

TIDAK DIPINJAMKAN KELUAR

MAJOR CHARACTERS' ATTITUDES AS EDITH WHARTON'S REFLECTION  
ON AMERICAN MARRIAGE INSTITUTION IN THE 1870s  
IN THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

THESIS

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By

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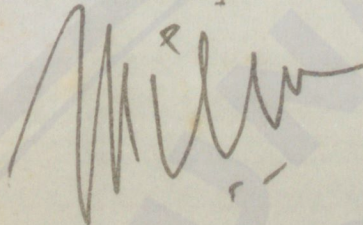
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APPROVAL SHEET

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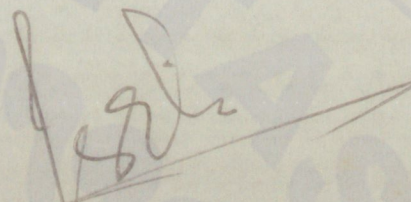
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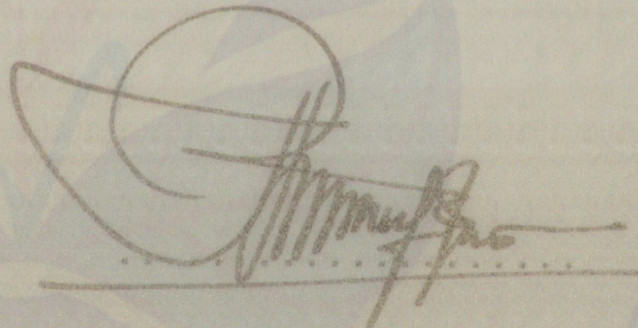


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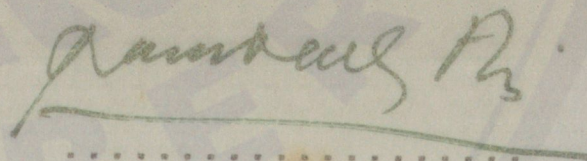


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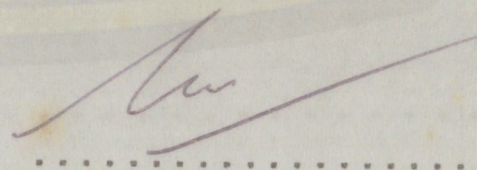
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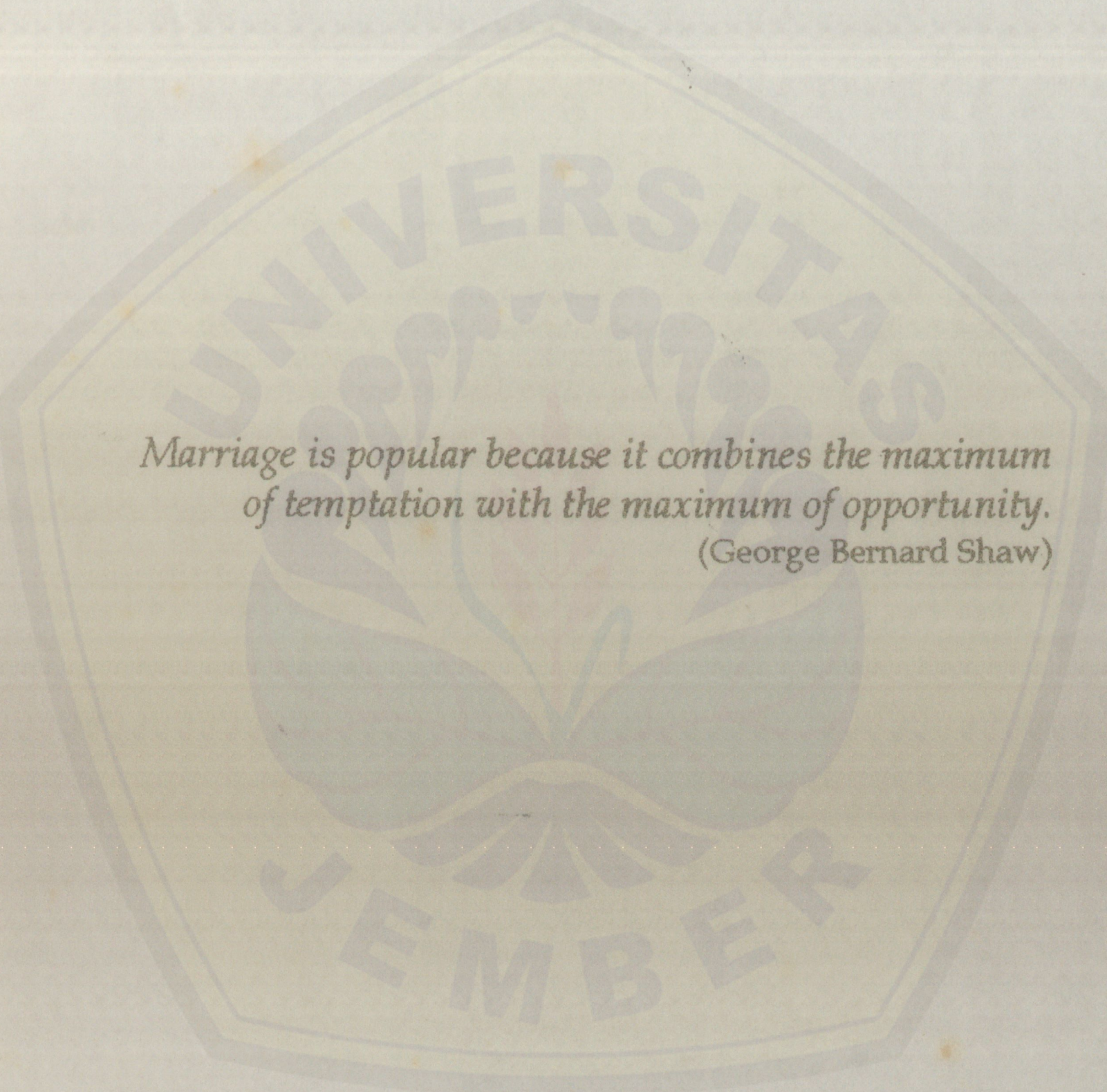
This work is dedicated to:

♥ *Achmad Koesen and Siti Komariyah*

"No words can show my deepest gratitude for your genuine and everlasting care and affection. I am always proud of being your flesh and blood until the very end."

♥ *Eko Hartanto, Dwi Hardono, Tri Asih Harijani, Catur Hartoko and Pantjoko Hariyoto*

"I am just sure of one thing about You all : it is very nice to be your youngest sister."

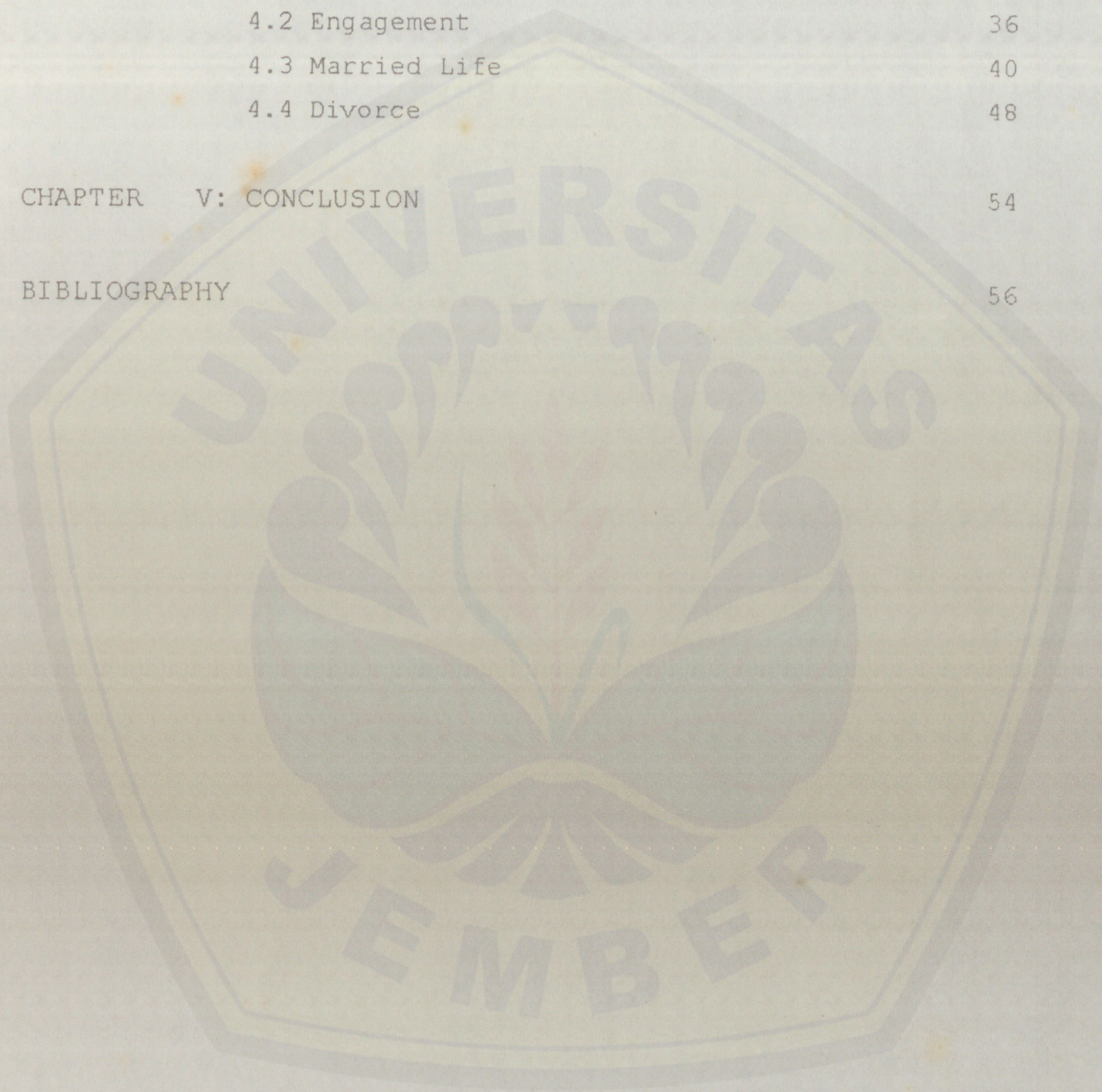


*Marriage is popular because it combines the maximum  
of temptation with the maximum of opportunity.*  
(George Bernard Shaw)

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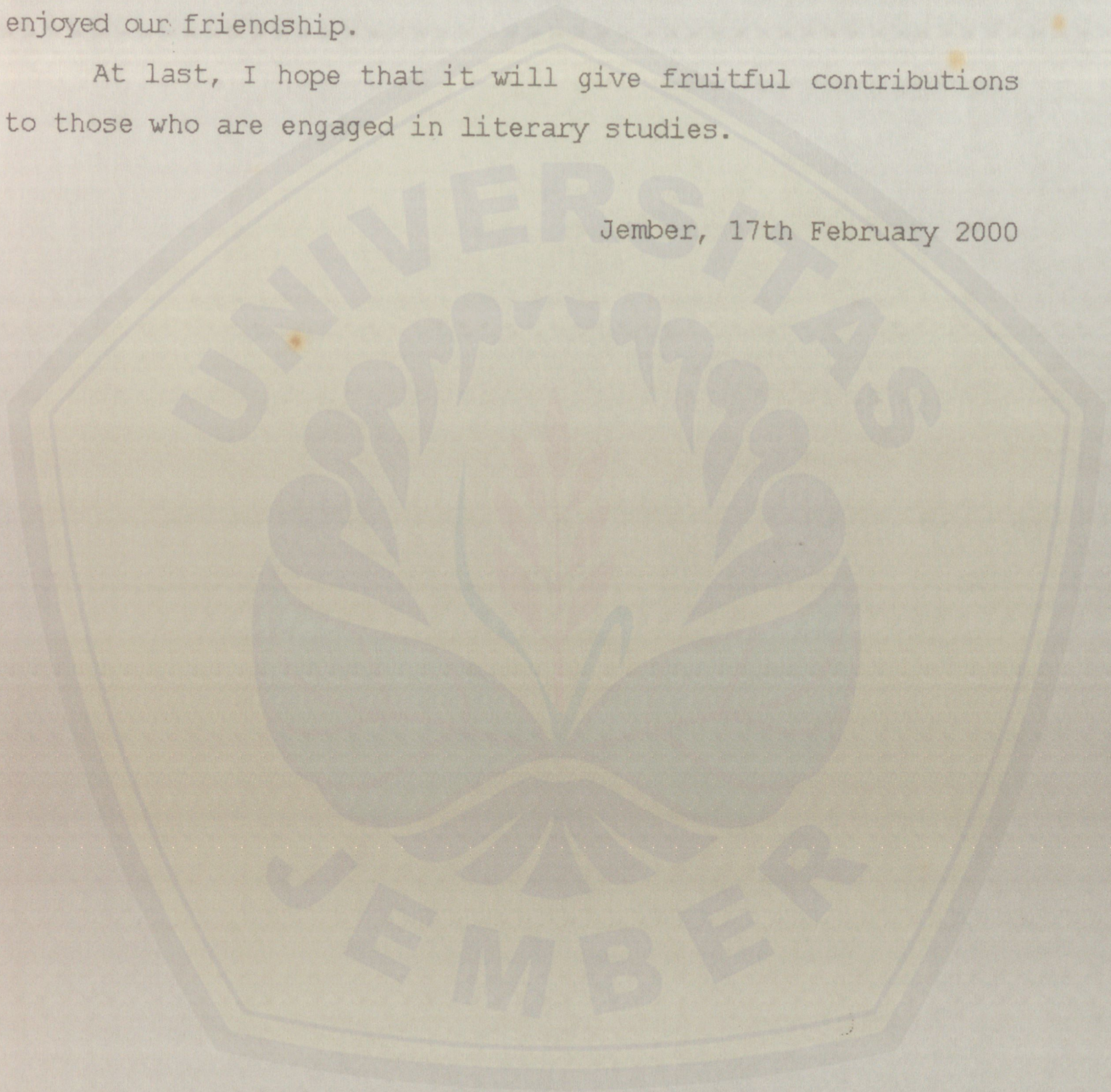
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At last, I hope that it will give fruitful contributions to those who are engaged in literary studies.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Topic about marriage is often inseparable from the topic about love since love may lead a man and a woman to marriage. In other words, marriage is expected by the couple who are madly in love as their permanent relationship and love manifestation. This topic has been immensely discussed by many writers. They write it in informative and imaginative forms, depend on their own purposes.

In accordance with the purpose of writing, Jones (1968:1) devises literature into two groups, that are: informative literature, that aimingly gives mere knowledge or information, and imaginative literature, which purposely arouses thought and feeling. The former will elucidates marriage in "formal" and "serious" way, for instance: about some strategies how to maintain a happy marriage, or about wedding rites in a certain society, law of marriage, et cetera.

While in imaginative literature, it seems to be a perennial source for writers to create some famous works that have been already printed, presented on stages or filmed for several times, such as *Pride and Prejudice* or *Siti Nurbaya*. At least, they prove that both writers and readers are still enjoying such a topic.

One of the writers who evinces interest in this topic is Edith Wharton, an American author in the Victorian era. Aside from being a Victorian novelist who tends to set her stories

in the era of her childhood, she is a naturalist. As a naturalist writer, her works are much concerned with female defeat in which the women characters in the nineteenth century neither can make peace with options available to them in their society nor fulfill their needs. She then rejects a plot which marriage becomes a ground of closure; a plot that is usually brought by many authors at the Victorian era such as Charles Dickens and George Elliot (Hockman, 1995: 211). One of her works which takes this topic is *The Age of Innocence*.

*The Age of Innocence* that is often pointed out by critics, has the flavor of a historical novel. The historical novel, as Hawthorn states, is determined by its detail description of the manners, building, institutions and scenery of its chosen setting (Hawthorn, 1985 : 15). In this novel, Wharton describes the precise detail of the wholesome atmosphere of American's life in a particular age based on her thorough research. It made her to be the first female author to win Pulitzer Prize in 1921 (Unger, 1974 : 320).

Wharton wrote this novel in 1920. It portrays the life and nuance of upper class New York society of the 1870s. It tells about the triangle love among three major characters. Newland Archer is a rich and perfectly mannered lawyer. He is going to marry the rich but conventional May Welland. Meanwhile, he falls in love decidedly with May's beautiful, Europeanized, disenchanted cousin, Ellen Olenska. Ellen is an unhappily married woman who wants to get divorced from her husband, a Polish nobleman. Unfortunately, they live within the narrow borders of aristocratic society where rigid social

manners and discipline take place. The society does not accept a divorce between the married couple. Newland and Ellen who are madly in love with each other try to break through the barriers of convention that surround them but in the end they realize they cannot escape from their tribal customs (Unger, 1974 : 321).

From the brief synopsis above, Wharton seems to convince us that the individual "is nearly always sacrificed to what supposed to be the collective interest." It is interesting to know her background of taking such a theme in her novel. A personal experience often suggests something that might have happened that could be used as the basis for a novel (Meredith, 1972: 2). In fact, she wrote this novel after getting divorced from her husband. Being a divorcee at that time that seemed to be inglorious and could not be entirely accepted by society inspired her to have a reflection on convention and institution of the society to which she belonged. That is also compatible with Hudson's statement :

"Literature can be defined as a vital record of what men seen in life, what they experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is, fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language" (Hudson, 1965:10).

Meanwhile, Taylor (1981:4) argues that reading on the surface level alone is only partly satisfactory. A full understanding and appreciation of literature depend on the ability to analyze and generalize as well. Thus, reader should grasp the exact details of the piece of action, character, events and setting.

Some of the novels and the dramas are about characters; about their reactions to an extended series of actions and about their attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, to shape those events. Interactions of characters and actions are more precisely shown in the novel and drama (Robert, 1964:43). Character, according to Abrams (1957: 20), is a dramatic or narrative work endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say - the dialogue - and what they do - the action.

The dialogues and actions presented by characters are worthwhile sources and data in interpreting the convention of the society that the author creates. Langland (1984: 33) asserts that character is revealed through response to convention. At the same time, convention is expressed only through the characters.

Even though a literary work is not a historical textbook for it is only fiction, it sometimes becomes a reference for readers to understand a social history, social phenomena in a certain period and society. The nature of the writer's conception expressed by the complex structure of words that he creates may reflect the everyday life in a particular time and place. Taylor (1981:13) further states that literature is often said to be a school of life in that authors tend to comment on the conduct of society and of individuals in society. The customs and mores of a particular social group or of individuals, their aspirations and values, are explored and exposed. Being affected mostly by her own experiences Wharton

in this novel chooses American society in the 1870s as the main interest; its culture, conventions and institutions.

From those reasons, this thesis strives to reveal the author's reflection on American marriage institution in the 1870s through the analysis of characters. For further and more detail explanation, the succeeding sub-chapters enumerate the problem to discuss, scope of study, method of analysis, approach to use, purpose of study and the organization of the thesis.

### **1.2 Problem to Discuss**

With regard to the preview above, the problems to discuss in this thesis are : first, the study will cover the marriage as the social institution; second, it is an effort to understand the background of author's thought of marital custom in America at the selected time; and the third or the last one is to what extent her thought is reflected in the novel through the study on characters' attitudes.

### **1.3 The Scope of Study and Method of Analysis**

Referring to Scholes' statement (1981 :10) that there must be a few major characters or a single character as the central focus to be concerned, the discussion concentrates only on three characters that seem dominant in the story, they are: Newland Archer, Ellen Olenska and May Welland. It is absolutely aimed at avoiding the complicated discussion.

They are regarded as major characters in view of they have important roles in constructing the plot of the story:

they experience more conflicts, they have more interactions with other characters, after all, the writer needs more time to tell about them than about other characters (Esten, 1990:93).

In respect of the title of this thesis, some definitions and aspects of marriage institution will be more clearly explained in chapter three. All the definitions are taken from several sources, including some dictionaries and encyclopedia as the comparison for the sake of their accurate meanings. Some references are selected carefully and considered compatible with the analysis. The novel itself is the main source. Characters' statements and actions are classified and clearly analyzed. By using inductive method, this thesis attempts to elucidate every meaning of the data employed. Hadi (1992:42) states that this method is applicable to draw a general idea from the particular events.

#### 1.4 The Approach to Use

Marriage is a social institution. It reflects conventions, characters and customs of a certain society. In addition, society can also be viewed as a system in action that is also the largest group to which individual belongs. Each individual is presumed unique so he has his own response toward convention that is sometimes different from one another. Assuming that this thesis discusses about a certain society in particular time, its convention on marriage and its people's attitudes revealed in the novel entitled *The Age of Innocence*, sociological approach is suitably applied. Scott (1962:123)

states that the sociological critic is interested in understanding the social milieu and the extent to which and manner in which the artist responds to it.

Since literary characters are defined as author's creation, their qualities depend on what the author has written about them. Interpreting a character means understanding his whole performance based on: physical description, portrayal of thought stream or of conscious thought, reaction to events, direct author's analysis, discussion of environment, reaction of others about or to character and conversation of other about character (Mochtar Lubis in Tarigan, 1991:133).

It is true that the literary work itself is the center of interest, the biographical or psychological background in fact is still significant to the analysis or interpretation of the text's form and to the truthfulness of its vision (Taylor, 1981:15). Reading a bit about Wharton's life brings an idea that her writing is intensely affected by her own experience. She even describes her literary characters stem from the same background and society just as herself. It proves that the certain parallels between author and her characters inhabit in the novel are inescapable (Hockman, 1995: 211). Owing to these reasons and previous explanation in the first sub-chapter, psychological approach is as well appropriate to use. It is based on Scott's statement in *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism* that there are three applications of psychological knowledge to art; that are: (1) the creative process, (2) the study of the life of the author as a means

of understanding their art and (3) the explanation of fictitious characters (Scott, 1962 : 71 ).

### 1.5 The Purpose of Study

Fiction is interesting for readers because of its imitation of life, the complicated ways in which it is at once like and unlike life. The experience of fiction then involves both pleasure and understanding. Interpreting a literary work is a means of recognizing truths about human existence through the direct presentation of selected experience.

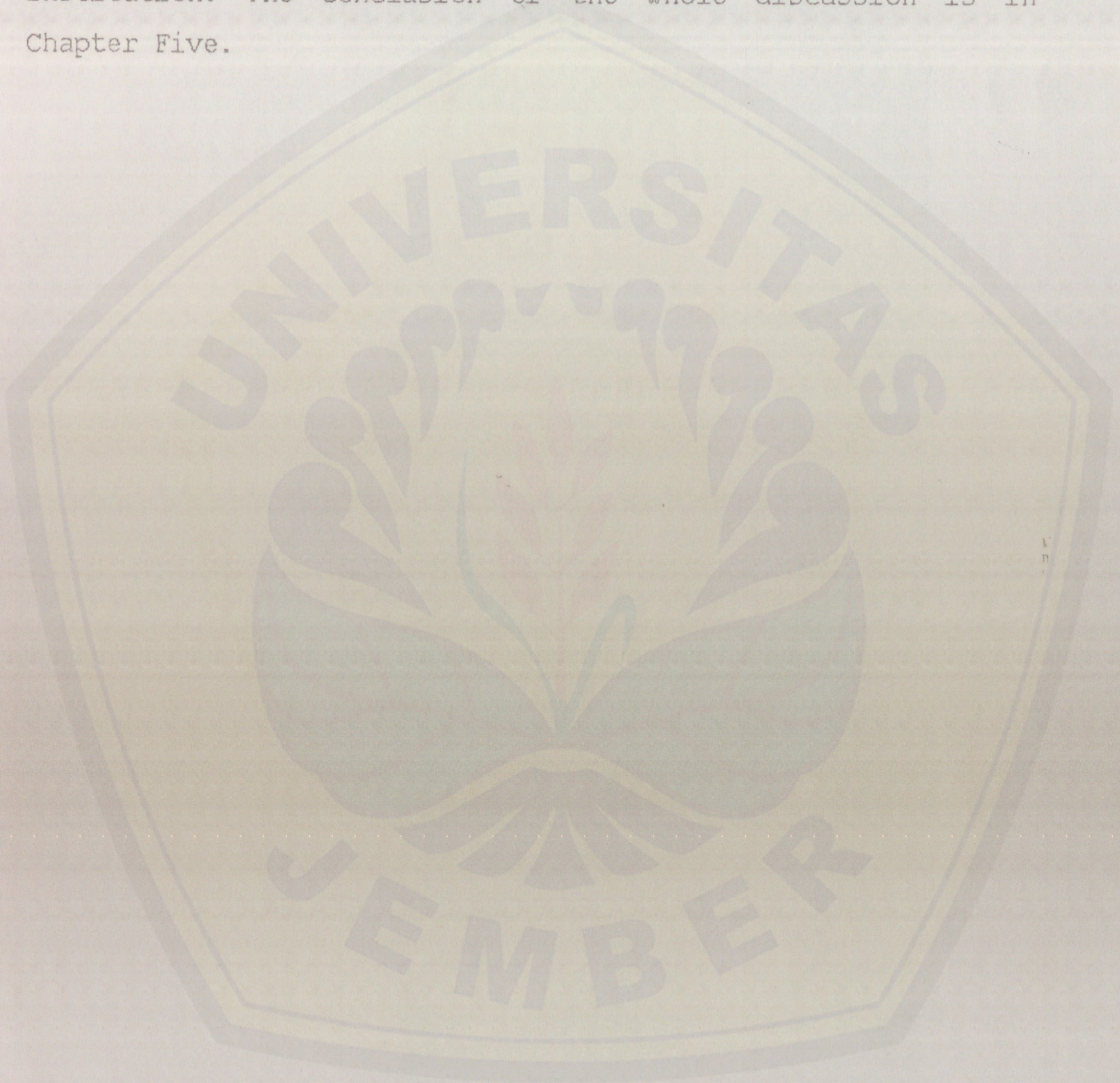
In view of most writers have their own attitudes toward their work materials and readers, the study aimingly strives to understand the tone of Edith Wharton in this novel. It will also enlarge the view upon American society and culture at the time of the chosen setting. In addition, the study of the characters' experiences shares valuable lessons about human affairs.

### 1.6 The Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction which contains six sub-chapters including the rationale of writing the thesis, problems to discuss, the scope and the purposes of the study, and the approaches that are applied in the analysis. Chapter Two is the brief biography of Edith Wharton that specially pervades her writing career and the synopsis of *The Age of Innocence*. Chapter Three deals with the further information about marriage institutions that relates to the analysis and the illumination of American



society in the nineteenth century. Chapter Four is the main discussion that presents the precise study of the attitudes of both, the author and the characters, in viewing marriage institution. The conclusion of the whole discussion is in Chapter Five.



CHAPTER II  
THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR  
AND THE SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

2.1. The Biography of Edith Wharton

By and large, the settings, characters or themes in literary works may suggest the authors' backgrounds and experiences of lives. To profoundly comprehend a literary work, readers should acquaint themselves with the biography of the authors in advance. For this instance, Wilson (in Scotts, 1962: 71) asserts "the study of the lives of authors as a means of understanding their art." This Edith Wharton's brief biography is based on several sources. It pervades her social and family background, childhood, love and connubial affairs, literary career and works.

She was born as Edith Newbold Jones on 24th January, 1862, in New York City and descended from wealthy and socially prominent New York families. She grew up in a restricted world which attempted to maintain its standards of education and good manners and of the scrupulous probity in business and private affairs against the threats of the new industrialism. In 1866 the Newbold Jones family moved to Europe for they were badly hit by the inflation that followed the Civil War. Edith spent her next six years of childhood variously in Europe, the fountain of arts. It encouraged her to have an acquaintance with several languages, that are: German, Italian and French. She returned to United States in 1872. As a girl from fashionable families, she was only educated privately by

formal school, she mostly spent spare time in her father's library. For her own amusement during her lonely and isolated childhood she learned to write stories and verses. The voracious and wide reading had prompted her talent and intellectual achievement as at the age of sixteen she privately printed volumes of poetry. One of them was published in *Atlantic Monthly* in the following year (Unger (Ed), 1974; Wharton, 1994).

Her father died at Cannes in 1882, a year before she was engaged to a wealthy banker, Edward Robbins Wharton. Three years later, in the age of twenty-three, she married him. Edward (Teddy) Wharton was an easygoing and friendly Bostonian. He was much older than Edith. Teddy had no intellectual pretensions, but adored his younger wife. The couple lived shiftily in New York and Newport, where Mrs. Wharton felt lonely because of the limited social relationship. Moreover there was no child came to their lives. Even though she inherited a great sum of money from her cousin and her mother, she felt and experienced unhappy life. She was frequently ill with nervous complaints. When her husband began to decline in health, the Whartons spent more and more time abroad, in England or Italy. It also prompted her to take up the profession of writing. Her success as a novelist and her greediness for intellectual companionship made them have a distance between husband and wife. Teddy didn't like his wife's literary friends and he preferred hunting to reading. Edith wrote in her diary, which is later published by Wayne Andrew, that "she could endure the 'moral

solitude' of her marriage only by creating a world of her imagination." Their relationships, however, was getting worse and worse. Estrangement was on its way. She even had love affair with Morton Fullerton, a mutual friend of Henry James, between 1907 and 1910. It didn't last long since they had different views of marriage. Edith wanted a more permanent relationship, that was a marriage, but Fullerton never agreed. However, when it was over, they remained quite friendly for the rest of their lives. In 1910 the Whartons sold their house in Lenox and established themselves in Paris. In the same year Teddy had a nervous collapse and was placed in a sanatorium. The Whartons could not put up with their incompatible marriage and eventually got divorced in 1913 (Unger(ed), 974:310).

During the first World War, Mrs. Wharton, with Walter Berry, worked tirelessly as volunteers by joining many organizations and committees to serve and help the refugees and victims of the war. Walter Berry was an international jurist and an old friend of her youth who gave much influence over her opinions. (Burkhardt(ed), 1964).

In the 1890s, she began to contribute short stories and poems to *Scribner's Magazine*, and later issued short story compilations, travel books and novels. Her first book, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897) was written in collaboration with Ogden Codman, Jr. (Americana Corp., 1977; Burkhardt, 1964). It deals with her exquisite taste in furnishing houses as Wilson (in Unger, 1974) points out she was the poet of decoration. *The Greater Inclination* (1899) and its successor, *Crucial*

*Instances* (1901) are collections of stories which have some of the flavours of James's stories. Her first novel, *The Valley of Decision* appeared in 1902. It is a long historical novel whose scene is laid in Italy in eighteenth Century. In 1903, she wrote *Sanctuary*, a parody of a Paul Bourget's theme. And *The Descent of Man* (1904) is another volume of short stories. One of the stories, "The Dilletante" denotes her development in illustrating the characters. (Unger(Ed), 1974:11).

*The House of Mirth* which was published on 14th October 1905 presages her coming of age as a novelist. "It became a bestseller with 140,000 copies in print by the end of that year" (Wharton,1994). The novel is a symbolic depiction of the manners of New York society and deals with the plight of a young woman, Lily Bart. She wishes to escape from the inhibitions of a rigid society but cannot do so because she has been molded beyond the change by its values and standards. Mrs Wharton's purpose in taking such a subject is recorded as "A frivolous society can acquire dramatic significance only through what its frivolity destroys. Its tragic implications lie in its power debasing people and ideals"(Burkardt (Ed),1964).

After her first popular success of *The House of Mirth*, she did not take New York subject for the ensuing eight years. *Madame de Treymes* and *The Fruit of the Tree* appeared concurrently in 1907. The latter is an experiment in new field. It illustrates an American executive's conflicts of love and business. In order to be able to draw the precise setting and depiction of the factory manager, she did a

profound research in a factory near her country home in Lenox, Massachusetts. The novel also pertains to controversy over euthanasia then becomes a readable novel even today.

Her succeeding book, *Tales of Men and Ghosts* (1910), contains some superb chillers. In Edith's opinion, writing such ghost stories requires brilliant faculty and techniques that not all writers are able to draw. The author should maintain the supernatural idea to irradiate the story with imposing horrors (Unger(Ed),1974).

Mrs. Wharton, later, composed *Ethan Frome* with "the greatest joy and the fullest ease" in 1911. The protagonist in this novelle is overcome by the dark features: grinding poverty, cultural emptiness and the oppression of a puritan past. Ethan's poverty and moral scruples trap and keep him from realizing his dream of leaving Starkfield for a large place. This situation is made particularly painful by the denial of his intellectual aspirations. Meanwhile, Elizabeth Ammons, a critic, has interpreted it as a fairy tale in which poverty and isolation turn women into witches and men into silent martyrs (White,1995:xviii-xx).

*The Custom of the Country* (1913) is a brilliant study of the sophisticated problems presented by a society in which making money is the only and respected activity. Her European character, the French aristocrat Raymond de Chelles, complains that Americans are proud of changing as well as Europeans are proud of holding to what they have (Conn, 1989:308).

*Summer* (1917) delineates a terrible psychological process of Charity Royal, her main female character. In addition to

*Summer*, it is also the companion piece of *Ethan Frome* in which the characters are trapped in the incest situations. Wharton's suggestion of incest is described as "slow mental and moral starvation" (White, 1995:xxii).

*French Ways and Their Meaning* (1919) is a nonfictional book which enriches the present binding generations together in the continuity of art and knowledge (Conn, 1989:308).

*The Age Of Innocence* (1920), awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1921, is primarily about marriage and divorce, and about the power of society to mold individual lives and the turning of women into beautiful objects (White, 1995). *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) was first serialized in the *Pictorial Review*. It may give the hint to its author's remarkable lapse of style and taste.

*The Writing of Fiction* (1925) is her resumption of writing with Balzac, Tolstoy, Flaubert and George Elliot. She turned away forcefully from the American literary tradition. Her instructions in the art of fiction she summarizes and exemplifies with an admirable essay on Marcel Proust (Martini, 1967:264).

Many critics have viewed her as a disciple of Henry James, a writer that she admired. They were close friends for the last twelve years of James's life; a significant period in her own creative development. They both were interested in writing about Americans in Europe. However, regardless of its resemblance, James was subtle, speculative and indirect, while Wharton was always clear and to-the-point (Burkhardt, 1964; Unger, 1974). The American setting was



employed particularly because she had been intensely impressed by the sightseeing where her parents had lived.

Edith Wharton suffered a stroke in June 1937 and died in her house near Paris on 11th August that year, at the age of seventy-five. Her acquaintances remembered her as the great lady who was formidable and perfectionist." She was the first woman to gain an honorary LLD from Yale University and was the recipient of many other civic and literary honors " (Burkhardt(Ed),1964). Her novels record timeless truths of psychological and social problems. She treated many of the issues of her own life in her fiction such as her frustration with the limitations placed on women, her knowledge about female sexuality, her miserable marriage and the stigma against divorce. She produced more than 20 novels, 6 books of travel, 10 volumes of short stories, a classic in the history of interior decoration, a distinguished memoir and three volumes of poetry, altogether forty-seven books. She had cultivated and handled them meaningful and important in her definite way (Martini,1967; Unger,1974).

## 2.2 The Synopsis of *The Age of Innocence*

The story begins when Mrs Archer and the Wellands intend to marry off their children, Newland Archer and May Welland. At the Beaufort ball-room where Mrs Beaufort always gives on an annual Opera night, May and Newland officially declare their engagement. They then make an arrangement to hold the wedding in a year.



In that occasion, Newland is introduced to Ellen Olenska, May's cousin, who has just come from Europe. Actually Ellen and Newland are old friends but they have not met each other for a long time. Ellen has been orphaned since she is still a baby and taken in charge by her aunt, Medora Manson. When Medora's husband deceased, she takes Ellen to abandon New York. People did not hear about them for some times then comes the news of Ellen's marriage to a wealthy Polish nobleman.

Since the first day of her arrival in New York, she becomes a topic of conversation. It is not only on account of her charming appearance and Europeanized behaviours. Her estrangement from her husband also prompts her to be a fresh and absorbing subject. Her returning home is actually for seeking rest and oblivion to her conjugal problem among her kinsfolk.

When everybody including her relatives regard her as a 'foreigner' owing to her attitudes that seem to break the custom, Newland has a different view upon her. He seems to understand her. That makes her take him into her confidence. With regard to their intimate friendship, Mingott family asked him to persuade her to withdraw her divorce-suit on Count Olenski. They think it is only Newland that can alter her mind. Furthermore, Mr Letterblair, the head office of a firm where Newland works as a lawyer, has also handed this case to him in view of his prospective alliance with the family. Though for some reason he dislikes the prospect as he thinks it is her right to decide for divorce, he understands and strives for doing this mandate after reading her husband's

letter and her financial situation. Divorce will just make her lose her facilities she usually gets from her husband.

While between Newland and May, for the third time he tries to urge his betrothed to advance the date of their marriage. Neither May nor her parents agree to this idea. While Newland thinks there is no reason to delay their marriage, May is of another opinion. She supposes Newland is uncertain of continuing to care for her because of another woman. She even gives him time to think it carefully as she does not want to get happiness made out of an unfairness to somebody else and then tells him not to release the woman just because of her.

Even though he denies May's assumption, Newland begins to be aware of its possibility. He realizes that he has taken a fancy to Ellen, to her insight on art and on brilliant conversation. When he meets Medora Manson, Ellen's aunt, he becomes certain to his own feeling and understands Ellen's to him. While knowing that Medora is on behalf of Count Olenski, Ellen refuses Medora's suggestion to go back to her husband. She also tells Newland that her reason for withdrawing her file of divorce is not due to her husband's threat nor her fear for being poor, but her anxiety for bringing more scandal on the family especially on him and May. They evidently know they have been in love with each other. Unfortunately, while they start to imagine about a further relationship, comes a telegram from May informing her parents' approval to Newland's proposal. Her grand mother, Old

Catherine Mingott, has been the means of hastening their marriage.

On Tuesday after Easter, Newland and May pronounce their wedding consent at Grace Church. After a three months wedding tour, Newland runs his days to be the husband of one of the handsomest and most popular young married woman in New York. He strives to treat May as good as all his friends treat their wives.

Newland knows that Ellen has established herself in Washington. The idea about marrying Ellen on the eve of his wedding day has been regarded as his last discarded experiment and it has become unthinkable until he finds out that Ellen comes to spend her summer in her Granny's house. When he does not find Ellen at Blenker's party he suddenly finds himself long for her. Ellen has gone to Boston to meet M. Reviere, her husband's secretary. On the chance of seeing her again, he makes an excuse to go to Boston. When they meet, Ellen tells him that her husband through his secretary offers a reconciliation but she rejects it.

In New York, Newland meets M. Riviere who takes the occasion to tell Newland that he honestly agrees to Ellen's decision. He even begs Newland not to let her go back to her husband. He says he really knows what life Countess Olenska has to face in such a marriage. Newland knows it will make him take an opposite view to the rest of the family.

One day, Catherine summons Newland to see her alone. She tells him the opinion of the family about Ellen's refusal to her husband's last proposals. All the family have urged her on

holding out and cutting off her allowance until she goes back to her husband. Disposing of her disagreement with this opinion and knowing that he is always on Ellen's side, she asks Newland to explain and make the rest of the family understand and accept Ellen's decision.

Unexpectedly Ellen decides to establish herself in Paris. Newland does not know what has prompted her to leave New York. Then two weeks after Ellen's departure May tells him about her pregnancy. She also admits that she has told Ellen earlier than her husband. He then understands that May strives to maintain their marriage. Besides, he knows whatever happens May will always be loyal, gallant and unresentful and that urges him to do the same. From that day forth he has not seen Ellen nor tried to meet her even though he has a chance, twenty six years later.

CHAPTER III  
MARRIAGE INSTITUTIONS AND THE GENTEEL TRADITION

3.1 Marriage Institutions

On the grounds that there are many definitions of the term marriage and aspects within, the present sub-chapter concentrates on the description of marriage aimed to be a boundary for the main discussion.

Webster's New World College Dictionary (1997:700,829) describes marriage and institution separately. Marriage itself is defined as "relation between husband and wife, married life, the act of marrying or wedding" and institution is stated as "an established law, custom, practice, system, et cetera,...". Grolier Webster International Dictionary (1974:584) describes marriage as "the social institution by which a man and woman are legally united and establish a new unit;...". Grolier Encyclopedia of Knowledge (1991:135) defines the institution of marriage as "an institution that is socially recognized union between a man and a woman that serves to legitimate their children". Some Americans describe marriage as a "contract" and others regard it as a "status" or "institution" created by a contract (Collier's Encyclopedia, 1994 : 440).

There are three important points that can be underlined about marriage from those description above, that are: the relation between husband and wife, a social institution, and a contract of matrimony. The relation between husband and wife is commonly associated with the level of adaptibility between them. A happy marriage is then presented by the lifelong fidelity. While Sadli (1993:107) states "marriage is a

fidelity. While Sadli (1993:107) states "marriage is a ratified union of two unique individuals and a basis form of mutual dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family", both husband and wife are presumed to be two different persons who have different wishes, visions, habits and expectations. In marriage life, therefore, beside love, they should grow mutual understanding, respect and adjustment. There are some cases in which the couple for the first time build and found their marriage without love since they previously have not known each other. It usually happens in arranged marriage, a marriage in which the elders assume that young people are unable to make their own choices. Nevertheless, through their togetherness and their capability in respect and adapt to each other, they can run their married life in tranquillity. On the other cases, the marriage based on romantic love does not guarantee its perpetuity.

Furthermore, the relation between husband and wife creates a family in which a child is the part of it. The presence of a child does not only make the marriage partners face an important new set of roles as father and mother but it also provides stability. At least, the couple that readily separates will think many times to decide divorce in a view of the parenting duties and their child's future.

As the social institution, marriage enters into a public act. It reflects the purpose, character and customs of the society in which it is found. Sadli (1993:107) further describes a marriage is "a socio-cultural event because its rites and ceremonies are closely tied to some factors such as social interest, tradition, law and religion that prevail and

are professed by two parties". Since culture includes more than idealized ways of knowledge, practice and belief, marriage customs then vary greatly from one culture to another. For example, in Indonesian tradition, the association of the couple is commonly presaged by sharing food by the bride and groom. Elsewhere, the groom places a ring on the fourth finger of bride's left hand and the second ring, if available, is similarly placed on the groom's left hand. In a few societies, transferring property has adequately legitimized the union. Yet, all of them have the same purpose that is announcing to the community that they are legally united.

For another example, with regard to plural marriage, each culture has its own view. In some cultures as in many traditional African and Asian, man is allowed to have more than one wife at a time, called *polygamy*. *Polyandry*, on the contrary, allows a woman to have more than one husband at one time. It can be found in a few cultures, most of them in central Asia. Although some cultures allowed plural marriage, *monogamy* - the marriage of one man and one woman at a time - is institutionalized in most cultures.

Meanwhile, culture has changed in time. Institution as one of the units of culture is no exception. The change of culture can be clearly seen from the change of people's attitude toward tradition. Something that in the past might be unacceptable or regarded as taboo by the society, it presently tends to be a common thing. Divorce, for instance, shows its increasing rate in United States. Green (1960:417) writes that

in 1890, one marriage ended in divorce for every ten marriages that ended in death; while in 1949, one marriage ended in divorce for every 1.58 marriages that ended in death. The ratios cited indicate the change in attitudes of the Americans about marriage. It is related to their tendency to believe more deeply in the possibilities of finding marital fulfillment. It arouses an experimental feeling toward marriage in which divorce seems to be no longer a final disaster but a temporary setback in a continuing quest (Green, 1960:417).

Not only has the opinion toward divorce changed, but the opinion toward other aspects of marriage such as choosing of mate, courtship, et cetera has also changed. Most cultures recently seems to extenuate the limitations regarded to have shackled the individual interests.

In the matter of marriage as a contract of matrimony, the couple have to promise each other a lifelong fidelity within religious provisions for the purpose of God's blessing and bestowal. In Roman Catholic, as presented in Holy Scripture, it is "a natural contract, instituted directly in the constitution of two instinctively attracted sexes and directly by the Creator's positive intervention;..." (in Collier's Encyclopedia, 1994:438). Regardless to its rites, the expression of the consent as the contract uttered by the two parties becomes the essential element in wedding ceremony. This event ordinarily presented by the preacher and two witnesses. This contract then has varied names. The Catholics call it "sacrament of marriage", 'akad nikah' for the Indonesian Moslems, while in Jewish tradition it is called 'Ketubah', and



there are still many other names. Whatever it is called, it brings some effects that must be carried out by the spouses. It really concludes an agreement of husband and wife to love and respect each other, to withstand against and overcome the burdens and temptations they may face during their marriage life, to procreate children and bring them up in their religious way.

Since it is aimed to be a permanent union, some religions forbid divorce and others permit it, in spite of assuming it as not a good preference, upon logic and acceptable reasons. Christian, especially the early Christian, made no provision for divorce. It is based on the canon law that could be summarized by the phrase from the Bible: "So they are no longer two but one flesh, what God then has joined, man must not separate (Matt, xix: 6). However, the Protestant, since Martin Luther broke away from the Roman Church in the 16th century, has permitted divorce on specific grounds such as adultery, cruelty or desertion. In Jewish law, a wife does not have the right to divorce her husband, but she has the right to remarry if her husband divorce her. And in some cultures, widows are prohibited to remarry.

Divorce is a way of dissolving a legal marriage that involves the recognition that a marriage has supposedly failed and that both parties or at least one of them has no desire to continue the marital relationship (Glorier Encyclopedia of Knowledge, 1991:175). It has been previously just a matter of religion or custom. In primitive societies, it is sometimes signed by the symbolic breaking of some thing such as a

household tool. While in some societies, the couple draw up a divorce contract.

Really, divorce refers to the idea that the spouse is incapable to carry out the contract. With a view to resolving their marriage problems, divorce consequently brings other problems that sometimes look heavier. By and large, the financial or economic affair and the custody of children are the most disputed cases. Divorce later is obtained through the action in a court of law. Accordingly, it is not utterly wrong when some Americans assume marriage as a mere civil contract.

### **3.2 Genteel Tradition in America in the Nineteenth Century**

Prior to the further discussion about marriage institutions, it is worth understanding the setting when and where the characters inhabit described in the novel. The slight depiction of social phenomena in America in the nineteenth century gives contributions to grasp the Americans' attitudes about marriage.

Horton and Edwards (1974, 189-200) elucidate that the standards of etiquette, manner and moral of the American society in the nineteenth century was strongly influenced by British Victorianism. The formalities of monarchy and nobility of Victorianism had provided the people a good social system of behaviour, moral, conservative ideas, with proper consideration for the amenities and with due deference to material wealth which is later called "Genteel Tradition".

The reasons for adopting such formalities was that they realized of "having no settled social pattern of their own and

lacking in tested and long-standing criteria of class and gentility". These reasons also prompted them to easily change. It has been aptly pointed out by Wharton in her novel "The Custom of the Country" (1913) in which the European characters complains that Americans "come from hotels as big as towns, and from towns as flimsy as paper where the street have not had time to be named, and the buildings are demolished before they are dry, and the people are as proud of changing of holding to what we have" (Wharton in Conn, 1989:308). As their nearest foreign relative, British Victorianism was easily accepted. In a sense, the Genteel tradition immediately became part of texture of society, coloring the art, literature, architecture, dress, and everyday manners of entire period.

The Genteel tradition had somehow led them into the world of hypocrisy. They were accustomed to disown their sore spots of life with the idea that those spots would naturally disappear. They disliked topics that they assumed were not of polite conversation such as death, disease, crime, politics, insanity, divorce et cetera. Subsequently, they would avoid that such unpleasant things with horror feeling.

The other characteristic of this tradition was its provincialism. They tended to perceive themselves the self-consciously respectable groups. As a result, they would reject all manners and influences that could be called 'foreign'. They were afraid of having them different from their own social patterns. Continental Europeans, for instance, were totally avoided as being strange and morally dangerous.

The effect of the tradition was apparent in most aspects of life. For example in architecture, they thronged their room with all sorts of useless things that imparted an appearance of museum, not a comfortable place of living. It indirectly showed their level of courtesy and pretensions as the member of leisured class. The passion for concealment was illustrated by the three layers of curtains on every windows.

In accordance with their way of dress especially for women's , it really suggested the strict and ostentatious manners. Dressmakers required yards of material for the wide double skirts, which reached or even trailed on the ground and were given fullness by the employment of wire forms and five to seven layers of underclothing.

They wore such clothes with the aim of attracting, in this case the male's attention, without being literally revealing. In addition, one writer describes their costumes as "the evidence of a well discipline mind and regulated values", and other writer puts it as "to inflame the passions of one sex while restraining those of the other".

At last, as the subsequent of high standards of etiquette, the genteel concept of marriage was to make this institution into permanent and sometimes dreary affair, filled with pretense.

CHAPTER IV

MAJOR CHARACTERS' ATTITUDES AS AUTHOR'S REFLECTION ON  
AMERICAN MARRIAGE INSTITUTION IN THE 1870s

There are three major characters whose attitudes are going to be profoundly observed. It is mentioned in the first chapter that the three major characters are May Welland, Newland Archer and Ellen Olenska. Those characters have their own attitudes that seem different from one another but are supposed to adequately represent the author's reflection on the American marriage institution in the 1870s.

May Welland represents the typical American women at that time. She is proud of as well as obedient to the conventions and traditions of the society to where she belongs. She is conventional, as she has always been taught to be, so it never comes on her an idea that all the rules have shackled her life. She never thinks that she lives within a rigid social system. On the contrary, she is convinced that being obedient to the tradition will always keep her from trouble and conflict with the society and even bring her virtues in her life.

Newland Archer is described as a young man who likes challenges on convention. He is proud of being a New Yorker and of the traditions that his society holds; yet he sometimes has a contradictory opinion to the convention. This prompts him to get conflicts within himself and with his society.

Unlike May Welland or Newland Archer, Ellen Olenska is regarded as a 'foreigner' for the Americans assumed "the continental Europeans were totally avoided as being strange and morally dangerous" (Horton and Edward, 1974:196). She is

actually a New Yorker but has spent her life mostly in Europe. She was still a child when Mrs. Chivers took her to leave New York. Her marriage to a Polish nobleman also makes her settle in Europe. Inevitably, her Europeanized and unconventional attitudes make her 'different' among her relatives and then evoke many comments and responds illuminating the real Americans' view on marriage at that time.

Based on the previous chapter, there are many aspects in marriage institutions; not only about wedding rites. However, the discussion concentrates only on few aspects that seem quite significant in connubial affairs, they are: choice of mate, engagement, married life and divorce.

#### 4.1 Choice of Mate

Having found a harmonious partner apparently suggests that the couple have got through a half of their struggle to build a happy marriage. Thus, the apt and wise choice of mate is very important for determining the quality of their married lives.

To begin with, choice of mate is usually limited by certain requirements, prohibitions and preferences concerning relationship, residence, and social status. Even though it is ultimately based on personal interests and characteristics, society particularly through family unavoidably influences its process. In genteel tradition social status was much considered not only upon their wealth, but also upon their refined attitudes and their families' respectful names, free from inglorious scandals. Family would carefully investigate

whether their son's or daughter's suitor was really good. They did not want to face that the suitor had a problem in their society. When one member of a family did something that was unpleasant according to people's view, all members of that family would also carry the result.

Newland's choice upon May is really accepted by his mother. Mrs. Archer likes May as May fulfills the required conditions for being a good wife: beautiful, religious, conventional and descended from a rich family. Her parents' contented marriage is one of the most consideration. Mrs. Archer does believe that May's family background will prompt her to create and build a happy marriage and good family as well.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Archer has a thing that weighs on her mind. She finds that May's cousin who has just come from Europe has done something shameful. She hears from her neighbor, Mr. Sillerton Jackson, that Ellen has been seen going out with a man who is not her own husband. In a view of Ellen becomes their relatives, Janey - Newland's sister - reminds him to be aware of being a member of this family. At any rate, they do not like to get effect and be gossiped because of Ellen's attitude.

'Stop her? Warn her?' he laughed again. 'I'm not engaged to be married to the Countess Olenska!' The words had a fantastic sound in his own ears.

'You're marrying into her family.'

(Chapter X, page: 55).

Meanwhile, Ellen's intention to get estrangement from her husband also gives a negative effect to Mingott family. Divorce at that time was regarded as a disgusting affair that

had to be avoided as well. Mr. Letterblair, the head office of the firm where Newland works, has entrusted Newland with Ellen's case. The idea to submit it to Newland is approved by Mrs. Manson Mingott, her son and Mr. Welland. Newland, who formerly refuses to take care of this case, eventually understands the reason of doing this mandate. Mr. Letterblair further says that he does not consult this case with others but Newland in a view of his prospective alliance to Mingotts.

Archer hesitated. 'I can't pledge myself till I've seen Countess Olenska,' he said at length.

'Mr. Archer, I don't understand you. Do you want to marry into a family with a scandalous divorce-suit hanging over it?'

(Chapter XI, page: 64).

Arranged marriage is perhaps the oldest way and still quite popular in some societies even today. Parents and other elder relatives commonly dominate the process of choosing a mate. They make suggestions and sometimes investigations to find a prospect and to make sure that the man or the woman is match for their son or daughter.

Though there are preferences from the society, young people in America still have more chance to choose their own mates. Bahr (ed., 1994: 437) states that in many parts of Africa and Asia, and in most of Europe until recently, marriages have been arranged by families rather than by individual. It is apparent when Ellen asks Newland whether his mating with May is arranged. She thinks that it is not from their own decision and also assumes that arranged marriage is the custom in America as the Europeans usually do.



'May is a darling; I've seen no young girl in New York so handsome and so intelligent. Are you very much in love with her?'

Newland Archer reddened and laughed. 'As much as a man can be.'

She continued to consider him thoughtfully, as if not to miss any shade of meaning in what he said, 'Do you think, then, there is a limit?'

'To being in love? If there is, I haven't found it!'

She glow with sympathy. 'Ah - it's really and trully a romance?'

'The most romantic of romances!'

'How delightful! And you found it all out for yourselves - it was not in the least arranged for you?'

Archer looked at her incredulously. 'Have you forgotten,' he asked with a smile, 'that in our country we don't allow our marriages to be arranged for us?'

A dusky blush rose to her cheek, and he instantly regretted his words.

'Yes,' she answered, 'I'd forgotten. You must forgive me if I sometimes make these mistakes. I don't always remember that everything here is good that was - that was bad where I've come from.'

(Chapter VIII, page:42)

In Wellands' opinion, Newland is good enough for May; he has a job, and the most important reason of accepting him for their daughter is that he is educated and descended from a respectable family. Newland has worked as a lawyer in Mr. Letterblair's firm. At that time, lawyer was a prestigious profession since few people could have chance and skill to study in college and then worked as a lawyer. They had to be rich to finance their schooling. Newland's habit visiting his club after working supports his social status.

He had failed to stop at his club on the way up from the office where he excercised the profession of the

law in the leisury manner common to well-to-do New Yorkers of his class.

(Chapter :X, page: 54).

Besides, as it is mentioned above, Newland is descended from wealthy and socially prominent New York family. Newlands have had good rappsorts and history. They can be grouped with Mingotts, Chiverses, and Mansons that actively dominate in New York society. Most people imagine them to be the very apex of the pyramid. Like what Mrs. Archer usually tells him, those are the things that should be proud of.

Our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were just respectable English or Dutch merchants, who came to the colonies to make their fortune, and stayed here because they di so well. One of your great-grandfather signed the Declaration, and another was a general on Washington's staff, and received General Burgoyne's sword after the battle of Saratoga. *ibid*

(Chapter VI, page: 32).

New York is a patrilineal society. It is the man who commonly takes the initiative in proposing marriage. They evidently practised it particularly in the nineteenth century. Man had much more opportunity to choose his partner. While woman had a less role; she just waited a man offering marriage proposal and after that decided whether she would accept or refuse the man.

Regarding the woman's right in this matter at that time, one writer says that the female costumes of the genteel period were designed "to inflame the passions of one sex while restraining those of the other." Women wore layers of underclothing that gave fullness appearance, the tight fitting jacket that showed the dainty little waist and the corset that

was indirectly bidding its wearer to express self restraint. Their clothes were those of 'ostentatious concealment' that had a purpose of attracting men without 'being literally revealing' (Horton and Edward, 1974 :198).

Furthermore, Edith (in Wolff's introduction to "Summer", 1939: xxvii), argues that woman has been taught to think of herself as nothing more than a beautiful object to be admired, praised, and eventually "collected" by a man with enough money to keep her. Besides, she regrets the rules of a society that urged passivity as an appropriate expression of femininity. Woman was expected 'to be'; she was not expected 'to do'. The way how woman should behave in a party, in which she had to wait for and did not get chance to have initiative to look for a man as her companion, is a clear epitome of woman's attitude in choosing her mate.

It was not the custom in New York drawing-rooms for a lady to get up and walk away from one gentleman in order to seek the company of another. Etiquette required that she should wait, immovable as an idol, while the men who wished to converse with her succeeded each other at her side. But the Countess was apparently unaware of having broken any rule; she sat at perfect ease in a corner of the sofa beside Archer, and looked at him with the kindest eyes.

(Chapter VIII, page:41)

In this way, the narrator's statement upon Ellen's attitude above implicitly elucidates the real fact that woman especially in America at that time had fewer opportunities than man to exercise independent control over her life, especially in choosing her partner of life. Indeed, arranged marriage had not been quite popular any longer for them.

Social preferences still had significant roles upon their choices anyway. In addition, most families and societies considered young women were unable to make choices for their own marriage. Their parents would or not give approval for their choices. Since they had been taught to be obedient, they should accept whatever decision that their parents had made on their choices.

#### 4.2 Engagement

Engagement is an initial step to marriage that gives the couple opportunity to be better acquainted with his or her betrothed and even more with his or her betrothed's family. Thus, the tradition after engagement is exchange visits. This also has a purpose of avoiding an unpleasant rumor that may arouse when a man and a woman without any legal union are often seen being together. Engagement, in this way, is a means of announcing that this man and this woman have a special and serious relationship to have privilege for being alone and having a courtship.

Owing to the religious and social norms, courtship at that time was far different from one at present in America. They were not permitted to be really alone for the ideal way of courtship still required virginity of the unmarried woman. The recognition of pre-marital intercourse was rarely or even impossibly found and allowed. For detail explanation of relation between different sexes will be discussed in the following sub-chapter.

Since engagement means an agreement to marriage, it sometimes brings the couple some prohibitions that commonly prevail upon the marriage couple.

'And she ought to know that a man who's just engaged doesn't spend his time calling on married women. But I daresay in the set she's lived in they do - they never do anything else.' And, in spite of the cosmopolitan views on which he prided himself, he thanked heaven that he was a New Yorker, and about to ally himself with one of his own kind.

(Chapter IV, page: 21).

However, it was not a custom to declare an engagement explicitly and openly to people. It was enough to hold engagement witnessed by families of both parties with a purpose that their families approved and, for the next step, arranged their wedding ceremony. The society would eventually know, that this man had been engaged to this woman, by its own way.

Having greeted Mrs Lovell Mingott, a large blonde lady in creaking satin, Newland Archer sat down beside his betrothed, and said in a low tone: 'I hope you've told Madame Olenska that we're engaged? I want everybody to know - I want you to let me announce it this evening at the ball.'

Miss Welland's face grew rosy as the dawn, and she looked at him with radiant eyes. 'If You can persuade Mamma,' she said; 'but why should we change what is already settled?'

(Chapter II, page: 12).

In fact, Newland has succeeded convincing May that they shall announce their engagement immediately and openly. His reason is actually due to his willingness to support his betrothed's family. Ellen's presence with her estrangement from her husband at least has aroused unpleasant talk toward

Mingott's family. While in Mrs Mingott's opinion like what she has told Ellen, Newland's reason on announcing his engagement at the Beaufort ball is for Ellen so that she might have two families to stand by her instead of one (ch:xviii,page:110).

With the aim of being familiar to his or her partner's behaviours, a long engagement seemed preferable. It might last a year or even more. They believed that the longer it took the more they would understand each other better. It is interposed by Mrs Welland that families "must give the couple time to know each other a little better" (ch: iv, page: 19).

On the contrary, in view of no worthwhile ideas behind long engagement, Newland strives to urge on May to hasten their wedding day. He thinks they are living in a small town where the people have known each other. Like Mrs Welland's opinion, May does not agree to Newland's proposal.

'If you call it long! Isabel Chivers and Reggie were engaged for two years: Grace and Thorley for nearly a year and a half. Why aren't we very well off as we are?'

(Chapter X, page:53).

Meanwhile, May assumes Newland is not certain of continuing to care for her because of another woman. She has heard about Newland's relationship with a married woman. She considers that a long engagement gives him more time to decide, to marry or to leave her. She does not want to get happiness made out of an unfairness to somebody else. She prefers to give him up for the other woman rather than build a marriage with such foundations. However, May's insistence for a long engagement is much more concerned with her fear of being 'different' to the tradition.

'We can't behave like people in novels, though, can we?

'Why not - why not - why not?'

She looked a little bored by his insistence. She knew very well that they couldn't, but it was troublesome to have to produce a reason. 'I'm not clever enough to argue with you. But that kind of thing is rather - vulgar, isn't it?' she suggested, relieved to have hit on a word that would assuredly extinguish the whole subject.

'Are you so much afraid, then, of being vulgar?'

She was evidently staggered by this. 'Of course I should hate it - so would you,' she rejoined, a trifle irritably.

(Chapter X, page:53-54).

Again, it is obvious that marriage for a woman, after a fashion, was traditionally arranged by her family and woman had been taught to be obedient to the convention that did not seem to give her more chance to express and make her own decisions. People through her parents deemed her have no opportunity even when she was approaching her marriagable age. In addition to marriagable age, Green (1960: 409) records that in 1890, the median age for women at first marriage was twenty-two years; the median age for men was twenty-seven.

It was the traditional maidenly interrogation, and he felt ashamed of himself for finding it singularly childish. No doubt she simply echoed what was said to her; but she was nearing her twenty-second birthday, and he wondered at what age 'nice' women began to speak for themselves.

(Chapter X, page: 53).

'You know, when it comes to the point, your parents have always let you have your way ever since you were a little girl,' he argued; and she had answered, with her clearest look: 'Yes, and that's what makes it so

hard to refuse the very last thing they'll ever ask of me as a little girl.'

(Chapter XI, page: 61).

Fortunately, Catherine Mingott, May's grandmother, agrees to Newland's reason and backs up his idea owing to her own health and age. She is afraid if they delay their wedding her chance to take part and present in her granddaughter's wedding party will disappear. Newland and May finally can hold their marriage, as Newland expects, sooner than their families' previous arrangement.

Here, in engagement, it is not its time-length but its 'quality' that seems more important. Edith herself had a two years engagement before marrying Teddy Wharton. In fact, a long engagement did not guarantee that they had run a compatible marriage. The quality on how they learn each other better will influence their readiness for entering married life. Above all, choosing a mate aptly and then fostering a feeling of togetherness as well as love may provide the couple the strong basis and stability for their marriage.

#### 4.3 Married Life

Before entering married life, a man and a woman have to get through a set of wedding rites. The wedding is an occurrence before which the marriage union can be called off but after which the partners can be legally separated only by divorce, death or annulment (Glorier Encyclopedia of Knowledge, 1991:136). In Western countries, where most of the people are Christians, it is usually church weddings, the weddings that are held in church within its religious rites.



For Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and a large number of Anglicans marriage is considered what is called 'sacrament of marriage', one of seven sacraments. For other Christians marriage is considered a civil union so that the procession is slight simpler than 'sacrament'. Above all, in all Christian communities, the joining of a man and woman in matrimony is regarded as an occasion for the church's blessing, and in many of them it is normal for a minister of the church to perform the ceremony (Collier's Encyclopedia, 1994 :439). The nuptials include the exchanging of rings and marriage vows between the bride and the groom. Their pronouncing a wedding consent presages a contract of matrimony in which lifelong fidelity is the main purpose. It often arouses a solemn feeling that they will face temptations and take responsibilities in their lives of togetherness.

As he dropped into his armchair near the fire his eyes rested on a large photograph of May Welland, which the young girl had given him in the first day of their romance, and which had now displaced all the other portraits on the table. With a new sense of awe he looked at the frank forehead, serious eyes and gay innocent mouth of the young creature whose soul's custodian he was to be. That terrifying product of the social system he belonged to and believed in, the young girl who knew nothing and expected everything, looked back at him like a stranger through May Welland's familiar features; and once more it was borne in on him that marriage was not the safe anchorage he had been taught to think, but voyage on uncharted seas.

(Chapter VI, page:28)

Weddings are commonly marked by celebration, and for the New Yorkers at that time, celebration was to invite all the

relatives and colleagues and to serve them with a very great amount and delicious feast. Horton (1974:201) writes that an ordinary wedding cost at least ten thousand dollars. It was derived from their tendencies to rank people in society based not on the family or breeding but on the amount they could spend in entertainment.

Too bad the breakfast is at old Catherine's, 'the bridegroom could fancy Reggy Chivers saying.' But I'm told that Lovell Mingott insisted on its being cooked by his own chef, so it ought to be good if one can only get at it.'

(Chapter XIX, page:114).

After having a wedding-breakfast, the newlyweds continue to have a wedding travel. Newland has arranged this tour carefully. This is one of his reasons for hastening their marriage. He has imagined to spend their wedding travel visiting many European countries in spring season. It takes for a few months as the leisured class usually got at that time (ch: xvi, page: 94). Under the traditional shower of rice and satin slippers, the weeping parents, the laughing bridesmaids, best man and all relatives that present in their party accompany the newly couple to set off their travel.

"...;his own luggage was already at Mrs Manson Mingott's, where the wedding-breakfast was to take place, and so were the travelling-clothes into which he was to change; and private compartment had been engaged in the train that was to carry the young couple to their unknown destination - concealment of the spot in which the bridal night was to be spent being one of the most sacred taboos of the prehistoric ritual."

(Chapter: XIX, page: 113).

This travel which is later commonly called "honeymoon" evidently presages their initial new lives of being husband and wife, especially for many women at that time who remained hopelessly uninformed on the subject of sexual relationships until after marriage. The bridal night for women was "a ghastly shock which destroyed all possibility of a subsequent happy companionship" (Horton, 1974: 198).

She was frank, poor darling, because she had nothing to conceal, assured because she knew of nothing to be on her guard against; and with no better preparation than this, she was to be plunged overnight into what people evasively called 'the facts of life.'

(Chapter VI, page: 29).

Edith (in Wolff's introduction to "Summer", 1939: xxii-xxiii) confirmed that she did not know where the babies come from until several weeks after her marriage. At the age twenty-two, she once tried to ask her mother about the entire dark mystery of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman. Her mother, however, almost certainly embarrassed herself and did not give her satisfying answer. She even suggested Edith not to be so 'stupid' and then closed the discussion forever.

Horton (1974: 198) further elucidates that in relationship between the sexes, the Genteel tradition demonstrated a complete confusion of purity and prudery. The double standard of morality was tacitly accepted. Young men were expected to "sow a few wild oats", to lead a life of pleasure and gaiety while young before settling down seriously. While young girls were brought up in an atmosphere of domestic constancy and antiseptic innocence.

Newland has passed his youth having a love affair with Mrs Thorley Rushwood. He experiences it without being afraid of risks and he assumes it as a part of adventures that men should have. There was a tacit provision for this adventure; a recognized season for "wild oats"; but they were hoped not to be sown more than once (ch: xxxi, page: 193). Thus, people seem to understand when they know that he has a love affair and they do not cast reflections on it.

When the fact dawned on him it nearly broke his heart, but now it seemed the reeming feature of the case. The affair, in short, had been of the kind that most of the young men of his age had been through, and emerged from with calm consciences and an undisturbed belief in the abysmal distiction between the woman one loved and respected and those one enjoyed - and pitied.

(Chapter XI, page:62).

In a way, the existence of the double standard of morality brought unfairness upon women. The woman that was involved in such a love affair would be entirely despised. It is seen when Newland's mother knows his affair with Mrs Rushwood, all people then share her belief that when 'this things' happens it is 'undoubtedly foolish of the man, but somehow always criminal of the woman' (ch: xi, page:62).

Conversely, when that man had married to another girl while he continued his 'adventure', people would turned their opinion toward him. The society would no longer tolerate his attitude and would call him "bastard" and then laughed against him. No one, however, would laugh at a wife of this man, the deceived wife, for 'protecting a woman's honour'.

Since New York is 'small', most of Newland's relatives have easily sniffed out his relationships with Ellen but they behave as if there was nothing wrong. Even so Newland feels that their attitudes toward him have already changed. He hardly hears Ellen's name mentioned in front of him, especially when May is beside him.

Now, however, as he walked home from Mrs Mingott's he was conscious of a growing distaste for what lay before him. There was nothing unknown or unfamiliar in the path he was presumably to tread; but when he had trodden it before it was as a free man, who was accountable to no one for his actions, and could lend himself with an amused detachment to the game of precautions and prevarications, concealment and compliances, that the part required. This procedure was called 'protecting a woman's honour'; and the best fiction, combined with the after-dinner talk of his elders, had long since initiated him into every detail of its code.

(Chapter: XXXI, page:192).

Green (1960:421) asserts that as an institution, marriage preserves a minimum number of obligation that must be met in a certain way regardless of the emotional tone of husband-wife relationship. Both are expected to present a solid front to the world and go out visiting together; each must strive to preserve the other reputation, which is irretrievably bound to his own. In Genteel tradition it was considered bad taste to invite one mate, instead of both, to certain social functions. Husband and wife, in most circles, were discouraged from forming friendships with members of the opposite sex, except where both are included. Giving these facts, Ellen's attitudes, in which she easily goes out with other men or invites them to call on her or when she has asked M. Reviere

to help her away from her husband, make Newland begin to guess that love-problems might be less simple and less easily classified in the complicated old European communities. Rich and idle and ornamental societies must produce many more such situations (ch: xi, page: 62).

'Mother's very angry.'

'Angry? With whom? About what?'

...  
3

'Newland! Do listen. Your friend Madame Olenska was at Mrs Lemuel Struther's party last night; she went there with the Duke and Mr Beaufort.'

At the last clause of this announcement a senseless anger swelled the young man's breast. To smother it he laughed. 'Well of it? I knew she meant to.'

Janey paled and her eyes began to project. 'You knew she meant to - and you didn't try to stop her? To warn her?'

(Chapter X, page: 55).

Young girls were expected to make themselves beautiful, to marry, to have children and to engage in the complex social world of wealthy New York. They were generally given the idea that part of their responsibility in life was to put up with their incompatible marriage. They were supposed never to admit that there was something wrong with their marriage, and then went on to do their role as good wives and mothers. It also prompted the couple to have less communication with each other.

This situation is described by Dallas, May and Newland's first son, as 'a deaf-and dumb-asylum'. He thinks that his parents "never asked each other anything, never told each other anything; they just sat and watched other and guessed at what was going on underneath" (ch:xxxiv, page:225).

'She hates Ellen,' he thought, and she's trying to overcome the feeling, and to get me to help to overcome it.'

'...'

'You understand, don't you,' she went on, 'why the family have sometimes been annoyed? We all did what we could for her at first; but she never seemed to understand...'

(Chapter XXXI, page:199).

A brawling between husband and wife just showed their failure, something that they had to be avoided at all. In spite of brawling with their husbands, women were expected to "tame the unfortunate animal nature of man" (Horton, 1974: 199). With a conviction as they had been usually taught that their responsibility was to keep their marriage whatever happened for the sake of family's honour, they would do everything such as removing her 'rival', absolutely through unobtrusive way.

May believes that it is Ellen who has been the cause of their unharmonious marriage. With this assumption, she strives to keep Ellen away from Newland. She tells Ellen that she has been pregnant even though she has not been sure at that time. May's pregnancy inevitably makes Ellen recognise her position that she must not disturb May's and Newland's happiness.

They looked at each other for an instant and again fell silent; then, turning his eyes from hers, he asked abruptly: 'Have you told anyone else?'

'Only Mamma and your mother.' She paused, and then added hurriedly, the blood flushing up to her forehead: 'That is - and Ellen. You know I told you we'd had a long talk one afternoon - and how dear she was to me.'

'Ah -' said Archer, his heart stopping.

He felt that his wife was watching him intently. 'Did you mind my telling her first, Newland?'

'Mind? Why should I?' He made a last effort to collect himself. 'But that was a fortnight ago, wasn't it? I thought you said you weren't sure till today.'

Her colour burned deeper, but she held his gaze. 'No; I wasn't sure then - but I told her I was. And you see I was right!' she exclaimed, her blue eyes wet with victory.

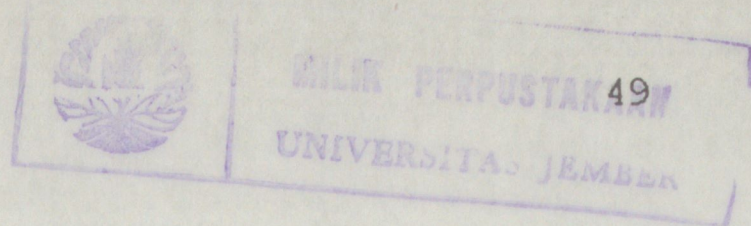
(Chapter XXXIII, page 217).

Being told that May is pregnant brings Newland consciousness to responsible toward his family. It is impossible to leave May in such a condition. He realizes that what May has done is actually based on her willingness to keep their relationship. Moreover, he is going to be a father of the baby that May is expecting. Since that day, Newland strives to behave as a man expected by the society; loyal and ready to do everything that his wife wants.

#### 4.4 Divorce

Divorce is a legal ending of a marriage that involves an idea that the couple, or at least one of both sides, do not want to continue their relationship. Most cultures permit divorce upon some provisions, but a few cultures do not. The early American settlers brought three different views on divorce: The Roman Catholics have a view that marriage was a sacrament and that there could be no divorce; the English people have a view that divorce was a legislative matter; and the Protestant's view explains that marriage and divorce were secular matters to be handled by the civil authorities. Owing





to this view, the Protestant then has permitted divorce on specific grounds, such as adultery, cruelty, or desertion (Grolier Encyclopedia of Knowledge, 1991:175).

Divorce is granted in New York only on the grounds of adultery, so that in New York courts all divorce actions are "caused" by adultery. The law of divorce is based on the assumption that one party is innocent and the other is guilty. If both party admit wanting a divorce, they are guilty of "collusion" and no divorce can be granted (Green, 1960: 419).

Ellen returns to New York in order to forget all the misery on her marriage and to get rest among her relatives. Though she lives in a moderate style with her husband, a Polish nobleman, she feels unhappy. During her life with Count Olenski, Ellen never gets financial problem for he always gives her a great sum of money. However she lacks his love and concern. The Count loves going out and travelling to many countries without taking his wife. Indeed she always feels lonely. She sometimes gets oblivion to her marriage problem by inviting her acquaintances who keen on art. However, it does not last long. She finds another reason why she wants to leave her husband. She is more disappointed and no longer put up with her husband's habit that is 'collecting women'.

' A half paralysed white sneering fellow - rather handsome head, but eyes with a lot of lashes. Well, I'll tell you the sort: when he wasn't with women he was collecting china. Paying any price for both, I understand.

(Chapter: II, page: 10).

It is a conversation among people when they first time meet Ellen since her arrival to New York. They can see that

Ellen has lost 'her looks' and they guess her miserable marriage has changed her.

In the beginning, Ellen has people's sympathy. All her relatives understand that it must be painful for her to face the fact that her husband has committed adultery. Having been explained in the preceding sub-chapter that people hate adultery done by a married man, they easily take a pity to the deceived wife. They strive to comfort and treat Ellen in a good way. Their kindness is so conspicuous, so it prompts and supports her to get divorce, something that never comes on her mind when she lives in Europe. After all, she knows that law of divorce has been legalized in New York.

After a pause Madame Olenska broke out with unexpected vehemence: 'I want to be free; I want to wipe out all the past.'

'I understand that.'

Her face warmed. 'Then you'll help me?'

'First - 'he hesitated - 'perhaps I ought to know a little more.'

She seemed surprised. 'You know about my husband - my life with him?'

He made a sign of assent.

'Well - then - what more is there? In this country are such things tolerated? I'm a Protestant - our church does not forbid divorce in such cases.'

(Chapter XII, page: 71)

To realize her will, Ellen asks her relatives to find a lawyer. Mr Letterblair's firm is the only choice for its good reputation and above all they can ask Newland's favor to handle this case by considering their prospective alliance. Newland understands their reason for choosing him to arrange Ellen's divorce-suit. Actually they also have a hope and

believe that Newland may alter her wish. He receives this case upon their request and for the sake of Ellen.

It was impossible to decide otherwise than he had done: he must see Madame Olenska himself rather than let her secrets be bared to other eyes.

(Chapter XI, page :61).

Eventhough divorce has been legalized, the tradition did not easily allow divorce. Ellen seems to be uninformed about such a thing. They were sympathetic toward the deceived wife but they immediately turned their attitude when they heard that woman arranged a divorce. Divorce for New Yorker at that time was considered an inglorious thing that even in conversation had to be avoided.

'Of course you know,' Archer continued, 'that if your husband chooses to fight the case - as he threatens to -'

'Yes?'

'He can say things - things that might be unpleas - might be disagreeable to you: say them publicly, so that they would get about, and harm you even if -'

'If?'

'I mean: no matter how unfounded they were.'

'....'

'What harm could such accusations, even if he made them publicly, do me here?'

It was on his lips to exclaim: 'My poor child - far more harm than anywhere else!' Instead, he answered, in a voice that sounded in his ears like Mr Letterblair's: 'New York is a very small world compared with the one you've lived in. And it's ruled, in spite of appearances, by a few people with - well, rather old fashioned ideas.'

She said nothing, and he continued: 'Our ideas about marriage and divorce are particularly old-fashioned. Our legislation favours divorce - our social customs don't.

(Chapter XII, page:71).

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(Chapter XII, page:71).

Ellen's intention to get divorce urges people to think that she must be a New Yorker that lost her sense and feeling of New York. People regard her willingness stems from the 'bad influence' of the European Continentals, where she has settled in for many years. They do not know that in Europe divorce is forbidden.

'But European society is not given to divorce: Countess Olenska thought she would be conforming to American ideas in asking for her freedom.'

...

'That is just like the extraordinary things that foreigners invent about us. They think we dine at two o'clock and countenance divorce! That is why it seems to me foolish to entertain them when they come to New York. They accept our hospitality, and then they go home and repeat the same stupid stories.'

(Chapter XVI , page : 92).

In a view that divorce is indecent thing even in cases of extreme incompatibility, divorce was unthinkable. Divorce would discredit family's honor. People extremely hated divorce and that is why a divorcee in the nineteenth century was regarded as just a slight prostitute and was immediately cast out by her friends and relatives.

Forty eight hours later the unbelievable had happened; every one had refused the Mingott's invitation except the Beauforts and old Mr Jackson and his sister. The intended slight was emphasised by the fact that even the Reggie Chiverses, who were of the Mingott clan, were among those inflicting it; and by the uniform wording of the notes, in all of which the writers

'regretted that they were unable to accept, 'without the mitigating plea of a 'previous engagement' that ordinary prescribed.

(Chapter VI, page 31).

Being provided by high standard of etiquette and moral, they were accustomed to disown their spots of life. They preferred remaining all the unpleasant thing in their lives and pretending there was nothing wrong with their lives.

'...Does no one to know the truth here, Mr Archer? The real loneliness is living among all these kind people who only ask one to pretend!' She lifted her hands to her face, and he saw her thin shoulders shaken by a sob.

(Chapter IX, page:50).

Moreover in marriage life, women had to withstand against the unhappy marriage for they were always taught to consider it as one of their responsibility. It is like what May's comment toward Ellen that whatever happens Ellen's duty is with Count Olenski (ch: xxviii, page :174).

At last, by considering her relatives' interest and hope, Ellen gives up her effort to get divorced from her husband but she prefers to live apart from him and establish herself in Paris. It may be that the Victorian, with all this "repression" had the better of the argument. Their marriage and family were supported by a set of conventions held by the community, family and religious exations (Green,1960:422).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

*The Age of Innocence* is one of literary works that applies the two purposes of literature: to entertain and to give information. Edith Wharton presents them aptly. Her "perfect language" and detail depiction based on her thorough research on the atmosphere of American society in the 1870s made it awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1921.

Wharton experienced a miserable marriage and got divorced from her husband in 1913. Even though divorce has been legalized in America for many years according to Protestant's view, she found the prominent families of New York where she stemmed from would never receive it. Divorce in the nineteenth century was considered "shocking" and inglorious. High standard of etiquette, moral and manners adopted from the formalities of monarchy and nobility of British Victorianism colored many aspects of the society, including its marriage institution. This tradition is then called "the Genteel Tradition". It led the American into the world of hypocrisy.

Wharton's connubial affairs and her interest in writing about Americans inspired her to have reflection on Americans' attitudes toward marriage institution in the 1870s. Through her three major characters in this novel, she depicts marriage institution that is extremely strict and full of pretense. It may be an exaggerated version that 'marriage is one long sacrifice' to illuminate how the Americans at that time were so afraid of being a divorcee, especially for the women. She

also describes that there was a double standard of morality in relation between a man and a woman. It gave the young men chances 'to sow their wild oats', while the young women were not conversant with that subject. Besides, woman's passivity in choosing her mate, long engagement, lacking communication between husband and wife, maintaining incompatible marriage for the sake of family's honor and social preference are the description that Wharton wants to reveal in this novel.

On the other hand, she also gives a wise opinion not to judge that the people of the society feel shackled within those rules and norms. May Welland, for instance, dies with a conviction that she lives in a good place, full of love and harmonious households; and whatever happens, her husband will continue to take care their children with the same principles and prejudices which have molded their lives. Meanwhile, Newland who formerly feels repressed by such customs eventually looks his old days back with relief. He has been what is called a faithful husband, and honestly mourns his wife's death. Their togetherness through the years has shown him that it does not matter if marriage is a dull duty as long as it keeps the dignity of a duty.

Even though marriage is ultimately based on personal<sup>x</sup> interest, there are still many prohibitions from society. However, it depends on the way of individual to look at the social convention; how the individual balance his own interest and his social interest, like what Wharton says that "everything was equally easy - or equally painful, as one chose to put it".

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