but because Persephone has eaten one seed from the pomegranate she was carrying when Pluto abducted her, she is doomed forever to spend a part of every year in Hades. The book's epigraph from The Descent Of Inanna, a Sumerian story of 2000 B.C., opens the door to an even more ancient myth, that of the powerful goddess, Inanna, who braved the underworld to establish her power (and by her example the power of women) and succeeded.

Echlin's homage to the myths begins with Moll, a motherless girl who bore and then drowned a dead baby, hid in a ship that was shipwrecked in the gulf of St. Lawrence and "after two days and a night she washed up a blue meagre hag on the shore of a little island" called Millstone Nether. Moll is a presiding spirit, and the character related to Inanna, for her near-drowning has been her descent to the underworld: "She was whirled and spun below and divested of what she once was ... She became in the lowest deep, a lower deep." Always hiding in the woods, she was sometimes an agent of light and healing, more often of darkness and death, but always hovering over the tale, a powerful dynamic in its telling. She found the body of Meggie Dob's mother washed up on the shore of the island that had first been settled by "merry-begots and hangashores, sleevens and slawmeens," and all of them musicians; "Millstone Nether's impractical claim for itself was music." Making their own instruments out of branches and boards, they were favored by fate with instruments washed up on their shores, one time a barrel of fiddles and another of whistles. Moll herself drew one time a barrel of fiddles and an instrument made by Rory, a young man of the village, but Rory died in the great flu epidemic, and Norea gave birth to Dagmar who from the beginning had a strange gift: plants grew if she touched them, and whole orchards and gardens appeared; storms occurred if she was unhappy, and harvests were abundant if she smiled. She is the Demeter figure, and her daughter Nyssa, the Persephone, irrevocably but not permanently linked to Moll and her fearsome power.

The tale is anchored to a reality we can recognize by its music—the music of Donal Dob, the son of Meggie, and his friend, Colin Cane. In a complicated courtship dance of leaving and return, acceptance, love and loss, and always their obsessive devotion to the perfection of their music, they ensnare both Dagmar and Nyssa whose music is likewise magic and perfectly matched to Donal's. The end brings with it redemption as the whole village celebrates the inevitable reunion of Nyssa and Donal: "The Millstone Nether people called for more and played together the old reels and jigs and strathspeys. They were happy to hear again the playing of Nyssa, who went her own way and Donal, who went with her, to hear the sounds those two alone could wring from fiddle and double bass."

Dagmar's Daughter is anything but an easy novel to read and understand, but it rewards the effort, not only for the depth of its story and its ancient undertones, but for its grounding in an unshakeable reverence for art: "It was a young island where art and life went hand in hand... On the island it was thought that life could not be beautiful without art, nor art flourish without life. When Norea gave her grandchild Nyssa a fiddle she said, "This little fiddle is fashioned from the suffering of the world. Are you worthy of it?" At the last, Nyssa proved herself worthy.

This book should really be read aloud. It is a story begging to be heard, with all the variations of tone and expression that a voice could bring to it. But even experienced only as the words on the page, it is hauntingly memorable.

NEW ESSAYS ON THE HOUSE OF MIRTH

Deborah Esch, Ed.

BY SHERRILL CHEDA

"Killed by the double standard" might be an alternative title for The House Of Mirth by Edith Wharton. Lily Bart was nothing if not a victim of the social conventions of her time, which punished innocent women on the basis of their reputation while allowing men total freedom.

The first essay in this collection, an introduction by University of Toronto Associate Professor Deborah Esch, reviews and summarizes the autobiographical, biographical, and critical literature on novelist Edith Wharton to place her in the context of fin de siècle New York society. It is important to know that The House Of Mirth, first published in 1905, was not only a critical success but also a popular one.

The second essay "The conspicuous wasting of Lily Bart," by Ruth Yeazell of Yale University, compares The House Of Mirth with Veblen's The Theory Of The Leisure Class and finds that the novel and the sociological treatise mirror each other in their views of class in America. She points out that one of the main ironies for women like Lily Bart is that, on the one hand, they are to use their beauty as a bargaining chip for a society husband while on the other
When we board the bus, the Hispanic woman's daughter sang a Backstreet Boys song and even her English sounded Spanish as the curves of her mouth struggled to bend.

I hear sounds coming from a man's lips, he is speaking to his girlfriend and they are beautiful sounds but that's all the words are to me as mysterious as monkey chatter.

As I'm leaning against the bus shelter a man in a white T-shirt and Jean shorts appears and something in the atmosphere dies like a hunter who invades the jungle. He mumbles "English Englishssh".

When we board the bus, the Hispanic woman's daughter sang a Backstreet Boys song and even her English sounded Spanish as the curves of her mouth struggled to bend.

Lindsay Soberano is an Editorial Assistant at Harco Publishing. Her poetry has been published in The Canadian Jewish Newspaper and she has participated in several readings.