In the author’s original text, the Duke’s sudden embrace of his duties and shift in feeling—from authentic affection to patriarchal displeasure—appeared contrived, if not implausible. The series, by contrast, allows viewers greater access to his original attraction to Nan. He is transformed from the boring lover of clocks into an artist, who revels in shirtless dips in the sea—a cheeky nod to Colin Firth’s emergence from the lake with his wet shirt clinging to his torso in the A&E version of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995). (Later, we watch from the beach as Theo walks, naked, into the sea. This is not Austen—or your mother’s period drama.) Instead, Seadown is the controlling husband who traps Jinny, and she, rather than Nan, escapes from the country with Guy, while Nan marries Theo to ensure her sister’s freedom. We are left to wonder if, in season 2, their marriage will achieve the same heights of constraint and cruelty as in Wharton’s version and whether the series will engage in the same tangled contortions Mainwaring did to extricate Nan and reunite her with Guy.

Accompanying the tonal shift is the sudden disappearance of Nan’s voice-over narration after the first two episodes (directed by Susanna White). We lose her first-person introductions and point-of-view shots. Her critical eye—the equivalent of Wharton’s—is eliminated as the series assumes the more conventional third-person point-of-view of standard television. Nan is subsumed into the ensemble drama, as the five girls’ romantic stories jostle for screen time. The burden of contemporary comment falls instead to the music. In the first episode, for instance, Taylor Swift’s “Nothing New” plays as the debutantes, dressed in virginal white, assemble before their entrance:

They tell you while you’re young
“Girls, go out and have your fun”
Then they hunt and slay the ones who actually do it

The lyrics make clear that marriage ends their carefree youth. As Nan watches, the debutantes descend the stairs, paraded like cattle before the eligible bachelors. Her commentary is initially registered visually, as she envisions each girl holding a number, as though at auction. We do not really need the dialogue that follows, the catty comments of gossiping elderly onlookers: “Americans, they say. Outspoken . . . and vulgar”; “Imagine the buckets of cash. Imagine them on their backs with their legs spread.” Nor Nan’s riposte: “Or imagine them as human beings with no interest at all in your opinion and not caring if you’re a

king or a mister.” The subjective point-of-view shot and the music have already made the point.

Later, however, the music alone acts as counterpoint or emphasis. By episode 3, Nan’s voice-over has vanished and scenes are presented using traditional cinematic techniques that match the conventional romance plot. As she visits Theo’s studio, they engage in a playful flirtation as instrumental strains from Brandi Carlile’s “Wild Horses” plays on the soundtrack. When he invites her to try painting, she dips her finger in cornflower-blue paint, as she had earlier dipped her finger in frosting at Conchita’s wedding while retrieving her lost shoe with Guy. She daubs some on the canvas and then invites Theo to do the same. Their fingers touch on the canvas and they turn hesitantly toward each other, as though about to kiss. Instead, they languidly paint each other’s cheeks. The blue paint matches the color of Nan’s dress and is echoed in the polka dots on his vest. They break off chastely, but their evident desire is channeled into a horseback ride by the surf. As they cut between scenes, the music swells and Carlile sings,

Tethered in wide open spaces
In fields that lead for miles
Right into the barrel of a gun
Mendin’ up your fences with my
Horses runnin’ wild
Only broken horses know to run

The song ends when Nan’s horse is startled by the sudden appearance of Guy on horseback, neatly stitching the two flirtation scenes together, while foreshadowing that Nan will be “broken” by one of the two men by marriage. The remaining lyrics are absent from the soundtrack, but viewers familiar with the song will recall lines about conforming to “the puppet master’s rules” and “treading softly for your grace.”

In the song, Carlile also mentions having to hold her tongue. Silence in the series is equated with conformity and docility. The American girls are repeatedly criticized for being loud, noisy, opinionated. As Conchita learns, approval comes from having “no voice, no opinions.” The song lyrics, voiced by female singers, convey the girls’ feelings, at times substituting for their outspokenness, at others, expressing their ebullience. A snowball fight on the lawn at Christmas is set to Darlene Love’s Motown hit, “Christmas (Baby Please Come Home).” The girls evade surveilling males by racing through a maze to the driving beat of “Rebel Girl” by Bikini Kill.

The dynamics of relationships have a soundtrack of their own. When Mrs. St. George tells her husband she's "done," we hear "love comes and goes" from Holly Macve's "Suburban House," reinforcing the suggestions that their marital strife about his indifference and infidelity is little different from that of any contemporary couple. Shifts in Nan's affection for Theo and Guy are tracked by Danielle Ponder's haunting R&B song "Into the Dark," which asks, "who can I trust when it's all changed around me?"

As the series reaches its climax—who will Nan choose?—point-of-view shots return with the music substituting for voice-over dialogue to capture her feelings and elicit greater audience engagement with the escalating drama. When the Duchess, Theo's mother, confronts Nan about her illegitimacy and demands that she leave, a dizzying handheld sequence begins, set to the song "Yo! My Saint" by Michael Kiwanuka and Karen O. Edited carefully to match the lyrics, it captures the details of Nan's predicament. As she leaves the Duchess, Kiwanuka sings, "Don't you tell another lie," before Nan, in close up, weaves through the hallways as though drugged. The lyrics "Don't you know the way I feel / Can't you read my mind" echo the visuals in representing her emotional turmoil. As the song plays, it cuts between shots of other characters in their own moments of distress, but then returns to Nan as Karen O takes over the vocals to sing "Forget 'em." The shift from male to female vocalist aligns the words with Nan and implies a decisiveness, which is underscored by her actions on screen as she packs to leave.

As the complications increase, visual representations of Nan's subjectivity again give way to a more objective commentary on the soundtrack. When we see Nan considering whether to go through with her marriage to Theo, "I can't love you how you want me to" plays as the camera cuts to his face, broadcasting her thoughts. The title of the boygenius song that is the source of the lyrics—"Bite the Hand"—prefigures Guy's sudden appearance outside her bedroom window and the sexual encounter to come. As Guy and Nan consummate their relationship, Sharon Van Etten sings,

What do you do when you've got so much to lose?
Maybe tomorrow we'll get away
And I'll stay close to you

The lyrics reiterate their decision to flee to Brazil. However, the delicacy of Van Etten's voice combines with the uncertainty of the lyrics to suggest the tenuousness of their plan. Nan's point of view recedes as the love triangle plot asserts itself, distancing viewers to augment mystery and suspense.

The complex handling of audiovisual material suggests that it is far too easy to say that “This *Buccaneers* is one for the Olivia Rodrigo generation”—that is, for young women who are fans of the twenty-something singer (Jarvey). Instead, the series exploits the intermediality of filmed content to reach more contemporary audiences. As Jakeways explained, the contrast is between two differing media forms: television and painting. She said, “I suppose sometimes when you watch a period drama, it can feel a little bit like you are looking at a painting, which is a picture of some people in a lovely dress sitting in a nice house that doesn’t feel anywhere like you’ve ever been” (qtd. in Jarvey). The series retains the period look while stressing movement and sound—often at once.

I cannot agree that the series is simply, as Robert Lloyd suggests in his *Los Angeles Times* review, “a well-turned object, pretty to look at and evidently expensive,” best to be taken on its own terms, rather than an adaptation. Writing about film adaptation, Robert Stam called fidelity to the written text a “chimera” (54), an impossible standard: “the shift from a single-track, uniquely verbal medium such as the novel, which has ‘only words to play with,’ to a multi-track medium such as film, which can play not only with words (written and spoken), but also with theatrical performance, music, sound effects and moving photographic images explains the unlikelihood [...] of literal fidelity” (56). “Each medium,” he argued, “has its own specificity deriving from its respective materials of expression” (59). While literature has one (the written word), filmed media has five: “moving photographic image, phonetic sound, music, noises and written materials” (59). In addition, any adaptation is influenced by “permutations in time, locale and language” and mediated by a series of filters, including “ideological fashion, political constraints, auteurist predilections, charismatic stars, economic advantage or disadvantage, and evolving technology” (68–69).

On these grounds, Jakeways’ adaptation naturally incorporates changed modes of speaking, acknowledges cultural shifts in attitudes toward race, class, and sexuality, casts a diverse ensemble of actors, all while showcasing the audiovisual medium’s differences—from splashy visuals to popular music. It does what Stephanie Harrison says the best do: “In the best cases, adaptations extend, enhance, and elaborate on their sources” (xix).

The series does take its source material seriously, deepening some of the novel’s critiques of racism, sexism, and misogyny, while demonstrating that the excesses of the Gilded Age past that Wharton revived endure in the present. Women may not need to land titled husbands—or a man—to achieve status, but women—and men—still navigate complex interpersonal, romantic

and familial relationships, and question their identity and purpose. Female characters (such as Mabel and Honoria) who are marginalized in the novel are elevated to more equal status in the series's ensemble cast, emphasizing the collective of Wharton's title: *The Buccaneers*. Hermione Lee argued, "Wharton's women discover that their freedoms have been taken away from them and their desires curbed, and that they are living like ghosts in their own lives" (726). The series affirms that this is a shared, rather than individual, experience, a fact likely not lost on American audiences, in particular, in the wake of the curtailment of women's reproductive rights. (It will be interesting to see if the second season of the series takes up Nan's punishment for miscarrying the Duke's child and his insistence that she fulfill her duty to produce an heir, even against her wishes.)

The tie-in promotion for Wharton's book makes this heightened emphasis on female solidarity its central appeal to a new generation of readers. The cover presents an aerial shot of the series's five stars, looking like the models in a commercial for Marc Jacobs's Daisy perfume shot by Sofia Coppola (or like the sisters in the 1999 film that inspired the look, *The Virgin Suicides*). They recline languidly as a pile of limbs on golden bedding against a backdrop of grass sprinkled with daisies. Logos for Apple and Penguin unite the streaming service and the publisher as both corporate entities join forces to profit from the series's success.

As I suggested to members of the Edith Wharton Society at their meeting in Pittsfield in 2008, such commercialism would not have been anathema to Wharton. She was a bestselling author who eagerly tracked her sales and whose earnings bought her not just the Mount but many other houses and motorcars galore. Wharton's books, despite her protests, were encased in the early twentieth-century equivalent of girly covers and some, such as *The House of Mirth*, even contained illustrations, "which she increasingly hated" (Lee 422). She published her works in serial form, the written equivalent of televised episodes, often not knowing the ending, just as contemporary show runners like Jakeways do not know if the series will be renewed for another season. Wharton oversaw theatrical adaptations of her novels and even tried her hand at writing contemporary comedies of manners for the stage. Several of her texts were turned into films in her lifetime, and though she never saw them, she profited from the film rights (Barlowe 51, 54).

Before her death, Wharton did contend that "the wireless and the cinema" were the "two world-wide enemies of the imagination" (*Ghosts* viii). Her judgment may have been partial and premature. As Donna M. Campbell notes in

her indispensable survey of the filmed adaptations of Wharton's works, the author saw only one film, featuring travelers on horseback, in Bilbao in 1914 (94). She did not anticipate that the many film and television adaptations of her works would demonstrate that "Wharton's themes [were] at times too revolutionary for her own day but surprisingly prescient for our own" (Campbell 94). Her novel *The Buccaneers* was a revisionist history of the 1870s that revealed the era's inequities in relation to class, race, and gender. Jakeways' series for Apple capitalizes on the observation that ours is a new Gilded Age and that the inequalities of the original not only endure but have been compounded, particularly for women. Like the characters it represents, the series is exuberant and colorful, with no shortage of outspoken opinions about their unfair treatment and the necessity of collective action to combat it.

SUZANNE FERRISS is an emeritus professor at Nova Southeastern University. Her publications include two edited collections on the cultural study of fashion, *On Fashion* and *Footnotes: On Shoes*, and two companion volumes on "chick culture": *Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction* and *Chick Flicks: Contemporary Women at the Movies*. Most recently, she has focused on the work of director Sofia Coppola. In addition to editing *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Sofia Coppola*, she is the author of *The Cinema of Sofia Coppola: Fashion, Culture, Celebrity* and the BFI Film Classics volume on *Lost in Translation*.

Notes

1. Twenty years ago, Plum Sykes, an Oxford-educated Brit turned New York socialite, and the author of *Bergdorf Blondes*, said with some impatience, "Honestly, if Edith Wharton published *The Custom of the Country* now, it would be considered chick lit" (qtd. in Solomon).

2. Another said, "Apple TV+'s *The Buccaneers* is like if *Bridgerton* and *Pride and Prejudice* (2005 version) got together and said, 'hey, you know what we need? Some Americans'" (Baty).

3. It also harkens back to *Twilight* with audiences asked to choose sides: Team Guy or Team Theo (see Baty).

Works Cited

Barlowe, Jamie. "No Innocence in This Age: Edith Wharton's Commercialization and Commodification." *Memorial Boxes and Guarded Interiors: Edith Wharton and Material Culture*, edited by Gary Totten, U of Alabama P, 2007, pp. 44–62.

- Baty, Emma. "The *Buccaneers* Creator Katherine Jakeways and Star Christina Hendricks Break Down that Nail-Biter Finale." *Cosmopolitan*, 3 Dec. 2023, <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/tv/a46120370/the-buccaneers-season-finale-interview/>.
- Berman, Judy. "The *Buccaneers* Is Trying So Hard to Be the Next *Bridgerton*." *Time*, 8 Nov. 2023, <https://time.com/6331903/the-buccaneers-review-apple/>.
- Boswell, Parley Ann. "The Gilded Age: Gosford Park Meets Edith Wharton's Old New York." *Edith Wharton Review*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2022, pp. 50–59.
- Buchanan, Kyle. "Sofia Coppola Makes It Look Easy. It Isn't." *New York Times*, 27 Oct. 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/27/movies/sofia-coppola-priscilla.html>.
- Bushnell, Candace. *Sex and the City*. 1996. Warner, 2001.
- Campbell, Donna M. "Edith Wharton and Film." *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Edith Wharton*, edited by Emily J. Orlando, e-book ed., Bloomsbury, 2022.
- Gilbert, Sophie. "Let's Never Do This to Edith Wharton Again." *Atlantic*, 2 Dec. 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2023/12/buccaneers-edith-wharton-apple-tv-review/676212/>.
- Harrison, Stephanie. *Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen*. Three Rivers, 2005.
- Jarvey, Natalie. "How *The Buccaneers* Breathes New Life into an Unfinished Edith Wharton Novel." *Vanity Fair*, 7 Nov. 2023, <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2023/11/how-the-buccaneers-breathes-new-life-into-an-unfinished-edith-wharton-novel>.
- Lee, Hermione. *Edith Wharton*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.
- Lloyd, Robert. "Review: *The Buccaneers* May Be More *Bridgerton* Than Edith Wharton." *Los Angeles Times*, 7 Nov. 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/tv/story/2023-11-07/the-buccaneers-review-apple-edith-wharton>.
- Orlando, Emily J. "Introduction: Broadening the Horizon of Edith Wharton Studies." *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Edith Wharton*, edited by Emily J. Orlando, e-book ed., Bloomsbury, 2022.
- . "The Most Unlikable Woman: On Sofia Coppola's Stymied Quest to Bring Undine Spragg to Screen." *Lit Hub*, 8 Nov. 2023, <https://lithub.com/the-most-unlikable-woman-on-sofia-coppolas-stymied-quest-to-bring-undine-spragg-to-screen/>.
- Powers, Katherine A. "The *Buccaneers*." *Boston Globe*, 19 Sep. 1993.
- Solomon, Deborah. "The Way We Live Now: Questions for Plum Sykes." *New York Times Magazine*, 30 May 2004, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/30/magazine/the-way-we-live-now-5-30-04-questions-for-plum-sykes-hazards-of-new-fortunes.html>.
- Sporn, Stephanie. "The Real-Life Story behind *The Buccaneers*." *Vogue*, 8 Nov. 2023, <https://www.vogue.com/article/the-real-life-story-behind-the-buccaneers-apple-tv-plus>.
- Stam, Robert. "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation." *Film Adaptation*, edited by James Naremore, Rutgers UP, 2000, pp. 54–76.
- Strecker, Erin. "The *Buccaneers* is Apple's *Bridgerton*, without the Bodice Ripping. More, Please." *IndieWire*, 8 Nov. 2023, <https://www.indiewire.com/criticism/shows/the-buccaneers-review-apple-bridgerton-1234923094/>.

- Toletino, Jia. "What Edith Wharton Knew, a Century Ago, about Women and Fame in America." *New Yorker*, 9 Sep. 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/second-read/what-edith-wharton-knew-a-century-ago-about-women-and-fame-in-america>.
- Wharton, Edith. *The Buccaneers*. Fast and Loose and *The Buccaneers*, edited by Viola Hopkins Winner, UP of Virginia, 1993, pp. 119–479, 489–98.
- . *The Buccaneers: A Novel*. Completed by Marion Mainwaring, Penguin, 1994.
- . *Ghosts*. 1937. New York Review Books, 2021.