

Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware*:  
A Study Guide with Annotated Bibliography

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ABSTRACT

Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware* (1896) is an important work of American fiction that deserves greater critical attention. My intention in creating a website devoted to Frederic's masterpiece is not only to promote awareness of the novel but also to provide high school and undergraduate students, as well as their teachers, with a resource that will situate *The Damnation of Theron Ware* within an historical as well as a literary and cultural context. Significant events and discoveries in the fields of science, technology, religion, philosophy, art, and literature shaped Frederic's thinking and writing, particularly the events and characters of *The Damnation of Theron Ware*. An understanding of this milieu is critical to understanding the issues of the richly complicated novel.

*The Damnation of Theron Ware*, or *Illumination* as it is known in England, is the story of a Methodist minister who loses his faith when he makes the acquaintance of a Catholic priest, a post-Darwinian scientist, a New Woman, and a pragmatic con artist. In the end, critics are in disagreement as to the extent of Theron's damnation or illumination. A best seller in the 1890s, *The Damnation of Theron Ware* was heralded as both "the great American novel" and as "anti-American" in its sentiments.

Conceived as an ongoing project and research tool, my thesis is an online study guide with annotated bibliography of criticism devoted specifically to *The Damnation of Theron Ware*. The website is divided into six main sections: (1) the home page, which briefly introduces users to the site, identifies the scope of the project and provides links to other pages; (2) "Harold Frederic," which includes a biography of the author, a timeline of significant events during his lifetime, a select bibliography of his writing, and a sampling of interviews with and articles on Frederic as author and critic; (3) "Bibliographical Studies," which lists bibliographies, checklists, catalogues, critical overviews, and online resources; (4) "*The Damnation of Theron Ware*," which includes a discussion of the contemporaneous critical reception of the novel, an annotated bibliography of criticism in list form and broken down by subject, a bibliography of dissertations and theses, and recommended discussion questions or topics for essays; (5) a "Glossary," which includes terms that may be unfamiliar to students; and (6) "Links of

Interest,” which directs users to other websites relevant to a study of *The Damnation of Theron Ware*.