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**THE REASONS OF THE DILEMMA BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL DESIRES AND
SOCIAL PRIORITIES IN EDITH WHARTON'S NOVELS**

Master Thesis

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**EDITH WHARTON'IN ROMANLARINDA BİREYSEL İSTEKLER VE
TOPLUMSAL ÖNCELİKLER ARASINDAKİ İKİLEMİN NEDENLERİ**

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

Bu tez ... / ... / tarihinde aşağıdaki jüri tarafından oy birliği / oy çokluğu ile kabul edilmiştir.

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Ahmet AKSIN
Enstitü Müdürü

– **To My Dear Son
and Husband** –

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ABSTRACT

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Edith Wharton's **The Age of Innocence** (1920) and **The House of Mirth** (1905) are discussed in this study as they depict the Gilded Age that emerged during the years after the Civil War (from 1870s to 1900) with its most distinctive aspects. Although Wharton spent most of her life out of America, in her novels she illustrates a New York society in which the wealthy set is dominant, social conventions are regarded as priorities and even, when necessary, the individuals are sacrificed for these conventions. The conventions, social life, men - women relationships, prejudices and morals of the time are presented in detail. Wharton depicts a society dominated by money and, people in that society are accepted or denounced according to their wealth. Unlike these two novels, in **Ethan Frome** (1911), an impoverished family and the members' lives in a small village are penned.

Wharton herself lived a distressing life. Raised to be an ideal Victorian girl, she encountered problems in her family and marriage. She often had difficulties to adopt the suffocating conventions of her social circle and these led her into personal dilemmas.

Her family preferred her to get married, but she wanted to become a writer. In her marriage, her husband's mental instability and his relationship with a young woman which led to their divorce became a problematic period for Wharton. These experiences of the writer are also reflected in the characters she depicts: in **The Age of Innocence** and **The House of Mirth**, the effect of social conventions on individuals is considerably felt. In **The House of Mirth**, a woman who is raised to marry, just like Wharton, is portrayed. In **Ethan Frome**, Zeena is a sickly woman and she leads her husband to financial and spiritual problems. The common point of **The Age of Innocence** and **Ethan Frome** is that main male characters love other women. Much as they live in distinct societies and conditions, characters share a common feature: their social priorities overwhelm what they want to do and lead them to dilemma. As they cannot set a balance between their priorities and the social environment they live in, they are stuck in difficult positions as a result of which they live unhappy lives. These positions are presented along with the reasons leading the characters to these points. In addition, how their choices affect their lives is highlighted. Each character is influenced by this process in different ways:

At the beginning of **The Age of Innocence**, Newland Archer is about to marry May Welland who is suitable for the society with all her features, but Archer falls in love with Countess Ellen Olenska, who is his wife's cousin just returning from Europe. He will either marry May and maintain his social position or go to distant places with the Countess and be excluded from the society he lives in. Newland prefers to marry May and he keeps his love for the Countess for long years in his heart. Here we understand that Archer has a dilemma due to his fear of losing his social status. In **The House of Mirth**, Lily Bart is a character who is in the quest for a wealthy spouse so as to gain status in the society. On the other hand, she loves Selden who is a lawyer from the middle class. As Selden cannot provide her with the prosperous life she desired, she keeps herself away from him. At the end of the novel, she is not able to reach either of her desires – wealth and Selden – and even if not intentionally, she commits suicide and dies. In **Ethan Frome**, Ethan leads a life with his hypochondriac wife Zeena who wears him away both financially and spiritually. One day, a young and beautiful girl named Mattie who is his wife's cousin settles the farm in order to take care of his wife and household. Ethan falls in love with Mattie and he also learns that his love is reciprocal.

However, when jealous Zeena is aware of their love, and wants to send Mattie from the house, the lovers who could not tolerate breaking up resolve to commit suicide. At the last moment, Ethan thinks that his wife could not overcome the hard conditions under which they live alone, because their saw-mill and farm are mortgaged. They also have no money sufficient enough to get by. Therefore, Ethan avoids the suicide and he and Mattie are involved in the accident disabling them both and leaving them dependent on Zeena.

Another reason leading the characters to dilemma is the Victorian morality. In **The Age of Innocence**, May, being aware of the love between Ellen and her husband, tells Ellen that she is pregnant in order to keep her away from her husband and Ellen leaves the city at the end. Learning he is going to have a child, Archer does not leave May and she regains her husband even if she leaves him in despair. In **The House of Mirth**, Bertha Dorset causes Lily to be ostracized from the wealthy set and her family circle, gossiping about her flirtation with her husband. Afterwards, in order not to be called as mistress, Lily avoids herself making debut into the wealthy group which she desires most and begins to lead a life in poverty. In **Ethan Frome**, Ethan's thinking of his wife even on the verge of death could be also dealt in ethical points.

Key Words : Wharton, Dilemma, Personal Desires, Social Priorities

ÖZET

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

EDITH WHARTON'IN ROMANLARINDA BİREYSEL İSTEKLER VE TOPLUMSAL ÖNCELİKLER ARASINDAKİ İKİLEMİN NEDENLERİ

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Edith Wharton'ın **Masumiyet Çağı (The Age of Innocence)** (1920) ve **Keyif Evi (The House of Mirth)** (1905) romanları İç Savaş sonrası ortaya çıkan Yıldızlı Çağı (1870'lerden 1900'e kadar) en belirgin yönleriyle anlattığı için bu çalışmada irdelenmiştir. Yaşamının büyük bölümünü Amerika dışında geçirmesine karşın, Wharton romanlarında, zengin sınıfın üstün olduğu, toplumsal kuralların öncelik olarak görüldüğü ve hatta bireylerin gerektiğinde bu kurallar için feda edilebildiği bir New York toplumunu betimlemektedir. Dönemin gelenekleri, toplumsal yaşamı, kadın - erkek ilişkileri, önyargıları ve idealleri ayrıntılı olarak sunulmaktadır. Wharton paranın egemen olduğu ve insanların varlıklarına göre kabul gördüğü veya kınandığı bir toplumu anlatmaktadır. Bu iki romanın aksine, **Ethan Frome**'da (1911) fakir bir aile ve onların küçük bir kasabada geçirdikleri yaşamları ele alınmaktadır.

Wharton'ın kendisi de sıkıntılı bir yaşam yaşamıştır. İdeal bir Viktoryan kızı olarak yetiştirilen Wharton, ailesinde ve evliliğinde problemlerle karşılaşmıştır. Çoğu zaman içinde yaşadığı toplumsal çevrenin boğucu kurallarına uyum sağlamakta zorluk çekmiş ve ikilemlere sürüklenmiştir. Ailesi evlenmesini istemiş, fakat o yazar olmayı tercih etmiştir. Kocasının psikolojik rahatsızlıkları ve genç bir bayanla ilişkisi, boşanmalarına ve Wharton'ın sıkıntılı bir dönem geçirmesine yol açmıştır. Yazarın bu deneyimleri betimlediği karakterlere de yansımıştır: **Masumiyet Çağı** ve **Keyif Evi**'nde toplumsal kuralların bireyler üzerindeki etkisi oldukça fazla hissedilmektedir. **Keyif Evi**'nde ise tıpkı kendisi gibi evlenmek için yetiştirilmiş bir bayanın portresi çizilmektedir. **Ethan Frome**'da, Zeena hastalıklı bir bayandır ve kocasını maddi ve manevi sorunlara sürüklemektedir. **Masumiyet Çağı** ve **Ethan Frome**'un ortak bir diğer noktası ana erkek karakterlerin başka kadınlara âşık olmalarıdır.

Farklı toplumlarda ve farklı koşullarda yaşamalarına karşın, karakterler ortak bir özelliğe sahiptirler: onların toplumsal öncelikleri yapmak istediklerinin önüne geçmekte ve onları bir ikileme sürüklemektedir. Öncelikleri ile yaşadıkları toplumsal çevre arasında denge kuramadıkları için, mutsuz yaşamlar sürmelerinin nedeni olan ikilemlerde sıkışıp kalırlar. Bu ikilemler, onları yol ayrımına getiren nedenler ile birlikte verilmektedir. Ayrıca, seçimlerinin yaşamlarını nasıl etkilediği üzerinde de durulmaktadır. Her karakter bu süreçten farklı biçimlerde etkilenir:

Masumiyet Çağı'nın başında, Newland Archer tüm özellikleriyle topluma uygun olan May Welland ile evlenmek üzeredir, ama Archer eşinin Avrupa'dan yeni dönen kuzeni Kontes Ellen Olenska'ya âşık olur. Ya May ile evlenip toplumsal konumunu koruyacak ya da kontesle birlikte uzaklara gidip yaşadığı toplumdan dışlanacaktır. Newland, May ile evliliği tercih eder ve kontese olan sevgisini uzun yıllar boyunca içinde taşır. **Keyif Evi**'nde Lily Bart toplumda statü sahibi olmak amacıyla zengin bir eş arayışı içinde olan bir karakterdir. Diğer yandan, orta halli bir avukat olan Selden'ı sevmektedir. Selden ona istediği zengin yaşamı sunamayacağı için, kendini Selden'dan uzak tutar. Yapıtın sonunda, her iki isteğine de – zenginlik ve Selden – ulaşamaz ve kasıtlı olmasa da kendi ölümüne neden olur. **Ethan Frome**'da, Ethan kendisini hem maddi hem de tinsel yönden yıpratın hastalık hastası eşi Zeena ile bir yaşam sürmektedir. Bir gün, eşinin kuzeni olan Mattie adında genç ve güzel bir kız, eşi ve işlerle ilgilenmek üzere çiftliğe alınır. Ethan, Mattie'ye âşık olur ve aşkının da

karşılıklı olduğunu öğrenir. Ne var ki, kıskanç Zeena aşklarını fark eder ve Mattie'yi evden göndermek ister. Aynı kalmaya dayanamayacak olan âşıklar intihar etmeye karar verirler. Son anda Ethan karısının yaşadıkları zor koşulların üstesinden tek başına gelemeyeceğini düşünür, çünkü değirmenleri ve çiftlikleri ipoteklidir. Aynı zamanda geçinmelerine yetecek kadar paraları da yoktur. Bu nedenle, Ethan intihardan vazgeçer ve her ikisini de sakat ve Zeena'ya muhtaç bırakan kazayı yaparlar.

Karakterleri ikileme sürükleyen diğer bir neden ise Viktoryan ahlak sistemidir. **Masumiyet Çağı**'nda Ellen ile kocasının arasındaki aşkı fark eden May, onu kocasından uzak tutmak için, Ellen'a hamile olduğunu söyler ve Ellen sonunda şehri terk eder. Çocuğu olacağını öğrenen Archer, May'i terk etmez ve May, kocasını üzüntü içinde bırakmasına rağmen, onu geri kazanır. **Keyif Evi**'nde Bertha Dorset, kocasıyla flört ettiği dedikosunu çıkararak Lily'nin zengin sınıftan ve aile çevresinden dışlanmasına neden olur. Daha sonra, metres olarak adlandırılmamak için, Lily üyesi olmayı çok istediği zengin sınıftan uzak durur ve fakir bir yaşam sürmeye başlar. **Ethan Frome**'da, Ethan'ın ölümün eşliğinde bile karısını düşünmesi ahlaki açıdan da ele alınabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Wharton, İkilem, Kişisel İstekler, Toplumsal Öncelikler

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Being one of the most striking historical timelines, the Industrial Revolution (from the late 18th to the early 19th century) began with the invention of steam engine by James Watt in 1763 and spread to Europe and the United States only after 1880s. It was a time which witnessed many developments. To begin with, improvements in coal and steel industry, invention of steam engines and the developments in electricity and chemistry technologies led to unprecedented industrial branches to be established. Moreover, domestic production began to lose its importance and machines replaced the simple hand tools. Factories emerged and labor force began to lose its importance and it got cheaper. Raw materials and markets for the factories were secured by overseas colonies. They brought about the increase of goods in quantity and provided economy in the number of workers. They entailed the building of railroads because coal - the staple of both energy and raw materials - was to be moved from pits to collieries. Furthermore, railroads facilitated the transport of the goods to cities or ports and when they were built, road transport gained speed and efficiency. Having been effective in all the fields of life, railroads helped to found socially and economically rich states. Other breakthroughs in transport were the construction of vessels made up of steel and fans that functioned with steam power. One of the advantages of these vessels was that the goods produced could be moved to Europe easily. The opening of Suez Channel (1869) contributed to the development of sea trade. Depending on all, the advance in trade also contributed to the Industrial Revolution (translated into English from Doğanay, Açıkşes, pp.15-16).

After the 1870s, the Revolution changed its essence a bit. Scientific inventions were supported by the governments and they were applied in manufacture. With the cooperation of natural sources and science, large and well-to-do firms began to churn out. In addition, there were differences in energy sources. The advance in electric industry and appearance of oil and chemical elements (as well as coal and iron) left their seal on the period. Many innovations, which we still use today, came into being such as internal combustion engine, telephone, microphone, wireless, gramophone, bulb, tires and bicycles. Communicative advances gained importance. Wireless telegraphy by radio-waves became one of the prominent means of communication. These advances helped newspapers to be read by masses, which had a political effect. Public opinion

was influenced by the media and this led to a new political arena. People could defend their opinions via media.

These changes affected the living and working conditions of people from all stages of the society. Factories needed a labor mass in order to process the raw materials coming from colonies. Due to the increase in the need for cheap workers in cities, a considerable immigration from villages to cities began. In addition, feudality was dissolving and peasants saw more opportunity in cities than in villages. As a result, population of the cities grew substantially. However, this increase in the population cannot be attributed only to the immigration. Through the advances in medicine, the death rate reduced and this also gave rise to the population boom. This growth brought about many disadvantages for the immigrants. They lived in suburban areas where the slums were dominant. As they came from smaller regions, they had difficulty in adjusting themselves to the city life. They had come for better opportunities, but instead they encountered a destitute life style. They were living in complete squalor. These people were paid low wages although they worked for long hours and became slaves of labor. The sanitation of the working places was unpleasant and precarious. Women and children took part in manufacture as they were regarded as the cheaper labor force. Consequently, poverty and guilt in cities increased considerably. In poorer parts of the cities, prostitution was increasing at a high pace and many poor and unemployed women worked as prostitutes in order to survive.

The 19th century can be called as the **Victorian Age** (1832-1901). As a term, “Victorian” is associated with pejorative, negative and condemning meanings (translated into English from Urgan, 947). Although the age is prominent in Britain, the political, social and economic effects of the age were felt almost all over the world. While the poor – especially the working class - was experiencing the drawbacks, the upper and the *middle class*, which emerged and became rich only when the mechanization had taken part in city life, enjoyed the wealth. It was only in the hands of these two classes and they governed everything. Especially the middle class (bourgeoisie) looked down on the poor, though they were newly rich. Everything they did was intended to show off. For example, in houses, they tried to show their prosperity through their interior decoration by the most expensive but tasteless furniture. They bought large houses, had servants and gave lavish parties. Wealth was

the prime factor and it was a means of respect. Their main aim in life was to earn money and they did wicked things to realize it. They did not have a sense of art and beauty but went to operas, read novels and visited art galleries. Middle class was characterized by bigotry, a false respectability and prudery.

Victorian period was a time of contradictions in terms of social and moral values. They were satisfied foolishly with the order and richness of their country and their own personalities. They seemed to defend the strictest morality but exposed many immoral behaviors. People seemed respectful in order to cover their hypocritical behaviors. They were supposedly in compliance with the social conventions because social conventions were vital to survive in the social class one belonged. They were the pillars of a person's family life, status and relations in the society. If people did anything offending the conventions, they would be ostracized from the social circle. Another contradiction was about sexuality. People were sexually repressed; they, especially the women showed artificial shyness in sexual matters, were slaves of sexual taboos and made loveless marriages. Men too, were the victims of these stiffening norms. For both women and men were unhappy in their domestic lives, they looked for happiness outside and most of them had love affairs. They lived them secretly and pretended to be chaste.

The age was one of the most conservative periods in the world history. In such an atmosphere, conservative ideas of the age were influential especially on women's roles. They did not have rights to vote. They were not allowed to attain careers like law, medicine or art. When compared with women, men had many privileges. Under the influence of the Bible, they thought that they should have had control on women's lives. Since women were portrayed as submissive creatures in the Bible, they had to obey the wishes of the patriarchal desires. Men were sent to schools and then to colleges. If they wanted, they had right to attend a university. On the contrary, a girl was usually educated at home by a governess. Women were raised to exhibit good manners, respect social rituals and please men. Although men were restricted to some extent (not allowed to drinking or gambling), women were in an inferior position when compared with them. They were even said to have less intelligence than them. Men were the superior side at home. They were regarded as the owners of their wives therefore women were seen as commodities of men. While men were independent, women were granted

passive roles both in the family and society. They were only responsible for the comfort of the house and nourishment of the children. All the responsibility was on women's shoulders; if their husbands or sons went to find happiness outside, they were the ones to blame. In addition, women were held responsible for taking care of the sick persons at home.

The acceptable career for a woman was marriage, but marriage was not a question of choice. They married as a duty. Sometimes they married in order to find a spouse to depend on financially, because they had no property rights. A rich husband was regarded as a ladder to social status as women were dependent on their husbands in all aspects. Even not wanting to get married was a disgrace for both women and their families. In addition, women's bodies were regarded as a sacred entity. They were the symbols of cleanliness and purity. They represented virtue and innocence. Therefore, sex only for pleasure was not acceptable in their lives. Sex was only permissible for childbirth. Even women were not taught about sex before marriage. Domesticity and motherhood were the means for emotional satisfaction. These worked as a confirmation of the women's identities. Even if women were in unhappy marriages, they had to tolerate the hard conditions. As the married couple was seen as a whole entity, divorce was not reasonable even in case of adultery. Divorce was regarded as the violation of the moral standards of the Victorian decorum. Men had right to keep mistresses only if it was not explicit. It should not be known by the public. In fact, it did not pose a problem for men if it was not learned. If a woman committed adultery and it was known by the public, she was ostracized from the society. Here it is understood that women in the Victorian era lived under very strict rules imposed on them. Satisfaction of social, economic, intellectual and emotional level was disregarded. In short, it was a time of double standards for men and women (we can call it sexual discrimination). In Wharton's selected novels here, we see the same structural characteristics of the Victorian Age. In **The Age of Innocence**, we see the influence of social conventions on people and values of the wealthy set. In **The House of Mirth**, Wharton displays the violation of moral standards in the characterization of Lily Bart, who gambles and smokes in public. In **Ethan Frome**, adultery, which is not an acceptable manner in the Victorian period, is dealt with, but Ethan cannot live his love with Mattie in public.

In religion, people maintained their religious bigotry without questioning anything. When Charles Darwin wrote **The Origins of the Species** (1859), he emphasized the importance of science and stated that people did not need God's existence to impose meaning to the universe and people began to question religious ideas. Moreover, in science and philosophy, the existing values were destroyed. Nietzsche's nihilism declared that human beings had right to object to the social values and they could change them. Another figure to change the social viewpoint was Sigmund Freud. He, with his psychoanalysis theory, argued that unconscious was the primary factor in determining a person's behaviors. The church regarded these arguments as threats to the established religious dogmas. There were changes in politics, too. When democracy spread, it became easier for working class to make use of educational institutes. Differences among religious beliefs began to be regarded as reasonable and tolerable. It was soon obvious that social reforms were urgently needed. They began with bettering the conditions of working class; in 1832 *Reform Bill* was issued but it was not successful. Then, in 1867 *Second Reform Bill* was issued and with *Trade Union Act* in 1871, working class obtained rights to found labor unions. All these ideas caused reactions from the middle and upper class Victorians.

The condition of women did not remain the same for long years. In 1792, British writer Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) wrote **A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects**, and started the feminist movement against the refusal of women's educational rights. She had declared that men and women were equal in all the circles of life. Then, Margaret Fuller, who was a significant gender theorist and thinker in America, began to organize discussions ranging from mythology to women's rights among the women in 1839. She aimed at urging women to be self-respectful, self-sufficient and independent. In addition, her goal was to train them since there were not educational rights for women. In 1845, she wrote her book **Woman in the Nineteenth Century**, which dealt with the women's position in the social, political, intellectual and sexual aspects. The book also argued that there was an inequality between genders which should be altered. It caused the public to understand that women were also individuals and that the restrictions imposed on them should be removed. Her book established the ground for the women's rights movement which was originally started by Seneca Falls Convention in 1848: inspired

by her studies, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who engaged in her discussions tried to accomplish some social and political rights for women in the United States. Under their leadership, *National Woman Suffrage Association* (NWSA) was set up and then by Lucy Stone and Thomas Wentworth Higginson established *American Woman Suffrage Association* (AWSA). These two associations tried to get right to vote for women and opposed to the 15th Amendment, which denied the women of voting. In 1890, these continued to function under the name NAWSA.

The socio-cultural, political and intellectual circumstances were not different in the United States in the late 19th century. It was going through a period of wealth, development and progress. "... modern America was in place: large-scale industry and advanced technology, densely inhabited urban areas, concentrations of capital in banks, businesses, and corporations, nation-wide systems of transportation and print communication, and a heterogeneous population of diverse races, classes, and ethnic groups."¹ Soon, America surpassed its European rivals, becoming the first power all over the world. First, its consciousness of nationalism and then its rapidness to accept new industry and technologies, its growing population, coming mostly from other parts of the world, its vast and fertile soil, full of the promise of riches and its fast progress in communication and transportation all helped America improve.

This growth in American industry, notably in the North, is the result of the Civil War. In the middle of the 19th century, the economy headed for the industry, and slavery was intended to be abolished in the Northern states of America since slavery was regarded as a national hazard. On the contrary, there was an economy dominated by agriculture on large farms in the South and the needed labor force was provided by the black slaves who were brought from Africa. Slavery was the backbone of the economy. Therefore, the Southern states were anxious in that if slavery was abolished, it would be a great threat to their life style in every field. Consequently, the nation developed into two divergent societies: the North was in favor of abolitionism and slavery was a must for the South. That contradiction turned into a great war lasting four years (1861-1865), because when abolitionist Abraham Lincoln was elected President (1860), seven southern states (South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Texas, Georgia and

¹ Paul Lauter, ed. **The Heath Anthology of American Literature**, Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994, p.3.

Louisiana) seceded from the United States. Those states constituted a new government in the name of *the Confederate States of America* under the leadership of Jefferson Davis. Soon, four states (Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina and Tennessee) joined them and they formed the *Confederacy Side* in the war. The rest of the country, notably the northeast, established the *Union Side*. However, the North was advantageous because industry was the leading force in the North. Most of the factories which produce war materials were there. The region was also well-equipped with railroads. On the other hand, although the South produced basic agrarian products, they did not have the necessary infrastructure to defend their region. As a result, in 1863, in the War of Gettysburg, the North had an indisputable victory over the South. The war ended with the triumph of the North in 1865, with the military force of the North besieging the South. After the war, Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery issuing “Emancipation Proclamation” (1865) and offered unsecured debts so as to reconstruct the South instead of exploiting it.

The Civil War could be seen as a turning point in American history. Before the war, the North and the South were equal in terms of wealth, but during the years following the war, the South was devastated economically. The war left the South in poverty. At the end of the war, the physical structure of the South was overturned, for most of the war took place there and it devastated the region. Many states were turned into ruins, railroad lines were destroyed and bridges were burnt. When the crops were destroyed, the region lost most of its agrarian income. The South had to rebuild its economy because slavery was abolished by the 13th Amendment (1865). Former slaves were also protected by the 14th Amendment (1866) which gave them the right for citizenship and with the 15th Amendment (1870), racial discrimination was banned in terms of voting.

While the South could not recover the economic effects of the war until the 20th century, the conditions in the North were the opposite. Besides gaining political control, the economy of the North also thrived after the war. The years from the Civil War to the World War I led to the development of the North. This period was called **The Gilded Age** (1878-1889), “the era of industrialization from the early 1860s to the turn of the

century in which a few wealthy individuals gained tremendous power and influence.”² It could be said that America was transformed from an agrarian society to a urban industrialized country. The industry was mainly based on factories, railroads and coal mining. There was also mechanization in industry. With that mechanization, small businesses found ways to thrive to combat in that industrial arena. The industry was in the hands of some industrialists and financiers like Corneillus Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carneige who were called ‘Robber Barons’. They were called “robbers” since they took part in some unlawful and immoral business affairs. They also made the people work in terrible conditions. Most of the workers picked up diseases such as cholera or typhus due to the unhealthy workplaces and some of them lost their fingers while working at a machine. Their life was secondary, even the last thing to these employers. The goal of the employers was to amass money. They were not interested in the conditions the workers were in. They disguised these manners by engaging in philanthropic activities like establishing social institutes, building schools, hospitals or prisons. However, although this pejorative nickname was given to them, it cannot be denied that they contributed to the revival of American economy.

America became a leading country in technology, too. There were a number of inventions including George Westinghouse’s air brakes for trains, Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone, Thomas A. Edison’s electrical tools. Moreover, oil succeeded the kerosene and John D. Rockefeller established Standard Oil Company in order to reinforce the industrial enterprises. The nation also faced a striking development in agriculture again with the aid of mechanization. To sum up, the Gilded Age was a time in which the United States got over the hardships caused by the Civil War and soon stood up taking its place among the distinguished countries of the world.

The Gilded Age in America was a time of splendor, opulence and conspicuous consumption. It was also the time which showed extravagant wealth and excess of America’s upper-class. A new middle class called bourgeois emerged like in Europe. The country was getting richer and so were the upper and the middle class people. Soon, wealth became a means for people to be accepted by the upper-class. Therefore, a class distinction came into being. Bourgeoisie put an end the social and political power of

² Sonia G. Benson, **Development of the Industrial U.S., Biographies**, Detroit:UXL, 2006, p.x.

aristocracy and got hold of the economic power. They made money in railroads, stock market or banking. This class included the newly-rich people who spent large amounts of money as people did in the Victorian Europe. The people who had just had money celebrated their wealth by showy displays. They built magnificent houses, held distinguished balls and spent their time mostly in leisure activities. These ‘nouveaux riches’ were belittled by indigenous rich people since they were only interested in showing off their wealth, which resulted in the appearance of a corrupted society in gluttony, fraud, dishonest businesses and politics depending on scandals. As Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner who gave the era its name with their book **The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today** (1873) told that the country was shining with wealth and development when looked from outside, but under the surface, there was a significant corruption.

Literature also went through changes in the years following the Civil War. Before it, literature in America was under the influence of Romanticism in which works of art should represent the spiritual not the physical appearance. They had elegant and refined forms. On the other hand, the literature was still showing the impacts of European literature. Their settings, forms of verses and main themes were chosen from Europe. Of course, there were American themes like democracy, slavery, individualism, religion or nature. During that time, the influential figures in literature were James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Along with the end of the Civil War, the term *Genteel Tradition* was coined in 1911 by George Santayana, the American critic. It described the values, mannerisms, ethics of the upper and middle classes of the settlers in the United States. The tradition is related to what in England was described as the Victorian tradition. The writers like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes and John Greenleaf Whittier turned their attention to human manners and social experiences. So, although the effects of romanticism continued to be felt, there was a gradual rise of realism. The writers tried to portray life on more realistic standards. “Realism was the response of writers to the sweeping-economy, social, and political changes of post-war life; to the recognized need to capture, report and interpret the world of the developing cities and the declining rural regions.”³ While depicting the actual life, they mingled realism with

³ Paul Lauter, *Ibid*, p.11.

naturalist aspects in the late 19th century. Among the most important writers of the age, there were Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sarah Orne Jewett, William Dean Howells, Edward Bellamy, Stephen Crane, Henry James, Frank Norris, Jack London, Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, Ellen Glasgow, Willa Cather and Kate Chopin. Harriet Beecher Stowe deserves to be especially mentioned because she was criticized when she wrote **Uncle Tom's Cabin** (1852). It was regarded as the book which started the Civil War because it contributed to the activities in the North against the slavery in the Southern states. Mark Twain is another prominent writer. His works, notably **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** (1884), represent all-American aspects.

Almost all the writers and intellectuals criticized the conflicting values and capitalist thought of the 19th century both in England and the United States. In general, they tried to portray the Victorian Age with its improvements and values. They drew attention to the inequality between the poor and the rich and emphasized the fact that the societies were getting corrupted. Matthew Arnold blamed the middle class as being narrow-minded and "philistine" because they did not appreciate art and beauty in addition they were deprived of culture. He criticized the antagonism against literary taste, that is to say, the taste for beauty. John Ruskin tried to emphasize the importance of art and literature by his works. Thomas Carlyle, D.H. Lawrence, Charles Dickens and George Meredith also criticized the bourgeoisie ruthlessly and drew attention to the gaps and inequalities among the social classes. "Muckraking Literature" in America had been emerging since 1879, attacking on corruption in politics and business. In the writings of Edward Bellamy, Rebecca Harding Davis, Thorstein Veblen, Henry Demarest Lloyd and Ignatius Donnelly and many more, we can see indignant criticism against the negative effects of capitalism, industrialism and political conflict. They tested the American present against the dangers of the future. The same tone of criticism can be seen in such novelists as Sinclair, Crane, Dreiser and Norris. They focused on naturalist elements in their works and depicted helpless characters before the social and economic circumstances. The lives of their characters are controlled by the environment and they illustrated the ugly portion of life exemplified like prostitution. They did not describe a Victorian paradise. When William Dean Howells wrote **A Modern Instance** (1882), his choice of the theme of divorce attracted reproach. It was a theme attacking the Victorian morals, and a subject that was not talked about or regarded as convenient.

Apart from these, some were the writers of *local color literature* which depicts a particular region along with every minutest detail. Sarah Orne Jewett was the leading figure of the genre. Under her influence, Willa Cather, Ellen Glasgow and Kate Chopin set their books in countries, villages or towns they knew best and meanwhile argued the position of women.

In the Victorian Age, although books by women writers often put the emphasis on submissive women characters, confined in their houses under the orders of the males, there were writers like Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin and Willa Cather who were writing about self-assertive and self-actualizing women. Their characters were now not the prisoners of the social conventions, attacking the established moral and sexual roles for women. Louisa May Alcott dealt with the conventional subjects like marriage. In her works, ideals of a marriage predominate on the other hand, she wrote about self expression and women's rights, too. Although Henry James spent most of his life abroad, in the centre of his works was America; he wrote about the cultural differences between the European and American people. He displayed similarities in his choice of themes with Edith Wharton. Like him, Wharton focuses on the profound similarities and differences between Europeans and Americans depending on social values and self-esteem. In general, they had sensitive characters that cause them to feel stuck among the other people or the forces of the society. Europe in her novels, like those of James is more cultured, freer, more concerned with art and more aware of the social phenomena than America. She spent most of her life in Paris, but she wrote about the upper-class society in New York. James appreciated her writing style and over time he became her literary advisor. He helps us understand the transition of America from the 19th to the 20th century. He explored America in the new age of “the woman question”. At that time, the concept of “... the New Woman originated as a literary phrase popularized by Henry James.”⁴ He is one of the writers of his time who refuses the conventional roles attached to women and he condemns the restrictions imposed on them. He tries to draw a woman type who does not accept the adherence to social conventions and who wants to be free. His women are mostly intellectual and self-reliant and they do not have domestic responsibilities. He attacks the patriarchal idea that women are the

⁴ Rula B. Quawas, “I give myself where I choose” : The Irrepressible Power of the Drive for Authenticity and Selfhood in Four Selected Stories of Kate Chopin”, in *JAST*, İzmir: Ege University Printing House, 2005, p.3

commodities of men and he defies the traditional distinctions between males and females. In **The Portrait of a Lady**, for example he introduced Isabel Archer going between the needs of her individual self and the claims of society. Edith Wharton is also similar to James at this point, too. She portrayed characters hesitating between their needs and the social customs around them. Like Henry James, she employed “international theme”.

Edith Wharton was born into the society dominated by wealth and conventions in New York. Her works are mostly the portrayal of the genteel and wealthy society of New York during the Gilded Age with vivid settings. Her family was among the upper class of the city. She grew up in such a society that she could observe the whole social life at a close range. “She knew their history and their origins, their prejudices and ideals, the source of their money and how they spent their summers”⁵. The social conditions under which she lived enabled her to bring that high society into literature “in all its concreteness and authenticity but also made it uniquely possible for her to perceive the complex and subtle interplay between our personal destinies and the destiny foredained by our particular social situation.”⁶ She not only mirrored the society with all its aspects but also explored the individual trapped within that society.

When Wharton’s family could not maintain the life style they were used to, had to move to Europe in 1866, for the social standards there were cheaper. Edith, between the ages of four and ten, spent her life in Germany, Florence, Paris and Spain. Therefore, she was shaped by European culture and when she returned, she felt as an exile in her own country. Being one of the most leading writers in America, Wharton could be said to have begun her literary career by making up stories when she could not even read at the age of five. She told stories about the people around her family circle by just looking at a book. This game-like creativity showed itself in her works later. Her tendency to literature was not limited only to those stories. When she was seven, she became interested in poetry; except her deaf grandmother nobody in the family listened to her. However, what was important to Edith was the sounds of the letters.

⁵ Louis Auchincloss, “Edith Wharton and Her New Yorks” in **Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays** ed. by Irving Howe, New Jersey:Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962, p.33.

⁶ Diana Trilling, “*The House of Mirth* REVISITED” in **Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays** ed. by Irving Howe, New Jersey:Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962, p.104.

During the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), the family was living in Germany. When Edith was ten, they returned to their house in New York. The house looked gloomy for Edith, for life in Europe was more vivid, but there was a large library which was everything to her since she was not sent to school. She was educated by a governess at home. She wanted to attend a school, but her family, as a classic Victorian one, believed that girls and boys should have to be educated separately, because she was to be a daughter of Victorian principles. This was not the only effect of Victorian thoughts on her life. First, she married only because her parents, especially her mother wanted her to make a decent marriage, but Edith's main goal in life was to become a writer. However, her literary longings were disapproved by her family. For them, literature was merely a harmless pastime. They did not regard it as a career, especially for a girl. Even it is said that a book written by her was destroyed by her parents. They primarily wanted her to fulfill her duties as a married woman and a mother, which did not appeal Edith very much. Wharton was in opposition to these domestic ideals since she was fond of reading and writing books. After all, "while every influence throughout her formative years was dead against"⁷ her, she accomplished what was thought to be impossible in such a disheartening milieu and took her place among the prominent figures of literature.

Despite these prejudiced ideas, she wrote her first story, "Fast and Loose" under the pseudonym 'Mr. Olivieri', but she received very harsh reviews. She was regarded as "a sick sentimental school girl"⁸. Still, such reviews in her literary life did not bother her, because "she accepted the severest professional criticism as valuable. This, she said, was better for fostering literary ability than 'premature flattery and local celebrity' and having one's path smoothed..."⁹ Then she composed poems and some of them were privately printed as a book called **Verses** (1878). Afterwards, her brother Freddy sent some of her works to one of his friends who delivered them to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Thanks to Longfellow's efforts, they were printed in 1880. After that, she did not get involved in poetic studies for a long time. Meanwhile, her parents saw that

⁷ Olivia Coolidge, **Edith Wharton**, New York: Scribner, 1964, p.9.

⁸ Candace Waid, "A Biographical Note on Edith Wharton" in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.229.

⁹ Q. D. Leavis, "Henry James's Heiress: The Importance of Edith Wharton" in **Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays** ed. by Irving Howe, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962, p. 85.

she was studious, so they rushed to make her entrance into New York society at the age of seventeen at a ball.

Her family settled in Rome between 1880 and 1882 because of the illness of her father. There Edith met and engaged with Harry Leyden Stevens who was known as a sporting enthusiast. Yet their relationship did not last long because Edith was not regarded socially suitable to Stevens family. They split up and after her father's death, Edith and her mother came back to New York. When she was twenty-three, she married Edward Robbins (Teddy) Wharton in 1885. Feeling trapped between domestic and academic roles, she had a nervous breakdown in 1898 when she was thirty-six. When her husband began to show mental instabilities during their stay in Paris, she looked after him. His condition was not something that Edith could tolerate; however, as Wharton grew up in a Victorian family she was to take care of him. When she wanted to get divorced, she was not backed up by her family, because they thought that they would all be affected by the divorce; if a member of the family did something inappropriate to the conventions, the whole family would suffer socially. She traveled abroad a lot with him and those journeys were beneficial for her. For example during their stay in Italy, she learned about architecture, decoration and gardening. She also had a vivid social environment. However, her marriage was problematic. Restless and dissatisfied, she consulted her marital problems to Dr. Mitchell who advised that she should write as a cure. Thus she began to write stories for *Scribner's Magazine* and published her first short story collection **Greater Inclination** in 1899. Afterwards, she followed the advice of Henry James to 'do New York!' because "her ties, of course, were stronger than his. She had been brought up in the city and had married there. She had experienced its social life in greater doses than she had wanted. She knew its men and women of property,..."¹⁰ and she wrote **The House of Mirth** in 1905 in which she told the hypocritical side of New York's upper-class life. In 1911, she wrote **Ethan Frome** which was set in poor rural New England in contrast to her wealthy New York works. Two years later, she wrote one of her most important novels, **The Custom of the Country (1913)**. Like **The Age of Innocence (1921)**, it also dealt with the contradiction between old New York and the newly rich, and between the European and

¹⁰ Louis Auchincloss, *Ibid*, p.33.

American culture. In the novel, the main character Undine Spragg even represented the United States through the initial letters of her name.

When her husband began to have love affairs with young girls, they got divorced, yet Edith was not upset, for she was ready for it. In addition, she had found the literary environment she desired most. She was admitted, by her life-long love Walter Berry's assistance, to literary circles and her works were appreciated. As she lived abroad for almost thirty years, she felt at home in Paris. Each day she felt more alienated to her own country. She made friends with the people from the politics and diplomacy. Among them, the most important figure was Theodore Roosevelt to whom she dedicated most of her elegies. She also met some French artists and writers such as Paul Bourget, Andre Gide, Anna da Noailles, Jean Cocteau, and Jacques-Emile Blanche. She spent time with some Americans like Henry Adams and Henry James, Bernard Berenson, Aldous Huxley and Kenneth Clark, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway as well as art patrons Alice Garrett and Mrs. Potter Palmer and expatriate artists Walter Gay and Ralph Curtis. When the First World War broke out in 1914, she began to work for charities and refugees in favor of allied forces. She spent her free time writing articles about the war. However, she did not keep writing books in her last years, because the world inspired her works was devastated by the war.

She was a prolific and versatile writer. In her long-lasting career over forty years, she wrote a lot of short stories, a great number of novels and novellas, three collections of poetry, books on architecture and gardening, travel books which include those about war, an autobiography called **A Backward Glance** (1934) which was thought to be an insufficient study and a critical study, **Writing of Fiction** (1925) in which she focuses on the construction of a novel, and significance of characters and situation in a novel. She was also interested in the philosophy of Nietzsche, Darwin's theory of evolution and liturgy.

Wharton could be classified as a realist novelist, for she illustrates the life so real that the reader feels himself in the setting of the novel. He also shares the experiences of the characters closely. Another realistic point in her works is the use of the detailed description of the places. Furthermore, as a formal writer, she does not want "a reader to

suppose he is in the world of the novel. She wishes her audience always to be aware of her firm guiding hand, to regard it is a force of assurance and control.”¹¹

Although Wharton can be regarded, to some extent, as a regionalist (local colorist) writer like Willa Cather, Sarah Orne Jewett and William Faulkner, she is best known as a novelist of manners. Novel of manners - represented by Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott, George Eliot, Henry James and Kate Chopin - displays customs, morals, ideas or conventions of a specific group in a certain time or place in detail. In this kind of novels, social conventions are superior to anything else. These conventions of the society give shape to the manners of the characters, mostly by repressing them. Therefore, it is usual that there is a contradiction between individual desires and social codes in the novels of manner. Characters are classified according to their life standards (prosperous or poor). People adhere to social manners to be accepted in the group they want to take place in. So the characters are always in a struggle to be a member of the society (like Ellen in **The Age of Innocence** and Lily in **The House of Mirth**). Some other themes include women's place in the society, marriage and its problems (these two themes could be regarded as autobiographical ones for Edith Wharton), but the most important theme is the conformity with the society. In general, the main character in a novel of manners is a single woman who wants to marry. The life of that girl results in either marriage or death. Also class differences take up an important part of these novels. For example, in **The House of Mirth**, Lily is the single woman who wants to marry and at the end she dies. Moreover, when she gets poorer, we are shown the differences between the wealthy and impoverished set of people. In most of her novels, notably in **The Custom of the Country**, **The Age of Innocence** and **The House of Mirth**, Wharton applied the genre successfully to New York Society, presenting the minutest details of the manners among people.

In her works, characters are the victims of the conventions ruling the social life. They feel confined between their relationships and repressing conditions. They see themselves as the prisoners of the social conventions. Sometimes they want to escape these confinements of the society but their attempts prove in vain (like Newland Archer

¹¹ Irving Howe, "Introduction: The Achievement of Edith Wharton" in **Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays** ed. by Irving Howe, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962, p.3.

in **The Age of Innocence**). They have loveless marriages (as Wharton herself has experienced) and social priorities which press upon them. They want freedom, because the social codes and manners limit what they want to do. She always tries to show the cruelty of the social conventions and the contradiction between prosperity and morality at that time. The characters also cannot explain their feelings easily. Their minds and hearts tell them to do different things. In short, we are shown the moral dilemma and dualism of behavior through the characters but, as she is not “a problem novelist”¹² (Nevius, 112), the dilemma of the characters are not resolved. In truth, she was very harsh in the presentation of her country and no American novelist did what she dared to do. She attacked the vulgarity of her own society and condemned her people ruthlessly and she kept scolding them in most of her works. Yet, she was criticized in *New York Times* book review- *Three Lives in Supreme Torture*, as “she prefers to present life in its unsmiling aspects, not with the deep sympathy, smiling tenderness and affectionate tolerance”¹³ Victorian reader required a writer to portray the optimist and positive aspects of life.

¹² A problem novel deals with the gradual development of the character, but Nevius here does not intend to say Wharton is a bildungsroman writer. He means that she only presents the problems in her works. She does not make an outlet for them.

¹³ “Three Lives in Supreme Torture”; Mrs. Wharton's "Ethan Frome" a Cruel, Compelling, Haunting Story of New England” in *New York Times*, New York, 1911.

2.0. ENVIRONMENT

2.1. SOCIAL CONVENTIONS

The features of an individual except his / her genetics could be determined by his/her interaction with the society he/she lives in and the conditions unique to the age s/he goes through. We cannot isolate the individual from the society and also the society cannot live on without individuals. So as to create a mild environment in which an individual and the society come to a mutual understanding, the society make some conventions and these conventions are the accepted ways of behaviors especially in social circles. The society requires the individual to abide by these rules, but once one of these is in conflict with the desires of the individual, there occurs a dilemma between individual and social priorities. The individual either obeys the social conventions or objects to them.

This recurring theme in Edith Wharton's works is revealed in terms of the repression caused by "the suffocating and emotionally stagnating rules that governed old New York's polite society during the 1870s and how adhering to those rules deterred people from being true to themselves and enjoying life in the manner in which it was meant to be enjoyed."¹⁴ Her characters like herself, either female or male, live in societies which have certain and strict rules. They are raised under the influence of these rules in order to be the product of the society. They are taught to do the things regarded as acceptable by the society, yet emotionally they sometimes want to act against the social conventions, and so they have to make a choice between their personalities and their social lives. However, in many cases, the cost to the characters is the limitation of their desires. On the one hand, there are their lives and on the other, the others, that is, the society. The characters force themselves to adjust and adapt to the social conventions in all stages of their lifespan as these conventions often contradict with the individual desires. Therefore, they at times violate these rules, because social life is just like an arena where the individual and the society find grounds to fight one another and at the same time, it is an agreement made reluctantly or willingly.

As a result of the repression, all the main characters (Newland Archer, May Welland and Ellen Olenska) in **The Age of Innocence** cannot do what they actually

¹⁴ Pagewise, http://kyky.essortment.com/whartonageinno_ola.htm, 2002

want; Lily Bart, in **The House of Mirth**, cannot adopt the social conventions and is ostracized from the wealthy set; and in **Ethan Frome**, Ethan as a married man cannot actualize her love for Mattie Silver who comes to stay with them and he cannot reach the status he wants because of his responsibility for his family.

In **The Age of Innocence**, Newland Archer is a young and handsome man. He is a promising and prominent lawyer and the heir of one of the established families in New York. He lives with his mother and sister. He is the only son of the family; therefore, his life has been shaped according to the codes and anticipations of the upper-class society where people "... dreaded scandal more than disease,... placed decency above courage, and ... considered that nothing was more ill-bred than "scenes," except the behavior of those who gave rise to them." (201) His life is repressed by the conventions of wealthy class in the nineteenth-century New York. This is made clear just in the beginning of the novel. He has to attend the crowd in the opera where the rich people in New York gather not to enjoy the art itself but to experience sociality and display their wealth to the others and gossip about their rivals as well. He goes to the opera because he is one of the leading members of 'the group'. In the opera, there is **Faust** on stage and the style which the primadonna sings her opera in Italian does not surprise Archer, because he is an intellectual person knowing Italian, since his childhood he is accustomed to going to operas many times. Even his clothes should be appropriate to the social manners required:

"...: such as the duty of using two silver-backed brushes with his monogram in blue enamel to part his hair, and of never appearing in the society without a flower (preferably a gardenia) in his buttonhole." (4)

He always tries to behave in the manner determined by the society itself even with his clothes, because he feels himself more aristocratic than the other gentlemen. The more he reads, thinks and travels, the more he thinks he is superior to them. However, as the opera is the place where they all represent New York manners, he cannot show his superiority and he behaves in the same way as the other gentlemen. He knows that if he seems to be proud of himself and looks down on others, he will be regarded as an upstart, too.

At the opera, he stands next to Lawrence Lefferts who is thought to be an authority on manners and Sillerton Jackson, the man knowing all the families in New York society in terms of their family pasts, relatives and relationships; as understood from the position of Jackson, the society at that time was obsessed with nobility. Even the people are mostly referred by their surnames. Therefore, when Lefferts makes an exciting statement about the woman who comes to sit in the Mingott box, Archer also has to turn his head, because if they are surprised to see the woman in the opera, she must be an important figure. They tell him that she is the Countess Ellen Olenska who is May's cousin.

Countess Ellen, after her parents die, is raised by her aunt Medora Manson, a wanderer. Her aunt has divorced a few times, and so Ellen's being brought up by her has been regarded as a pity in the society. Soon Ellen has begun to display some of her aunt's peculiarities such as wearing gaudy clothes for her uncle's funeral, asking unexpected questions, making smarty comments, having strange art inclinations like drawing and playing the piano. This shows Ellen is becoming a girl like her aunt who flouts the conventions. Afterwards, Medora marries to Thorley Chivers, but when he dies, she departs with Ellen to Europe. For some time, nobody has heard from them. Then, it is heard that Ellen has married a Polish Count who has magnificent establishments in Nice, Paris and Florence. After a few years, Medora has returned to New York. It is not a long time that Ellen has left her husband and intended to come back to live with her aunt and "to seek rest and oblivion among her kinsfolk." (39) She lives with her aunt for a short while and then moves to a house in a Bohemian part of the city.

As Countess Ellen has inconvenient manners, Lefferts and Jackson condemn Mingott family as they bring Ellen to the opera with them. This is not acceptable to the men, for it is rumored that she has left her husband and then has lives in Venice with her husband's secretary. Archer knows that she has come for almost two days and May has visited her cousin at Mrs. Mingott's house. He always appreciates the unity among the Mingott members in case of a disagreeable condition, so he is contented with the fact that his fiancée is kind to her destitute cousin.

“...but to receive Countess Olenska in the family circle was a different thing from producing her in public, at the Opera of all places, and in the very box with the young girl whose engagement to him, Newland Archer, was to be announced within a few weeks. No, he felt as old Sillerton Jackson felt; he did not think the Mingotts would have tried it on!” (9)

Still, under the influence of these two men, Newland also gets worried since she sits next to May with whom he is about to engage. As a man shaped by a strict Victorian morality, he thinks that a woman, who is about to divorce and is supposed to live with a man, cannot go to such places as operas with a young woman. Although he appreciates the family’s taking her under their protection, he is disturbed by her existence. He regards her being seen with May as a matter of chastity for himself.

At that time, “he hated to think of May Welland’s being exposed to the influence of a young woman” like Ellen (11), because May is a girl raised under Victorian values and she is the characterization of all the concessions of her ‘tribe’. She is “physically magnificent but mentally equipped with no more than the clan negations”¹⁵. She is a girl of a careful upbringing. She is reliable and she has no mysterious actions. She does not have a dirty past like Ellen according to her environment. She is the symbol of politeness, innocence and honesty. She is obedient to all the social conventions. She is, briefly stated, an appropriate bride for Archer’s distinguished family and his marriage to May will strengthen their prominent position in New York. The only drawback she has is her having no sense of personality. She cannot separate or individuate herself completely from her mother since her mother has grown her up to be a decent society girl in all manners. Since May is an ideal Victorian girl, she will not disappoint Archer before the society, will manage every mood of her husband she will soothe him. Hence, their marriage will be a proper unity of decent classes. Archer’s mother and sister also want this joining of a ‘Welland’ and an ‘Archer’.

¹⁵ Vernon L. Parrington, Jr., “Our Literary Aristocrat” in **Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays** by Irving Howe, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962, p.152.

On the other hand, Countess Ellen is everything that May is not. May is the indication of domestic virtues, but Countess Ellen is a woman transformed by European values. Therefore, she is more intellectual and acts more freely. She takes part in the social talks with men unlike May who is only a charming society-produced girl.

So, he rushes to the Mingott box to talk to May. There he is introduced to the Countess and she reminds Archer what they did in their childhood with an insolent style. Archer regards her manner as flippancy and says sarcastically that “You have been away a very long time.” (12) The reason of his manner is that he thinks she has forgotten the codes of her own society and speaks disrespectfully. Then, May wants Archer to announce their engagement to the Countess, because May is worried that Countess Ellen will enchant Archer. She is also worried that their engagement could be postponed to a later date until Ellen returns her husband. So, her anxiety even shows that Ellen will not be accepted to the society easily. Her return and condition will make the couple get engaged at once.

Beauforts hold a ball after the opera is over. Although people with old customs look down on this newly rich family (the general attitude towards such people in the Gilded Age), they have no other choice but to attend the ball as theirs is the only house with a ballroom. Archer gets nervous as he considers the possibility that Mingott family, going too far, could bring Ellen to the ball, because he is a man of conventions and he does not want his fiancée to be seen together with the Countess. Consequently, Countess Ellen does not come to the ball and Archer is glad to hear that from May. May tells that she changes her mind at the last minute as she thinks her dress is not convenient for a ball. However, May, Archer and all the others know the exact reason: she does not attend the ball since she is regarded as “the black sheep” of the family (9).

In the ball, May and Archer announce their engagement. They are happy but Archer “wished that the necessity of their action had been represented by some ideal reason, and not simply by poor Ellen Olenska” (16). He is dissatisfied because he has to get engaged in an earlier time than he has expected owing to Ellen’s debut into the society suddenly. His “remote, exclusive small world in itself is disturbed by the return

of one of its prodigal daughters who begs to be taken back as though nothing had happened.”¹⁶

The next day Archer family visits May’s house. When they get there, they do not see Ellen as she is out. Although her wandering is thought to be indelicate, they are, to some extent, content not to see her. Not only Archer but also his family is anxious about the influence of her unhappy and shadowy past on their relations, because her violating the social norms also affect the appearance of the family. Afterwards, Countess Ellen comes home accompanied by the parvenu Julius Beaufort, who is married to Regina – a woman from one of the established families of New York. Seeing this, May’s mother thinks that:

“... It's a mistake for Ellen to be seen, the very day after her arrival, parading up Fifth Avenue at the crowded hour with Julius Beaufort--
" (21)

As understood from the quotation, being a woman who is still married, Ellen’s wandering with a married man is not convenient to her position. Therefore, she is criticized in terms of the manners unique to married women. While they are going home, Ellen asks Archer to call on her and this also makes Archer think that she is a woman out of the social standards because he is an engaged man and it is not appropriate for Ellen to invite him to her house. Of course, this is not the only unconventional manner of Ellen. Once, in Luydens’ house, she “gets up and walks 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...” (41) She openly utter the word ‘dull’ for socially prominent Duke of St. Austrey who is a man of royalty. Even her wearing a black satin at her debut ball is thought as a violation of the conventions. At that time, Archer is grateful that he is from New York and he is engaged to a girl like May from his own set.

While their arrangements for wedding continue, Ellen states that she wants to get divorced. She wants to be set free by divorce because her marriage is an unhappy one; her husband commits adultery. However, social conventions say that she is a married

¹⁶ Katherine Mansfield, “Family Portraits”; *The Athenaeum*, December 10, 1920, pp.810-811

woman and her place is next to her husband however hard her conditions are. Primarily, she has to fulfill her duty as a matron. Therefore, her wish for freedom is repressed by the social conventions and she feels trapped between her womanhood and her social compulsions.

Mingott family talks over the issue of divorce and they want Archer to deal with the matter himself since he is regarded as a member of the family and also they do not want it to spread among their set. Initially,

“Archer felt his temper rising. He had been somewhat languidly drifting with events for the last fortnight, and letting May's fair looks and radiant nature obliterate the rather importunate pressure of the Mingott claims. But this behest of old Mrs. Mingott's roused him to a sense of what the clan thought they had the right to exact from a prospective son-in-law; and he chafed at the role.”(59)

He gets angry with them because he is about to marry May and does not want to be seen together with Ellen. On the other hand, when he sees May's soothing and attractive looks, he feels at ease. He is not a member of May's family yet, but he has to try to persuade Ellen not to get divorced because, as stated above, a divorced woman is a disgrace for the family. Her condition will affect all the family members' positions, indirectly including his, in the society.

Although the whole family members are against her divorce, Ellen is determined to act and Archer insists that it is not a suitable manner in New York conventions saying that New York is smaller than the world she comes from and it is dominated by old-fashioned ideas. Although he is an enlightened lawyer, he adds that "Our ideas about marriage and divorce are particularly old-fashioned. Our legislation favours divorce--our social customs don't."(70) According to the codes of the society, in such cases, the individual could be sacrificed to the society's well-being, because such individuals are seen as threats to the integrity of the social life. As the society could not be changed completely, the defiance of the conventions is not permissible. Even Archer's mother thinks that “people like the Countess Olenska, who have lived in aristocratic societies, ought to help us to keep up our social distinctions, instead of ignoring them.”(158), but Ellen is acting against her idea. She wants to get divorced; she

makes friends with married or engaged men – all these are not acceptable for someone who desires to be accepted to the society regardless of why she has come back.

Finally, during their discussions over divorce, Archer succeeds in persuading Ellen not to leave her husband. The family and indirectly the “kind people who only ask one to pretend, who do not want to hear anything unpleasant”¹⁷ are glad when they are informed that the Countess gives up divorce. Soon, Archer “finds himself appallingly and passionately in love with”¹⁸ Ellen. When Ellen, writing a letter, wants him to visit her at the house in Skuytercliff, Archer goes with enthusiasm. However, while they are talking, Julius Beaufort comes and Archer is stressed in that he thinks she has a relationship with him. Therefore, being afraid of defying his social role with an inappropriate love affair, he thinks the earlier he marries May, the earlier he forgets about Countess Ellen. Thus, he forces May to get married at an earlier time than the appointed date. Hearing that, May suspects he is thinking about another woman. Indeed, she is right since Ellen is always in his mind. She becomes a vital part of his life in order to survive. He cannot help not seeing or thinking about Ellen. He regrets persuading her not to divorce, for him, if she returns, she will go back to her miserable life with her husband. Archer now wants to change the course of events, but he is torn between “the girl of restricted nature and the woman of deeper and stronger character.”¹⁹ He respects May, but he realizes what love is when he meets Countess Ellen. At the end, he marries May who “represented peace, stability, comradeship” (126), as a duty. His education and sense of morality requires this.

His dilemma deepens between his desire and social priority when he learns May is pregnant. He is completely stuck to May though he plans to go after the Countess Ellen since he is going to be a father. His responsibility increases with the burden of a child. He does not want to leave his wife and child alone. On one hand, there is his real love, Ellen, the woman for whose sake he wants to dedicate his life and on the other, the most importantly, there are the codes he is expected to obey. If he violates these codes

¹⁷ Cynthia Griffin Wolff, “*The Age of Innocence* as a Bildungsroman” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.427.

¹⁸ Katharine Perry, “Were the Seventies Sinless?” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.382.

¹⁹ R.D. Townsend, “The Book Table: Devoted to Books and Their Makers, Novels Not for a Day” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.390

of the society and prefers to go with Ellen, he himself will also be ostracized by the people and he will lose his social position as a prominent lawyer. His fear of losing his position is revealed during the farewell dinner of Ellen. People talk about Beaufort's infidelity and his wife's condition and Archer concludes that "It's to show me what would happen to *me*." (201) he is very anxious about his future. If they learn about his relationship with Ellen, he will also be accused of adultery and attract harsh criticism. However, at the end "he had been, in short, what people were beginning to call a good man, and becomes a faithful husband though he loves someone else. He is victimized to a life which lacks emotion and satisfaction (Doren 386). He has lost the most meaningful thing and the real dream in his life. Ellen is the flower of his life but he fades her by obeying his social roles. In fact, they both "sacrifice their love for the sake of a person, May Welland Archer..."²⁰ They know that they cannot be free at another's cost. Their happiness is less important than the maintenance of the overruling conventions. Their self-sacrificing love could be seen as a positive side in terms of the codes, because "the idea of breaking up a family to fulfill personal desires is entirely shocking and unacceptable in this society."²¹

Throughout their marriage, May is always aware of Archer's love, but as an adherence to social conventions as a matron, she must pretend to be unaware. May loves Archer, but her priority is her family's maintenance. We learn that she knows everything through the end of the novel by her son Dallas' words to his father:

"Yes: the day before she died. It was when she sent for me alone – you remember? She said she knew we were safe with you, and always would be, because once, when she asked you to, you'd given up the thing you most wanted." (214)

Here we understand that although she spends her life with a man who loves her own cousin, she wants her children to trust him to the end because he can sacrifice everything invaluable for him. His duties have surpassed his lifelong love for the sake of his family.

²⁰ Carl Van Doren, "An Elder America" in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.386

²¹ Lenay Breeland, "A Hieroglyphic World: Representations of Repression in Scorsese's Age of Innocence", **Fixing a Hole: Bridging the Gap between Text and Performance**, Senior Seminar in English, State University of West Georgia, Fall 2001, p.30.

At the end of the novel, after May dies, he has a chance to see Ellen again, but he thinks it is more real sitting on a bench under her balcony than going up to meet her (217). He demands Countess Ellen remain an illusion. Even if the conditions are now suitable, he is too timid to live his love to his heart's content. Here, he can be regarded as a romantic idealist. The novel ends with the disappointment of Archer because as Cynthia Griffin Wolff states:

“Newland Archer does have choices, but they have been limited by the nature of his one portion of history. He cannot flee the provincial world of old New York; ... He perceives himself as alienated and without vocation; his ordeal by love teaches him the lessons that are acceptance of reality and dedication to generativity.”²²

Lacking common sense and courage, he imprisons himself into his own defects. The period he has lived with Ellen has become a negative turning point in his life. Thus, he has become the victim of his own adherence to social conventions. He is a failure in that he cannot flee himself from his limitations. All these lead him to a success at one point; he learns to face realities.

Like May Welland, Lily Bart, in **The House of Mirth**, is a woman who is brought up to be a girl of the society and its conventions by her mother. However, she draws a more different picture than May. May obeys the conventions of the society though she has to sustain a life with a man who resolves to stay with her only for his children not for his love for her. We can say that Lily resembles Ellen Olenska when it comes to social codes, because she violates the conventions required by her. She is seen with married men before the public; she smokes and gambles. These are the values contradictory to the society, but she does these things in order to maintain her social role among the wealthy people, which is a mistake. This shows that she cannot see the realities. It is unreasonable for a girl of nineteenth-century New York society to gamble, smoke and be friend with married men. If she wants to climb the social ladder, she is obliged to give up such kinds of habits. She tries to behave as the rich but corrupted people do since her goal is to

²² Cynthia Griffin Wolff, “*The Age of Innocence* as a Bildungsroman” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.422

obtain a respectful status and a rich husband. She lives in a social environment that gives importance to status and money. So she is driven into the activities that are against some of her personal desires. On the other hand, that society requires morality and preaches goodness, but in fact it is a corrupt society and people are engaged in wicked activities, for they are hypocritical. When she steps into that society, she sees the true face of the people and to maintain her existence there, she feels she has to adopt its faulty way of life. For example, she attends parties though she does not enjoy. She goes to those parties only to give the impression that she is one of them (like Archer's going to the opera only out of duty). We understand her intention when she talks to Selden about whether to go or not:

"Mrs. Trenor asked me; but I can't get away till the end of the week; and those big parties bore me."

"Ah, so they do me," she exclaimed.

"Then why go?"

"It's part of the business--you forget! And besides, if I didn't, I should be playing bezique with my aunt at Richfield Springs." (14-15)

From the conversation, we can conclude that Lily means if she does not attend the parties she will be seen as the 'other'. However, she wants to be one of them. Instead of spending time with her aunt, attending the party and being among the wealthy people appeal her much more.

When Selden sees her at the train station at the beginning of the novel, Lily is said to be the "victim of the civilization which had produced her" and "the links of her bracelet seemed like manacles chaining to her fate." (9) Judging from this statement we, as readers, understand that she is fond of wealth and this will lead her to a destitute life in quest for wealth and pretense of a conventional woman. After their encounter at the station, Selden, her life-long love, invites her to his home. During their talk, Selden asks her whether she is brought up to get married and she accepts that she is raised to marry a wealthy man. This is of course the way her mother chooses for her. It is not one of her own choices. Indeed, she loves Selden, but he does not have money sufficient enough to

satisfy her material longings. She accepts she wants to marry, yet she states that she must have a great deal of money. Money is her key to success in the wealthy set.

This passion for money displays its unsmiling face to her when she leaves her fiancé Dillworth, because his mother is afraid that Lily will use up all the family properties. It is so obvious that she is like a rich-man hunter and makes people around her frightened with her ambitions. She spends time for looking for better opportunities and much richer men to get married, and it results in her aging.

Everybody around her wants her to marry and she says she waits for the suitable partner. Then, she chooses Percy Gryce who is very rich. Although she loves Selden, she plans to marry Percy Gryce which is another kind of hypocrisy. She does not love him, but he has the luxury which is “the only climate she could breathe in (29).” She believes she is not a woman for mean environments. She always wants more than she has. She “is obsessed with maintaining the appearance that she is wealthy even she may not be”²³. Appearance is central to her, which is one of the features of Victorianism. Her absolute fears are rejection from the society and dinginess. At the night Lily meets Percy Gryce, her friend Judy Trenor wants her not to play bridges before him, because he is a man of conventions and does not want the woman he will supposedly marry to gamble even if it is for entertainment. She wants her to dress in decent clothes and also not to smoke. In order to secure her marriage to Gryce, she pretends the role of a woman adherent to the conventions, because, if she is to be his wife, she will have everything material she desires, she will have jewelry and she will wear smart clothes; “... she would be free forever from the shifts, the expedients, the humiliations of the relatively poor.” (53) When she becomes a Gryce, she will be praised; her pride will be gratified, and she will be financially powerful. Now society will “turn its illuminated face to Lily.” (54) In fact, Lily lacks character; she deceives either herself or the other two men because she disregards her heart and listens to the voice of her mind which leads her to the wrong path. Indeed, these all result from her upbringing to hate dinginess. If she lives the rest of her life, she will have to lead a dull life.

²³ Hawkins, Kyle, *SparkNote on The House of Mirth*, January 31, 2008
<<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mirth>>.

The next morning, she is asked to go to the church with Percy Gryce. Although she is not willing to walk with him, she has to go, because she sees the bills to be paid on the table. However, she makes Percy wait and she prefers to spend the time with Selden. Selden is her true love, but as she is afraid of the life she will have next to him, she keeps herself away. However, this time, regardless of no matter what the result is, she listens to the voice of her heart.

When Percy Gryce leaves them suddenly, nobody can understand the reason. They think that he and Lily will flirt and then maybe will decide to get married. In contrast to their ideas, Gryce suddenly goes without saying anything. However, Mrs. Fisher, who helps Lily every time when she has troubles, gets worried about his unexpected going while everything is alright and makes the reason evident when she talks to Lily:

“... - I wonder what drove him away? He is rather shy, and I'm afraid we may have shocked him: he has been brought up in such an old-fashioned way. Do you know, Lily, he told me he had never seen a girl play cards for money till he saw you doing it the other night? And he lives on the interest of his income, and always has a lot left over to invest!" (83)

Although Lily is warned not to gamble when Percy is there, she cannot help playing cards and misses the chance of marrying him, because he gives importance to the smallest penny of his income and does not want it to be lost in gamble, especially by a woman. Yet, she does not regret it because she understands that she cannot make a loveless marriage.

Afterwards, she talks to Mr. Trenor about her worries, but she is not aware of his sexual tendencies to her. She mentions her condition and desires in detail and strengthens his hand in her gamble to survive. She says she does not have anything her friends do and that she cannot dress smart clothes like the other women. Although what she does is discretion, in her opinion, men are fond of the women not only for themselves but also for their appearance. No men want to be seen with a woman in shabby clothes. As for the men, they do not have such worries, but if you are a woman, you are expected to look smart. These show the Victorian values for women at the time. On the other hand, she is financially dependent on her aunt and she has got an insufficient income. If she goes on

living in these conditions, she will have hard times to get by. Therefore, she wants him to help her to invest her money in stock market. She again wants more and this will lead her into destruction.

At the engagement ceremony of Percy and Evie, Lily and Gerty Farish, who is Selden's cousin, talk about the pearls the girl has. She wears the pearls because they symbolize innocence, beauty and purity, and she is the personification of them. On the other hand, Lily misunderstands the meaning of the pearls and interprets the stones as the symbol of wealth. At that time, "the glow of the stones warmed Lily's veins like wine. More completely than any other expression of wealth they symbolized the life she had longed to lead..."(95). She thinks that if she had not been caught playing cards that night, now the pearls would be hers. She cannot analyze the events properly. However, Lily knows her and she is a stay-at-home kind of girl unlike herself and this consoles Lily a bit. She thinks she is the most suitable partner for Percy because he also has the same tastes. She is disturbed and jealous, but as a defense mechanism, 'rationalization', she tries to state her feelings in compliance with the expressions approved by the society. She cannot display that she suffers from what she has lost because of her own faults.

Then her witch-like cousin Grace Stepney tells all the truth about Lily to her aunt - Mrs. Peniston. In fact, her aunt only knows her debts to the tailor, but Grace, in contrast to the meaning of her name, talks about her gambling debts and says that she has missed Percy Gryce because of being seen gambling. She adds that it is rumored her bills are paid by Gus Trenor. Even she tells that Lily has a quarrel with Judy Trenor on account of her accepting attentions from her husband. On the other hand, she ensures her stories in that the conditions are the same with George Dorset even though Lily only has a friendly relation to him. According to the conventions of the society and to her aunt's viewpoint, "it was horrible of a young girl to let herself be talked about" (134) and her aunt decides not to pay Lily any money from then on because

"... In her set such gossip was not unusual, and a handsome girl who flirted with a married man was merely assumed to be pressing to the limit of her opportunities." (136)

Her aunt is right; Lily forces all the doors to the wealth, but she is not aware of the wicked and destructive people around her. She only wants to obey social

conventions because she lives in a group of affluent people and she is expected to play the game by their rules. Therefore, she trusts Gus Trenor to invest her money and has friendships with rich men. In fact, these are against her morality, but she has to do something to recover these negations. That is, she is confined within the traps of that strict society.

One night, while she has monetary problems, she attends a tableau vivant²⁴ and there she is praised and regarded as a beauty in a painting. Her cousin Ned Van Alstyne thinks that “what's a woman want with jewels when she's got herself to show? (145)”. Almost everybody agrees that she has such a charm that she does not need jewels to add her appearance. However, appearance and beauty are not enough for Lily. She is a frivolous woman who always goes after what she does not have. This is, perhaps, her worst mistake: she always has far-reaching intentions. If she upholds her material existence as it is, she will not have to pretend anything unfavorable. On the other hand, there are people who look down on her because of the rumors. These people also want to expel her from their group out of jealousy. After that night, under the influence of all the gossips, scorns and exclusions,

“... She was realizing for the first time that a woman's dignity may cost more to keep up than her carriage; and that the maintenance of a moral attribute should be dependent on dollars and cents, made the world appear a more sordid place than she had conceived it.” (179)

She is aware that personal dignity is important. Unlike what she has thought of the society before, a life depended on materialism is low and base. She understands that she, in fact, lives in a hypocritical society. People pretend to like her, but when she turns her back, they do everything to despise.

Here, Mr. Rosedale, who is a Jewish parvenu, comes to her with his marriage offer. He is aware that Lily is not fond of him, but that she ‘loves’ money and likes dressing and entertainment. If she marries him, she will not have to settle for the things because she will have everything. Indeed, for Rosedale, Lily is a woman to enable his

²⁴ Tableau vivant means ‘living picture’ in French. It is a scene which is presented by actors or actresses who remain in silence, do not speak or move. It is the mixture of painting and photography on stage.

social position. Lily functions as an asset for his longings. He only wants to increase his own social status by marrying her, for he is a newly rich and is not liked by others. Although he is a good chance for Lily, she does not accept his offer. In fact, Rosedale behaves hypocritically, because he does not love Lily, either. Yet, he wants her to be his wife only because he sees her as a commodity that will help him to secure his position in the society. If he marries a beautiful woman like Lily, everything will be completed. Lily, however, does not respond to his longings. She believes that if she marries only for money but not for love, she will betray herself and also him. Like the society, both of them know that if they marry, they will exploit one another for their own personal desires; they think of a loveless marriage as typical Victorians.

Spending a hard time without enough money for her needs and debts, Lily, after a while, is backed up by the Duchess and Lord Hubert. They secure Lily's coming back into the society. She is immensely admired by the Duchess. She collects herself and becomes more handsome and this makes Bertha Dorset, who has a few extramarital affairs, jealous of Lily. She tries to find ways to eliminate her from the group and she reaches her goal: she invites Lily to a cruise in the Mediterranean. Except them, Ned Silverton is on the cruise. He is Bertha's darling, but her husband does not know this. Bertha takes Lily with them only to distract George's attention since she knows they are good friends. She knows that Lily will not realize what is going on. She will not see the trap which is prepared by Bertha on her way. In a short time, Bertha begins to play her tricks and spreads the rumor that Lily has a relationship with her husband during the cruise in order to cover her own infidelity. Lily cannot defend herself and is ostracized from the society because a woman's adultery is not an acceptable thing whereas men are free as long as they have discreet affairs. Lily does not know where to go, because Bertha does not allow her to return to the yacht. Selden helps Lily to find a place to spend the night.

At that night, Selden takes her to stay with his cousin Gerty Farish who is a poor but honorable girl. She spends a few days in her house, but then returns to her aunt's house. Nevertheless, the rumor about Bertha's husband George has been told to her aunt by Grace Stepney, for the second time, causing Lily to be lower before the eyes of her. Hearing what is told about her niece, her aunt excludes Lily from her will except a small amount of money. Instead of supporting her in the face of difficulties, she drives already

unhappy Lily into despair. Here, we can remember some of Katherine Anne Porter's stories such as "He", "Holiday", "The Downward Path to Wisdom", "That Tree" and "Maria Concepción"²⁵.

People begin to treat her as if she has a plague. They ignore her existence and even they do not listen to her explanation about what happened on the yacht. Indeed, Lily herself is so tired with the society that she herself does not want to talk about it. At that time, Lily confesses Gerty that they would not treat her in that way if she had the money around which their world is turning. We understand that nothing gives lessons to her. She is obsessed with wealth. She regards money as a key to all the things.

Then, Mrs. Fisher advises her to keep herself away from those people for a while. After she returns, she asks Lily to marry George Dorset as a retaliation because his marriage to Bertha is about to end. Lily gets on well with George, but after the events and words directed to her, Lily does not even want to see George let alone marrying him. Fisher says that if she does not want to be exposed to the relentless actions of Bertha or the society, she must marry someone else. At this time, Lily remembers Rosedale's offer for marriage. When she goes to him in order to accept his offer, he says that he does not believe what is talked about her, but the stories are there and he cannot change the circumstance. "... at the end he turns away, convinced she has lost her market value"²⁶. As marriage is a mutual property for Rosedale, he sees Lily as a commodity and as a cunning businessman, he observes his own profits, disregarding others' feelings.

At that time, Lily leaves Mrs. Fisher's house in order not to be a burden to her and settles a boarding house. Seeing Lily penniless, Mrs. Fisher finds some works for her. Lily holds these works to earn money in order to pay her debts, especially to Trenor who made her owe him with a hypocritical way since she has responsible character; she wants to pay all her debts. At first, she begins to work as a secretary for a disreputable woman. When her morality overwhelms her monetary needs, she quits the job. Afterwards, she works at a millinery shop, but she does not work enough, she is made

²⁵ See F. Gül Özyazıcıoğlu's Master Thesis **Katherine Anne Porter'in Öykülerinde Başarısızlık Teması**, Erzurum: Atatürk University The Institute of Social Sciences, pp. 24-34.

²⁶ Irving Howe, "A Reading of The House of Mirth" in **Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays** by Irving Howe, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962, p.124.

redundant. She is helpless and cannot sleep at nights thinking what she will do. She begins to take sleeping pills, but she is warned not to exceed the dosage limit.

When her aunt dies, she leaves her only ten thousand dollars. It is only enough to pay Trenor's debt, the others will wait to be paid. Therefore, she visits Grace Stepney to borrow some money, but instead she is accused of her aunt's death due to her disturbances. Grace has told that her aunt could not tolerate Lily's name is talked over and has died of grief.

One night, she gets the cheque informing that she could withdraw and use the money inherited. She takes an envelope and puts the money in it, writing that it is for Gus Trenor. Then, while thinking what she will do in order to recover from her condition with the slightest hurt, she takes pills more than usual dosage, because she is in great need of sleep. Next morning, she is found dead in her bed. Before she dies, she thinks of Selden whom she truly loves and she has lost because of her ambition for wealth. Her life in pursuit of wealth ends in death and her death generates question marks. Whether she commits suicide is not known, but what we know is that her death is realized by the negative impacts of her environment. Since she lives in a society which prosperity comes before every virtue and value, she wants to become a part of it. She is in the quest for wealth in order to adjust to social conventions of the wealthy set. However, when she fails, she cannot go on living in that squalid and hopeless life and this time she plays the game by her own rules. She dies as a woman of lost opportunities.

Written as inspired by a newspaper account²⁷, **Ethan Frome** (1911)

“... examines the frustration and limitations imposed on individuals by poverty and strict adherence to social codes concerning decency, propriety and loyalty particularly as they impinge upon male-female

²⁷ Miss Hazel Crosby, Miss Crissey Henry, Miss Lucy Brown and Miss Kate Spencer crashed into a lamp- post while they were sledding down a very uneven hill at an enormous speed. After the accident, Miss Hazel Crosby died and the other three got injured. Crissey's injury was on her face, but she was psychologically affected. Her mood got worse. Lucy had thigh fractures and she also had cuts in back of head and under chin. Kate's right hip joint was dislocated. (Berkshire Evening Eagle, March 12, 1904)

Edith Wharton had an acquaintance with Kate Spencer while she worked at the Lenox Library. In addition, there are some Christmas presents for Spencer in Wharton's handwriting as well as a letter to Kate to the library (Marshall, 92)

relationships, and suggests that infidelity invariably leads to further unhappiness.”²⁸

Ethan lives in an impoverished environment. He only has a farm and a failing sawmill which are mortgaged. Therefore, he has limited means to get by. He also suffers from his dilemma between social conventions and his goals like Lily Bart and Newland Archer, but his real dilemma is caused by his love for another woman and social status. Social conventions are only connected to his dilemma in terms of his being the only son of his family and a husband of a sickly woman. As the head of the family, he has some duties:

“... duties are done for no other reason than that they are said to be duties; for no other reason, sometimes, than that the doer hasn’t really been able to conceive of any other course – has, perhaps, been afraid to think of any other course.”²⁹

Even if he sees that duties are unreasonable, Ethan does the things which make his life unbearable only for he regards them as duties. Social codes are so strict that there is nothing to do except performing them: he quits his education as it is his duty to look after his sick parents; he marries Zeena because he does not want to be left alone after his mother’s death, and he cannot think any other way than to get married. Like Archer, he makes a loveless marriage. Therefore, it can be said that it is novel summarizing how hypocritical Victorian morality is, how it leads people to unhappiness by a double-standard morality.

Ethan is advocate of social conventions and responsible for the works of his family because his father is disabled and then dies in a farm accident and Ethan has to give up his education in science to manage the farm. Nevertheless, he wants to live in the city and lead a more comfortable life. Instead, he leads a life as a man of duties. According to the social conventions, he has to handle the works as the only son of the family like Archer in **The Age of Innocence**. After his father’s death, his mother loses

²⁸ "Wharton, Edith: Introduction." Feminism in Literature. Ed. Jessica Bomarito and Jeffrey W. Hunter. Gale Group, Inc., 2006. eNotes.com. 2006. 31 Jan, 2008 <http://www.enotes.com/feminism-literature/wharton-edith>

²⁹ Lionel Trilling, “The Morality of Inertia” in **Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays** by Irving Howe, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962, p.143.

her mental abilities. As she needs to be looked after, Ethan cannot leave her alone. He invites his cousin Zeena to get her to take care of his mother and the housework. “She seemed to possess by instinct all the household wisdom that his long apprenticeship had not instilled in him.” (30) Ethan realizes that until Zeena comes he has been an apprentice and is not skillful for housework and as a patient keeper. However, Zeena is good at nursing and housework. Her efficiency in housework and caring his mother surprises Ethan. She wants him to allow her to see to the things alone and tells that Ethan does not have to do any further work at home except dealing with the farm and mill.

After his mother’s death, he is frightened by the very idea of loneliness and offers Zeena to get married, because when she comes to the farm, she is a talkative person and Ethan needs someone to talk to. He needs a lively person and he also knows Zeena. He thinks they will get on well. However, nothing in his marriage goes as expected and one year later, Zeena begins to become a sickly woman because she could not get accustomed to Ethan’s environment and her psychology gets worsened. She is right to some extent because she comes from a larger village near the railway and this is not the life she has dreamt of. After a while, she begins to belittle Starkfield and in a year she becomes a burden both financially and spiritually for Ethan. They spend their already insufficient money for her medicine. Her medicine bills are piled each day and her hysterical moods wear Ethan away. When she first comes, Ethan thinks that she is able to take care as a nurse, but her skill “had been acquired by the absorbed observation of her own symptoms.” (30) While looking after his mother, Zeena gets her own illnesses. It should be remembered that Ethan’s mother has lost her mental abilities. Therefore, Zeena’s being a hypochondriac can be associated with the time she spends with Ethan’s mother. At the end, she becomes a hysterical mother as Rosenberg states,

“... The hysterical woman virtually ceased to function within the family. No longer did she devote herself to the needs of others, acting as self-sacrificing wife, mother or daughter: through her hysteria she could and in fact did force others to assume those functions. Household activities were reoriented to answer the hysterical woman’s importunate needs. A devoted nurse recruited. Fortunes must be spent on medical bills or for drugs and operations.

Worry and concern bowed the husband's shoulders; his home suddenly become a hospital and he a nurse...³⁰.

From the quotation, it is understood that Zeena is to have such Victorian values as a self-sacrificing wife and mother. However, she does not realize them because she herself is a woman who is worn away by these duties when she takes care of her mother-in-law. Therefore, Zeena perfectly fits in this definition, because she is a thoroughly hysterical woman. She always thinks that she is ill and does not implement her duties as a (house)wife. She loads everything to her husband, Ethan. He is like a housewife and a nurse at home. He is also the worker on the farm. On the other hand, his hopes for a better life are barred by his wife's medical expenditures. At the end, as a solution, she decides to bring her cousin Mattie to look after her as she did for Ethan's mother. Although he gets rid of his duty as a nurse, most of the work at home is still done by Ethan since Mattie is not skillful enough to fulfill the house works.

However, one of the duties of a married man is to protect and take care of his family. Therefore, Ethan is expected to endure his hard conditions on behalf of his wife and marriage. He sticks to social conventions because of his responsibilities first for his family and then for his wife.

³⁰ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America" in **Ethan Frome**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1995, p.102.

2.2. FAMILY

The issue of family in the selected novels is in close relation to the social conventions. As parents themselves grow up under the influence of certain conventions, they want to raise their children with these codes, too. As they are influential aspects in a family, the lifestyle, the education, the jobs, and even the marriages the children will make are affected by the viewpoints of them. The parents do not want their children do anything contradicting the norms. They know that if they are in conflict with the society, they will be excluded from the group they belong and suffer from it. They want their children to adhere to these rules imposed on them by social life and to be acceptable characters in the society. However, sometimes the children want to do more different things. They have their own desires to realize, and they do not want to be distracted from their paths. In their opinions, what they wish is the truth; nevertheless, the society determines certain codes and wants the children to follow them, because these codes are the society's priorities. Above all, they are the members of the society and they are expected to behave according to the manners stated by social norms. At that point, the children have dilemmas between their personal desires and social priorities they are to obey.

To begin with, in **The Age of Innocence**, Newland Archer is a man whose life is shaped by these conventions. From the way he dresses to his manners, it is obvious that he is submissive to the codes attached to him. His mother and sister also obey these conventions. They do not often go out or attend the gatherings. They prefer to learn about what is going in public through the news they get from a family fellow. They also want him to make a decent marriage with May Welland, who is the representative of the conventions. They believe that she is innocence and pure. She has nothing that will disgrace her, her family and also Archer. In fact, Archer, who is only fond of her, does not love her, but the society and his family thinks it as suitable. He marries her towards the middle of the novel. Before his marriage, he is attracted by May's cousin Countess Ellen Olenska, who is Europeanized in her manners. She has a freer spirit and does not care about the social roles she is to obey. As she has spendt most of her time in Europe, she is different from May in all aspects: she takes part in conversations with men, she smokes, she wanders with married men, and she wears more daring dresses than the

other women. She even treats her servant as a friend. She does not give importance to hierarchy which is the most important thing in New York nobility.

On the other hand, unlike May, Ellen has a dirty past according to the rumours in New York circles. Therefore, at first, Archer does not approve her coming back. He gets anxious that his naïve darling will be influenced by her since he knows that May cannot treat her as strictly as her family. They are grown up together like sisters, so she does not want to do anything to offend her. Even she wants Archer to be friendly towards Ellen because she comes from a much more different social background and he is a perfect partner during her adaptation process. He is intellectual and his tastes to some extent are in compliance with hers.

However, over time, when his fiancée wants him to spend time with Ellen and the family makes him to persuade her not to get divorced, his feelings for Ellen turn out to be love. He cannot express his feelings for Ellen because his engagement to May cannot be broken. Both May's family and his have this marriage made since they think it will be proper that two prominent figures of the society will unite. They are aware of the love between them, and they see Ellen as a disgrace; they will not allow her to destroy their order. They think that Archer, as a distinguished and promising lawyer, does not think of leaving May and lower his position before the eyes of the society when he goes away with Ellen. Under the influence of his family, he chooses the marriage with May and leads an unhappy life without forgetting about Ellen. She always remains in his mind and heart. He lives in a world of illusion. He supposedly marries May who is his duty, but in fact he keeps the real love in his heart.

His wife is aware of the love between her husband and Ellen, but as a girl raised to be the product of the society, disregards it and sustains her marital position. It is bitter for her to keep a marriage while knowing her husband loves another woman. Still, she plays her role well and draws a happy woman figure in public. Her upbringing requires her not to reveal any uneasiness in the family circle. Therefore, she is torn between her pride and her family, and at the end, for the sake of her dignity, she surrenders to the conventions and pretends to have a contented life with her children.

Ellen has been raised by her aunt Medora Manson after her parents' death. Her aunt herself is a woman not approved by the society, because her actions are seen as

oddities. She is a wanderer like Ellen's parents, and she is not liked in the society as she is repeatedly widowed and does not care the roles of such a woman.

One day, Mrs. Manson sets out her wanderings in Europe again parting her husband. When she returns, she brings Ellen, who is in charge of her. Ellen has red cheeks and tight curls, and this gives her an air of gaiety. As the society knows what kind of a woman her aunt is, they feel pity for the girl as she is going to be grown up by a woman who has disrepute. However, soon the society witnesses that the girl is like her aunt, for she begins to display some eccentricities, for the Victorian society is against the performance of art, they condemn Ellen's playing the piano and drawing pictures. Of course, she does these things under the influence of her upbringing by her aunt: Mrs. Manson herself wears a shorter veil than the usual for her brother's funeral; on the other hand, Ellen is in crimson merino and amber beads for the ritual. As a girl having lost her parents, she is to be in blacks, but she is not. This shows that both have "peculiarities to flout the unalterable rules that regulated American mourning..."⁽³⁸⁾In America, there are certain rules for lamentation, and people are supposed to obey them. Ellen and her aunt are in conflict with these rules in that they get dressed as if to scorn them. In fact, they are condemned by the society.

After losing her last husband Mr. Thorley Chivers in a madhouse, Mrs. Manson takes Ellen to Europe with her. For some time, there was no news heard from them. Then, it is learned that Ellen marries a rich Polish Count. However, she cannot have a happy marriage and she leaves her husband and makes preparations to return to New York so as to seek for support. Her marriage ends in disaster and she regards the city as a safe place, because she will be among her family members.

Nothing goes as she hopes. When "she returns to self-satisfied and self-centered society in New York"³¹, her dishonour shakes New York society and soon some rumors about her are spread in the social circles. She is told to leave her husband and spend time with his male secretary. She is accused of adultery and the society think that

³¹ R.D. Townsend, "The Book Table: Devoted to Books and Their Makers, Novels Not for a Day" in *The Age of Innocence*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p. 390.

“ ... A girl is only a sketch, a married woman is the finished picture. And it is only the married woman who counts as a social factor.”³²

As understood from the quotation, if a woman is to have a respectable position in the society, she is expected to complete her existence by a marriage. Without marriage, she does not have any meaning as a woman. This attitude toward women shows that women living during the Victorian Era are identified by their husbands' names attached to them. If they are not married, they are seen as half creatures, and they are not respected and admired. On the other hand, a woman who is married is the one to be appreciated since she is a finished product of the society through her marriage.

The society shows its intolerance to her leaving her husband in many ways. For instance, at the beginning of the novel, Ellen attends an opera. Yet, this is considered as a strange incident due to the rumors about her condition. There is an attitude among people that she cannot make her debut into such a social atmosphere. As a woman violating social conventions, she has to avoid such gatherings. Even Newland Archer is disturbed by her attendance to the opera because during the opera, Ellen sits next to May Welland, and this irritates Archer. He does not want her fiancée to be seen with a woman who is rumoured to violate her social roles. She is also expected not to attend the party after the opera held by Beauforts who are one of the newly-rich families. As she is a disgrace for the family, the society does not want to see her near Mingott family, even if it is Ellen's own family, because the disgrace of a woman affects the whole family members. The dilemma caused by family first appear here: Ellen has come to New York to be among her friends and family, but instead of being supported, she is excluded from the gatherings. She wants to join them; however, as she knows that she will not be accepted into the society easily, she has to stay home. Another sign of her exclusion from the circles is the formal dinner given in honour of 'the Countess Ellen Olenska'. Nobody prominent except Beauforts, Mr. Sillerton Jackson who knows everybody in New York and his sister participates in the dinner. This is “an intended slight” (31) against her.

Apart from divorcing, she has come “back to get away from the kind of life people lead in brilliant societies”, (56) and she is required to respect the feelings of New

³² Edith Wharton, “The New Frenchwoman” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, pp. 293-294.

York. She sacrifices her own values to the society's to be one of them. Thus, she makes some attempts to adapt herself to what the society all does. She wants Archer to help her and gets him to warn her if she does anything unconventional.

Having troubles in adopting the noble and conventional lifestyle in New York as a completely European woman, Ellen makes her position worse before the eyes of the society and her family when she expresses her wish to divorce. However, the whole family is against the divorce because they live in a society which has certain barriers against the undesirable things. As stated above, her divorce will discredit the family name. If they cannot persuade her to return to her husband, they will also be excluded from the prominent set, but Ellen insists on divorce. She wants to get away from her husband and everything related to him. She does not claim anything even material, because if she leaves her husband, she will be at ease spiritually. She wants to be free and to wipe out all her past in Europe.

Archer says that she cannot do what she wants. As her family does, Archer himself thinks that divorce is not a thing favored by social customs. It is not an acceptable thing in New York where getting divorced is regarded as a violation of the social conventions. Although it is a right of a person in legislation, the society sacrifices the one who attempts to disregard its conventions to its own welfare. Legislation is secondary to the customs of the family and the society. As a result of his efforts, he dissuades Ellen from divorcing. He tells the family that

“...she had given up the idea of seeking a divorce, basing her decision on the fact that she had understood the uselessness of the proceeding;...” (74)

He believes that Ellen gives up her wish for divorce only because she understands her attempts are in vain; she cannot make the society approve her and comprehend her reasons. In fact, these are not the real reasons why she chooses not to dissolve her marriage: she has come to be supported by her family against her brutal and deceiving husband, but instead, they ask her to go back and not to dishonor their family name. If her family understood her difficulties, they would back her up. However, they prefer their dignity to the happiness of their daughter. Like others, they are afraid that her position will make their future undignified, too.

The influence of the family is seen again her leaving New York completely at the end of the novel. During their talks about her divorce, there has occurred an intimacy between Ellen and Archer, which is known by everybody but not talked over. Although he is an engaged men to marry soon, they have been trapped in a desperate love. Archer could not leave May, because if he left her, he would put his career as a prominent lawyer at risk; on the other hand, Ellen has not divorced, yet. Under these conditions, Archer has asked her to be his mistress, but Ellen has certainly opposed this as an honorable woman. After he has married out of an unescapable duty with May Welland,

“... the Countess Olenska had become almost unthinkable, and she remained in his memory simply as the most plaintive and poignant of a line of ghosts.” (126)

He has preferred to forget about Ellen, and sends her to his subconscious, but whenever he has heard her name spelled, he has suffered from it. As she is a prohibition for him, she is now more attractive. He visits her by creating professional excuses. Every time he tries to persuade her to go away together. However, Ellen says that her family tries to organize a new life for her, and that she cannot disappoint them. She is torn between her family and her love. She loves Archer, but she cannot make her family upset again after their experiencing disgrace because of her, though only for a short time. At the end, she prefers to live her love in her heart only for not being unfair to her family members.

Lastly, the influence of the family displays itself in the pregnancy of May. Ellen has come to New York and been accepted into the society only for her grandmother's failing health, because she has decided to live alone without getting divorced. She is again in conflict with the desires of her family. Therefore, she is allowed to stay until she gets better. At that time, Archer urges her to run away. However, hearing that May is pregnant, Ellen does not accept his offer. Now they will be a family with the baby coming, and she thinks she does not have any rights to destroy the happiness of the family. Again she sacrifices her love for the family and their desires.

In **Ethan Frome**, we are given Ethan's family story through the knowledge the narrator gathers from the townfolk. His parents are not alive and the narrator learns that Ethan Frome leaves Skuytercliff to go to Worcester where

“... he had taken a year's course at a technological college ..., and dabbled in the laboratory with a friendly professor of physics; His father's death, and the misfortunes following it, had put a premature end to Ethan's studies;...” (13)

He has some abilities for science and wants to have a profession on it. He tries to create an intellectual out of himself. However, one day, he is informed that his father is disabled as a result of an accident on the farm and dies. He is asked to return and deal with the farm and the saw-mill which are in bad condition. In addition, her mother needs emotional assistance, because she begins to show mental disabilities after her husband's death. Nevertheless, Ethan wants to settle the city and has a more comfortable life after he finishes his education. He desires to know the world outside his family farm. Yet, he has to return to farm and look after his mother. Her family problems put a barricade between his education and his duties for his family.

After a while, he cannot handle neither his mother's health care nor the housework and the farm. He cannot find time for all the things alone. Therefore, he wants his cousin Zenobia (Zeena) to come to the farm and help him. Zeena is good at housework and nursing; thus, she makes Ethan's works easy. He is not responsible for his mother's care now. He only works on the farm and for the saw-mill.

After his mother's death, he sees that Zeena is preparing her suitcase to go back to her house. He thinks that if she goes, there will be nobody to share the house, and so he is frightened by the idea of loneliness. He offers marriage to the shabby and ugly girl, although he does not love her. He makes his worst decision because after a year, his wife begins to have hypochondriac inclinations and traps Ethan into financial and spiritual burdens. She also does not fulfill her responsibilities as a wife. She always lies in bed and comes downstairs only for meals.

Needing someone to do the work in the house, Zeena calls her cousin Mattie, who is a girl left destitute after her parents' death. Her relatives do not support her financially. Therefore, she has to accept being Zeena's nurse. After she has come, Ethan

again is happy because she is a lively figure when compared to his whining wife. Over time, he falls in love with Mattie. His love is mutual and he enjoys spending time with her. He teaches everything that she does not know about housekeeping.

However, Zeena is aware of their love, and unlike May who represses her envy, she displays it openly; she wants to send Mattie away out of jealousy. The lovers cannot tolerate separating and they decide to commit suicide. They make up their mind to sled down to the big elm tree in the center of the town. Yet, at the last minute, Ethan remembers his wife. If he dies, she cannot handle the works and debts alone. Although they do not have any children, she is his family, and he is responsible for her. No sooner does he avoid the suicide than they have the accident crippling both of them.

In **The House of Mirth**, like in **Ethan Frome**, we are informed of Lily Bart's family via flashbacks. What causes the protagonist to undergo the dilemma between her desires and social priorities is her mother. In fact, she is a very bad example before her daughter, and also her manners that she uses while directing Lily are wrong.

At the opening chapters of the novel, we are given information about Lily's parents. We do not get enough information about her father, because it is told that

“... made him even more of a stranger than in the nursery days when he had never come home till after dark. She seemed always to have seen him through a blur--first of sleepiness, then of distance and indifference-- and now the fog had thickened till he was almost indistinguishable.” (36-37)

It is understood that Lily herself does not know her father well. She regards him as a stranger coming home at late hours of the night. Perhaps, there are nights at which she could not see him, sometimes because of sleepiness and sometimes her father's indifference to his daughter. In fact, the man comes home late, works hard only because he has to fulfill his duties to his wife: “hiring a good cook, decent dresses, cabling to Paris for an extra dress or two, sending her jewelry she has liked” and the like. (36) He tries to provide everything that makes a comfortable life for his family, whatever it costs. In addition, this is why he neglects his little daughter. To sum up, he is the one who only brings money to home. He works only for the material needs of the family. However, his wife is never satisfied with what is given to her. We can say that she is a

woman who is in love with money since she makes her husband work to death in order to meet her wishes. The mother also does not pay enough attention or interest to little Lily. Lily is brought up in a loveless milieu.

One day, he goes bankrupt and gives up fulfilling his material duties. He has already had no emotional duties neither to his wife nor her daughter. He is the one who only brings money to home. He is financially ruined and following this unfortunate event, he dies of grief. In his wife's opinion, "... he had become extinct when he ceased to fulfill his purpose,..." (36-37). According to her, he has been alive as long as he has provided them with wealth and comfort, but now he is gone and she is completely devastated since he has left them in poverty. She is afraid of "living like a pig". (36) She also wants her daughter not to pity him:

"You are sorry for him now--but you will feel differently when you see what he has done to us." (37)

She says that Lily will understand what his death costs them in the future when they run out the means to get by. Lily is sorry for his father, but she will realize that he has been the provider of the prosperous life they are used to when she grows up. Therefore, after her father's death, her mother always teaches Lily to hate dinginess. She tells Lily that if she wants to maintain the lifestyle she is used to, she should exploit her beauty to attract rich men and marry one of them: "But you'll get it all back--you'll get it all back, with your face." (32) She is in the opinion that they are out of goods to lead a comfortable life, but Lily can regain it with her beauty. Her mother always reminds this statement to Lily with a kind of severe vindictiveness. She believes that if she misses the opportunities she encounters, she will not have any possibility other than living in poverty as they do after her father dies. On the other hand, she thinks that nobody can see Lily in "... these holes where we're stuck..." (39) She wants her to go out to be seen because she believes that the rich men do not come to the place they live and cannot see her beauty. Therefore, she encourages Lily to make a wealthy marriage before she gets older by saying she is young and has the possibility of doing it.

Thus, Lily is groomed as a daughter to secure a prominent place for her among the wealthy set by marrying a wealthy man. The mother believes that whatever the results are, someone should live in a wealthy environment, and therefore, she ingrains

her own thoughts into her daughter, because she wants her not to be confined in limited means. Lily is a commodity according to her mother. She sees Lily as “the last asset in their fortunes, the nucleus around which their life was to be rebuilt.” (38) She will benefit from her daughter’s physical appearance to get what they have lost back. She attributes to Lily some duties and responsibilities. “... She watched Lily jealously as if she is her own property and she is the sole keeper of it.” (38) she is afraid of losing her daughter. In fact Lily is ashamed of her mother’s passion for wealth; in addition, in her own mind she thinks that beauty itself is not enough. She thinks that she has to have a great amount of money to get what she wants. As her mother does, Lily begins to hate dinginess and follows her mother’s steps.

After her death, Lily goes to stay with her aunt Mrs. Peniston, who meets her financial needs. She only gives a small amount of money to Lily, but as she gambles, she piles debts without her knowledge. After her aunt learns about her debts and the ways she uses to pay them such as making Gus Trenor invest money in stock market and having friendships with rich men. These are disagreeable things for her, and so she refuses to give Lily money for her needs. She also accuses her of being the daughter of her mother:

“... When I think of the example you’ve had in this house! But I suppose it’s your foreign upbringing, no one knew where your mother picked up her friends. And her Sundays were a scandal that I know.” (181)

Like her mother, Lily has some mysterious activities. Nobody knows where she finds money to gamble, or how she manages to have comfortable lifestyle while being given only a small amount of money by her aunt. Therefore, her aunt blames her for gambling, and to avoid her disgrace, she withdraws her financial support.

Having lost the material back-up of her aunt, Lily tries to make a marriage as soon as possible. However, as she always wants more, she misses her opportunities. In fact, she loves Selden, but he cannot give her the life she wants. He is a lawyer but he does not have the money to satisfy Lily’s insatiable wishes. As she is taught to find a rich husband to secure her with a comfortable life, she does not think of marriage with Selden. At this point, we see Lily’s lack of reason and self-confidence: she is afraid that

she will lead a poor life if she marries him, but she cannot comprehend that he is the only reasonable character to spend the rest of her life. On the other hand, Selden is different from her, too. He is a man brought up to live without caring for money. His parents do not define their life in terms of money. They can find other things to rely on such as happiness, faithfulness, knowledge and dignity. Therefore, he also keeps himself away from Lily since he thinks that her ambition for wealth will destroy their happiness.

Her passion for money seeded by her mother causes her to get to lower positions in contrast to what her mother has thought. She has thought that Lily will gain a distinguished position when she becomes a member of the wealthy set. However, Lily cannot realize her desires because she chooses wrong ways to reach her goal. She gambles, which leads her to a lot of debts. She is seen with married men, which causes her to be expelled from the set. On the other hand, her failure is not only the result of her manners. People are aware of her pursuit of wealth, and they make use of her passion in favor of themselves. For instance, Bertha Dorset spreads the rumour that Lily has had a relationship with her husband, George during the cruise in the Mediterranean. Simon Rosedale, a Jewish upstart, knows about her pursuit of wealth, and in order to guarantee his position, he wants to marry her. Through the end of the novel, they cause her to be excluded from the wealthy set and live in poverty. She hardly finds money to make a living. In addition, she is not supported by her aunt. Hearing that Lily is talked about in an adulterous event, her aunt excludes her from her will, which drives Lily into helplessness.

In fact, she is aware of the fact that her mother's values are wrong:

“... the beginning was in my cradle, I suppose, in the way I was brought up, and the things I was taught to care for. Or no, I won't blame anybody for my faults: I'll say it was in my blood, that I got it from some wicked pleasure-loving ancestress, who reacted against the homely virtues...” (234)

She knows that from the birth, she has been under the influence of her mother. She has been taught to dislike and look down on poor lives, and she has always been driven into wrong paths only for wealth. She accepts she has done all. If she has wanted

she could choose another way on her own, but she has preferred what is easy and now she cannot blame anybody. Indeed, she will be right if she blames her mother, for she has been raised by her mother in false manners; her mother has made her stand up against domesticated morality. She has created a new Mrs. Bart out of Lily who is the reminder of herself.

As a result, she begins to have chloral in order to sleep and forget about her squalid life. One night, she exceeds the dosage limit of the pills in order to forget that she has been left without means, and she is found dead the next morning in the boarding house where she lives. If she is not raised to hate poverty and is not inflicted by the passion for money, Lily is now married to Selden whom she truly loves. If her aunt supported her instead of leading her to an impoverished life, Lily could collect herself and improve her life conditions. As a consequence of a false upbringing and opposition from her aunt, Lily dies as a woman of lost opportunities. She is victimized by her family, especially her unloving and neglectful mother. Moreover, she cannot discriminate between what is wrong and right. She cannot present her self-confidence and self-assertion.

3.0. PERSONAL DESIRES

3.1. CRAVE FOR LOVE

In Edith Wharton's novels, the dilemma of all the characters mainly depends on their love for someone. Newland Archer in **The Age of Innocence** and Ethan Frome in **Ethan Frome** are driven into their dilemmas since they fall in love with women although they are responsible for their wives. Lily Bart in **The House of Mirth** loves Selden, but she sacrifices her love for the pursuit for wealth.

In **The Age of Innocence**, Archer is engaged with May Welland at the beginning of the novel and he only marries her because she is an appropriate bride for his prominent family. She is the personification of all the social conventions. She is innocent, has nothing dirty in her past and the most importantly, she knows the responsibilities of a Victorian woman. May is the perfect woman figure according to the social and moral values of the New York society. Throughout the novel, she is associated with purity. She is often dressed in white gowns, carries white lilies that are the symbols of "purity and sweetness"³³. She is portrayed as the type of woman who will always exalt Archer and does not cause Archer to be humiliated, to be ashamed or to be condemned before the public. "The young man was sincerely but placidly in love. He delighted in the radiant looks of his betrothed, in her health, her horsemanship, her grace and quickness at games, and the shy interest in books and ideas that she was beginning to develop under his guidance." (29) He is comfortable when he is next to May and he knows that he will be her teacher for many issues and he is fond of the idea that she is dependent on him.

On the other hand, he is anxious that "his marriage becoming what most of the other marriages about him were: a dull association of material and social interests held together by ignorance on the one side and hypocrisy on the other."(29) He is aware of the hypocrisy of the society and he is afraid of the mechanic relationships between husband and wife. He is anxious that his life will be insipid. He is also worried that

³³ Kate Greenaway, "from *Language of Flowers*" in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.366.

“... what could he and she really know of each other, since it was his duty, as a ‘decent fellow’, to conceal his past from her, and hers, as a marriageable girl, to have no past to conceal? What if, for some one of the subtler reasons that would tell with both of them, they should tire of each other, misunderstand or irritate each other?” (28-29).

As a typical Victorian male, he believes that a man can do everything as long as nobody knows, but he expects his fiancée to have nothing to conceal in her past. This shows the double-standard in the relationships and Archer’s hypocritical point of view. He is also anxious that they do not know each other’s temper very well. He wonders about his marital future. He does not know whether they will be happy or not. They marry only for the sake of the social norms as a duty. His mind is confused under the influence of these thoughts, for he is afraid that Ellen’s coming will damage their happiness. Although he does not approve of Ellen’s return from Europe and leaving her husband, in depth, he finds her attractive. She is a woman who carries the values of a European woman. “... She dresses better,..... more coquettish, ... more feminine, ... more excitable, ... more emotional, ... more immoral.”³⁴ Furthermore, when compared to May, she seems to be more mature. At first, Archer thinks that Ellen is going to affect May since she has more daring values and manners; but over time, he begins to feel affection for Ellen. For example, when everybody around him accuses Ellen of violating the values of the society, Archer thinks that she is right. When his mother and sister Janey criticize Ellen’s leaving her husband, he gets angry:

“... Why shouldn’t she be conspicuous if she chooses? Why should she slink about as if it were she who had disgraced herself? She’s ‘poor Ellen’ certainly, because she had the bad luck to make a wretched marriage; but I don’t see that the reason for hiding her head as if she were the culprit.” (26).

Nobody wants to understand her reasons for coming back. In the mind of the society, she is a woman and she cannot leave her husband. She must endure her life whatever her husband does, including ‘living with harlots’ (27). Although he believes

³⁴ Edith Wharton, “The New Frenchwoman” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.289.

the Victorian values, he cannot tolerate that people regard Ellen as the only guilty person of her marriage. He is torn between his reasons and values at one side and at the other his feelings. Ellen comes back to New York to be among friends. She wants to be accepted into their circle and says to Archer, “;... at any rate, I want to do what you all do – I want to feel cared for and safe.” (47) Here, we understand that she had a worse life in Europe than what is told, and she needs someone to take care of her and a place where she feels safe.

In this context, she knows only two people who seem to understand her. One of them is Archer and the other man is Mr. Julius Beaufort who leaves his hometown in order to escape from the rumors that he engages in dishonest business affairs. His acceptance by the society is the result of his marriage with a girl from a prominent family. He understands Ellen because they have the same cultural and intellectual tastes. Therefore, she enjoys his company although it is seen as an unacceptable thing because he is a married man and so is she. On the other hand, she wants Archer to help her and to tell her what she is going to do, for he is now regarded as a member of her family. She has forgotten the values of her country, and now she is eager to learn anew. While adjusting to this environment, Archer warns her to follow also the advices of her older friends, since these people, including Granny Mingott, Mrs. Welland and Mrs. Van der Luyden, like and admire her and they do not want anything evil to come to her.(50) When Archer mentions the older women, Ellen opposes his idea:

“... Oh, I know – I know! But on the condition that they don’t hear anything unpleasant. Aunt Welland put it in those very words when I tried... Does no one want to know the truth here, Mr. Archer? The real loneliness is living among all these kind people who only ask one to pretend!” (50).

Ellen is aware of all the truth and the events as they are. When she comes, she is warned by her aunt as Archer does. Yet, she does not understand why they make a newcomer pretend. She wants to be admitted as she is, a Europeanized Ellen. This is the way she is accustomed to. She thinks if she is expected to play roles as if she is a conventional woman, she will unwillingly be led to loneliness. Still, she utters that “... I want to cast off all my old life, to become just like everybody else here.” (68) She feels

the duality between her desire to be accepted into the society and her seeing it as false and fake.

Meanwhile, Welland family goes to St. Augustine where they spend the winter. May writes a letter to Archer in which she wants him to spend time with her cousin. In the letter, she writes

“... she likes you and admires you so much – and you know, though she doesn’t show it, she’s still very lonely and unhappy. I don’t think Granny understands her, or Uncle Lovell Mingott either; they really think she’s much worldlier and fonder of society than she is, ... - but I can see that you’re almost the only person in New York who can talk to her about what she really cares for...” (76).

Although Ellen does not give clues about her loneliness, she is unhappy among her family members since her grandmother and uncle do not understand her feelings, for they are older and more narrow-minded. Therefore, May wants Archer to spend time with Ellen because she thinks that he can understand her. She is so naïve and innocent that she does not understand she makes a mistake. She is brought up so adherent to Victorian values that she cannot think an engaged man and a lonely woman can attract one another. She does not know that the men have other relationships apart from their marriages. May, unaware of what she does, drives Archer into convergence to Ellen since she has just returned and she has almost no friends. Therefore, Archer begins to come by Ellen’s house. He even sends her flowers although he is afraid that May could learn about it, but he thinks that it is May who wants him to look after Ellen, so he feels a bit relieved. Yet, in his inner world, “he did not care, as an engaged man to play too conspicuously the part of Madame Olenska’s champion.” (76) On the other hand, he is disturbed when he thinks about his social position. Once, when his sister asks him why he does not accompany Ellen to Mrs. Lemuel Struther’s party, he gets angry and says “I’m not her keeper.” (54) However, he is in an illusion that everything is arranged to make them come together. This time, Archer is supposed to deal with Ellen’s divorce process. This is also a mistake made by the family members. At first, May causes them to be together as friends, and now Archer is going to spend more time than usual because of his job. The relationship is becoming a dangerous one since during their

conversations, Archer begins to know more about Ellen and this makes him feel more close to her. His mind gets more confused as indicated by the yellow roses he sends her:

“... their “fiery beauty” reminds him of her. ... In general roses mean beauty or love, but the meaning of yellow roses differs. They could mean jealousy, infidelity, adultery, decrease of love, love that will not last, and rarely friendship.”³⁵

Throughout their negotiation over divorce, he commences to feel sympathy and affection towards her and his mind is bewildered about Ellen. The roses foreshadow the future of their compassion as they mean adultery and betrayal. They are also the symbol of a hopeless love between Archer and Ellen.

When he does not get any news from Ellen for three days, he is afraid that she does not want to see him. Then, he receives a letter from her informing him that she is in Skuytercliff and wants him to join her. When Archer goes there, he tells about May’s plea for taking care of her. Ellen gets angry when she hears that, because she does not need anyone to be her caretaker. She is an adult person and she does not accept to be regarded as a helpless, vulnerable and defenseless woman.

Archer asks for the reason why she has called him there. Ellen takes her to the house of old Patroon where they could have a quite talk, far away from the eyes of the public. She complains that she cannot find any place to be alone for a minute. She believes that the lives of people are always interfered with either by a servant or a visitor and they do not have time for themselves at all. While they are talking, Archer wants to know whether she comes here because of him. At that time, Ellen confesses that she is not unhappy when he is there. This is the first sign of her emotional interest in Archer. “... in that moment, Archer imagined her, almost heard her, stealing up behind him to throw her light arms around his neck.” (84) It is obvious that they have a mutual affection. Afterwards, an unexpected visitor, Julius Beaufort comes. Archer is shocked to see him there and gets angry. He leaves the house without saying anything

³⁵ Mrs. Burton Harrison, “Changing Mores in New York: The Romance of Leisure and the Specter of Divorce” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.342.

and condemns Ellen that she has a relationship with a man like Beaufort from the newly-rich class.

After he returns to New York, he urges May to get married as soon as possible, which makes May suspicious of another woman in his life, most probably Ellen. In fact, everybody doubts of an affair between them. This is mostly caused by Archer's attitudes such as defending her coming back and her wish for freedom. Once he talks to Marchioness about Ellen's position and says "That she ought to go back? I would rather see her dead!" (101). This opposing statement reveals that he does not want Ellen to return to her husband. He would rather see her always near to him. For Archer, her marriage is like a hell and he thinks "to forgive is one thing: to go back into that hell - ." (100) If we do not know his love for Ellen, we could think that he is a modern man.

At the end, Ellen gives up the divorce, which makes everybody glad to hear except Archer. Archer tells her:

"... I have never made love to you and I never shall. But you are the woman I would have married if it had been possible for either of us." (105).

This is a very bitter sentence summarizing his lack of courage. Although he knows that his love is reciprocal, he cannot go out of the limits of the society and sacrifices his love. He finds the right woman for marriage, but he cannot realize marriage with her. He understands that she will not get divorced, and so he explicitly confesses his love for Ellen. Before his words, she states that it is he who dissuaded her from getting divorced. If he had not insisted because of the family repression, she would not have to think of going back to Europe. This possibility makes Archer afraid. He does not want to lose Ellen, but she goes on saying:

"... Isn't it you who made me give up divorcing – give it up because you showed me how selfish and wicked it was, how one must sacrifice one's self to preserve the dignity of marriage... and to spare one's family the publicity, the scandal? I've made no secret of having done it for you!" (105).

Here, Ellen is seen more self-assertive, courageous, honest and reasonable than Archer. Although she is willing, she does not insist on divorce due to Archer's persistent expressions about the society which does not excuse a woman's leaving her husband. At that time, Archer regrets because he will lose the most meaningful part of his life if Ellen goes; but, he accuses Ellen of forcing him to behave in that way, saying:

“ ... I'm the man who married one woman because another one told him to.” (147)

Archer emphasizes his own passivity. He misunderstands Ellen's companionship with Beaufort and accuses Ellen of driving him to marriage with May. Once he tells her he cannot marry May after learning her feelings about him, Ellen loses her self-assertiveness and says that she has to sacrifice her love. She adds that she can love him even if she leaves him. (107) She gives up her love for the sake of the society. As she has told him they cannot be happy if they deceive the others, Archer accepts his duty and marries May.

Meanwhile, he gets a telegram informing that the wedding is going to be held at an earlier time than arranged. After reading it, he “crumpled up the yellow sheet as if the gesture could annihilate the news it contained.”(108) He creases the telegram as if he wants to destroy the news about advance of his marriage. The telegram is the sign of his becoming a married man soon and losing his chance of togetherness with Ellen in another place. He is angry and sorry to learn the news.

They get married, but he feels stuck in that marriage. Once, while they are sitting in the library with May, Archer even utters that “The room is stifling: I want a little air.” Judging from his words, we can deduce that May's very existence bothers him. He feels repressed when he is next to May. On the other hand, although May perceives the reality that he is not happy with her, she tries to cover her true feelings. In fact she is deeply depressed. As it is cold outside, she says she is afraid that he will catch his death before the window. Upon hearing her, he turns back saying, “... I've been dead for months and months.” (178) Since he loses his chance of reunion with Ellen, he is affected emotionally and he thinks that his life has no meaning like a dead person. At that time, an unexpected thought comes to his mind. He “has a diabolical wish that his

lovely and devoted wife were dead.”³⁶ and he is caught by this dreadful idea. His wife is a perfect woman, but he cannot forget about Ellen. “Whenever he heard those two syllables, all his carefully built-up world would tumble about him like a house of cards.” (115) He is so much in exposure to his love for Ellen that when he hears her name spelled, his life loses its importance. Therefore, he thinks that if May dies, he will be free and will get Ellen back.

When Ellen’s Granny becomes ill, the family accepts her coming back to New York and living with them until she gets better. During this time, Archer again asks her to go away with him, but she refuses. Her family wants her to get rid of her disgrace – that she is living alone - and to lead a decent life. They try to ‘remake’ her life, so she thinks she has no right to destroy their lives. They are making efforts to make people forget about her past. It is unfair if she does anything opposite. She believes that it is in vain to attempt to do the impossible.

After Granny recovers, Ellen decides to return Europe and the family holds a farewell party for her. Archer is curious about her sudden decision, but May makes everything clear to him by saying that she is pregnant, and Ellen knows this. He understands that she sacrifices their love for the baby which is Archer’s priority. Now he should think about it and his wife. Here,

“... May’s pregnancy proves to be just a retaliatory function, reining in Archer just as he is about to stray. She prematurely assures Ellen that the Newland Archers are about to have a baby, an announcement that in clinching Ellen’s allegiance to familial order proves to be an internally motivated regulation by the family.”³⁷

Since she loves her husband and she does not want to lose him, it is bitter for May to be aware of the fact that her husband is in love with another woman and he has thoughts over going away with that woman. She thinks that by informing Ellen of her pregnancy, she will make Ellen keep away from Archer and as a reprisal, she says that she is pregnant. On the other hand, Ellen’s being motivated to leave the city by her

³⁶ William Lyon Phelps, “As Mrs. Wharton Sees Us” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.385.

³⁷ Dale M. Bauer, “Whiteness and the Powers of Darkness” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.480.

family members will also secure her devotion to the family values. Here, Ellen is helpless before the social norms, but her obedience to the social conventions will destroy her 'New Woman' features.

Consequently, May "offers a true and honorable life when his dreams of Ellen are confounded."³⁸ When he learns that he is going to be a father, he is completely trapped in his marriage, and he cannot leave his family. His obligation to maintain his marriage with this true and honorable Victorian wife leads him to put his life-long love aside. His wife and child become the reality whereas Ellen only lives in his dreams. Therefore, torn between two different women, Archer chooses to spend the rest of his life with May for the sake of his child as an unhappy man.

Like Archer, Ethan Frome is torn between two women one of whom is his duty and the other is the one he truly loves. When his mother dies, Ethan understands that he cannot put up with loneliness, and asks Zeena for staying with him, making the worst mistake in his life:

"... After the funeral, when he saw her preparing to go away, he was seized with an unreasoning dread of being left alone on the farm; and before he knew what he was doing he had asked her to stay there with him."(30)

During her illness, his mother displays mental disabilities, and she does not talk much. After her death, "Zeena's volubility was music in his house. He felt that he might have "gone like his mother" if the sound of a new voice had not come to steady her."(29-30) Zeena talks much with great energy and enthusiasm. Unlike his mother, her talkativeness brings a new breath into the house. When she talks, Ethan feels as if her words compose musical sounds. He believes that if Zeena does not talk in the house, he will lose his mental abilities like his mother. His fear is an irrational one. Loneliness is an unbearable thing for him; therefore, he asks Zeena to stay though he is not in love.

However, his marriage does not develop as he expects it, for he has not based his marriage upon love. It soon becomes monotonous and his marriage turns out to be his duty. After a year, Zeena begins to display her sickliness. She is always ill and needs

³⁸ Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "The Age of Innocence As A Bildungsroman" in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.430.

medication. As Ethan is poor, he cannot afford her medical needs. He also has scarce time for dealing with both his wife's care and the farm. Under these conditions, Zeena decides to call her cousin Mattie to live with them. Mattie's parents are dead and no one in the family wants to take care of her. She thinks if she comes to the farm, she will have a house and a family environment. In fact, she also comes to the farm to look after a sick woman as Zeena does for Ethan's mother. This is a foreshadowing, implying that Mattie's life will not be more different than Zeena's.

Seeing her difference from Zeena, Ethan starts to feel emotionally close to her in the course of time. They go to the farm together, they set the table together, and Ethan teaches her whatever she does not know. Zeena is not contented with her being unskilled, but Ethan tries his best to make her a complete housewife.

After a while, the convergence between them makes Zeena jealous. Naturally, she wants to send Mattie away from both the house and her husband. Although they have married out of Ethan's helplessness, she does not want to lose him because, like Ethan, she is trapped in that small village. She does not expect such a life when she marries Ethan:

“... this marriage is as confining for her as for him. What must it be like to be Zenobia, a woman imprisoned on an isolated farm with only the taciturn and inarticulate Ethan for company?”³⁹

Her life on the farm is like a prison. She comes from a larger village and she cannot get used to living here. She has only Ethan as a reason to stay there, but he is silent and cannot express himself as clearly as she does. Therefore, they cannot understand each other and cannot communicate properly.

On the other hand, Ethan and Mattie love each other, and they understand they cannot put up with separating. Yet, Ethan is penniless and cannot find money to take Mattie away, for the people do not give money without securing the repayment as they do not trust one another financially. Therefore, being left helpless, the lovers decide to commit suicide with Mattie coming up with the idea. They will do the sledding as Ethan

³⁹ Judith Fryer, “The Spaces of Ethan Frome” in **Ethan Frome**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995, p.159.

has promised, but this time right into the big elm tree in the centre of the village. Even when their lives come to a halt, they will not separate each other, leaving Zeena alone. However, while they are just about to reach their aim, Ethan remembers his duties for Zeena. As a sick and poor woman, she cannot continue to live on her own. He does not want to leave her in the middle of poverty. It is true that she is not a woman with whom he can live after he knows Mattie, but he also cannot leave Zeena in a destitute life only for his love for her. However, it is too late to give up the idea and the sledge runs into the tree leaving them crippled:

“ ... Although he is neatly hemmed in by circumstances, it is Ethan’s own sense of responsibility that blocks the last avenue of escape and condemns him to a life of sterile expiation.”⁴⁰

He is confined by his bondage to Zeena, and he feels like a prisoner who has no way out. Now, he has a chance of running away from his duties for his wife, but at the last minute, he leads himself to an unproductive atonement. This is his last option however, he cannot ignore his responsibility for Zeena. So, he avoids the suicide. Nevertheless, they are played

“... upon one of the grimmest tricks of fate and doomed to a lifelong punishment, she with a broken back, he with a warped and twisted frame, tied beyond escape to the slow starvation of the barren farm and watched over by the invalid wife, scarcely more alive than themselves.”⁴¹

The tableau is very pessimistic showing a dark future for the characters. The situation is ironical in that they have wanted to get rid of Zeena, but they become dependent on her. They are confounded in the infertile farm and now they are bound to live under the control of the woman whom they think is the barrier on their way.

Whereas Ethan and Archer’s dilemma come from love, in Lily’s case, we can add love to pursuit of wealth. In **The House of Mirth**,

⁴⁰ Blake Nevius, **Edith Wharton: A Study of Her Fiction**, California, 1961, p.121.

⁴¹ Frederick Taber Cooper, “Art for Art’s Sake” in **Ethan Frome**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995, p.121.

“... There is a portrait of a young woman trapped in her confusions of value, a story of love destroyed through these confusions,...”⁴²

The protagonist of the novel, Lily Bart is a woman who is raised to marry a rich man and secure a respectable place in the society which values prosperity more than anything else. When her father is ruined economically, her mother advises her to use her beauty in order to attract the wealthy men around her. Ironically, this pursuit of status is the only factor leading Lily to her end. She is in love with the lawyer, Lawrence Selden, who is more romantic when compared to Newland Archer in **The Age of Innocence**. However, because of her upbringing to hate dinginess, she follows her mother's path, and she tries to grasp a chance to be wealthy although it means marrying a man whom she does not love since Selden cannot provide her with the prosperity she is after. Therefore, she sacrifices her real love for her quest for wealth. She is confused by her financial and emotional values.

Her desire of wealth also gives way for Selden to lose his chance for love with Lily. In truth, Selden is the only character

“... who is able to move within the elite social circles and yet view them with the detached scrutiny of an outsider. Not wealthy himself, Selden has a distant relationship to money, believing love and happiness to be found instead of purchased. He is one of Lily's few consistent friends, always providing lively banter, a shoulder to cry on, and honest advice. Selden's rational thinking often overpowers his romantic side,...”⁴³

Here, Selden is portrayed as an ideal person, friend and husband. He is a chance for Lily. Although he lives in an environment where Victorian values dominate, he does not give importance to physical appearance or money. In his opinion, rich people cannot

⁴² Irwing Howe, “A Reading of The House of Mirth” in **Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays** ed. by Irving Howe, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.,1963, p. 122.

⁴³ Hawkins, Kyle, *SparkNote on The House of Mirth*, February 7, 2008 <<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/mirth>>.

buy happiness because it is a thing which can only be found. Therefore, although he loves Lily, he avoids joining Lily's wealthy circle which is hypocritical in his opinion. He chooses to watch them from a distance and seldom enters among them. His rationality is always superior to his emotions. Although he tries to warn Lily about the negations of the circle she is in, he fails to distract her. This is because she is so ambitious about materialism that she insists on pretending as if she is the member of the wealthy set. At the end of the novel, Selden becomes the right side. Wealth does not bring happiness which Lily thinks can be bought.

In the opening pages of the novel, the two friends Lily and Selden meet at a train station. Just from the first sentence, it can be judged that he is attracted by Lily's beauty: "... his eyes had been refreshed by the sight of Miss Lily Bart." (5) Lily Bart has missed the train to Bellomont where she will attend a gathering at Trenors' house. She remarks that she has almost three hours for the next one. In this case, Selden invites her for tea to his apartment. In the mind of the Victorian society, it is wrong for a young man to invite a young woman to his apartment where they will be alone and it is also unpardonable for a young woman to accept his offer. Although they know this fact, they go to his house and while they are talking, the issue of marriage is put forward by Lily. She says there are men who do not like her and there are ones who are afraid of her as they think she is after them to get married. She indicates that she is aware of people who do not want to be near to her and ask her for marriage as they think she wants them only for their wealthy positions. As Selden is an honest man, he is glad that Lily expresses her ideas and criticizes herself openly. He likes her because she does not have to pretend when she is next to him. While they are together, she realizes his difference from other men. He seems to be more real and straightforward. In fact, he is also in a conflict: although he is portrayed as a sincere and trustworthy character, he conceals his true feelings towards her. He is fond of her, but he keeps himself away from her, for she wants to be a member of the wealthy set which does not appeal to him. Lily also detaches from him, as he does not have the money – the goal of her life - . When she says he does not think that she wants to marry him, Selden agrees and she understands what he really thinks about marriage with her. He ensures Lily that he does not want to marry her although he is in love.

Then, Selden mentions about her upbringing. He questions her values in marriage and Lily confesses the very reason why she wants to get married:

“I threw away one or two good chances when I first came out
 – I suppose every girl does; and you know I am horribly poor
 – and very expensive. I must have a great deal of money.”
 (12)

She defines herself in terms of money and sees money as the aim of her life. It is clear that she will marry only for money. Her emotions are secondary to her material world. She throws away the chances she has because she always wants the better. She is left in poverty after her parents’ death and dependent on her aunt financially. Therefore, she is in great need of money to remake her life. The key to this life is of course a husband with a great amount of money.

“... she was not made for mean and shabby surroundings, for the squalid compromises of poverty. Her whole being dilated in an atmosphere of luxury; it was the background she required, the only climate she could breathe in. But the luxury of others was not what she wanted.” (29)

The conversation between them at Selden’s apartment ends when she says she is not a type of woman who will yield to live in ragged and stingy environment. She cannot tolerate the squalor and cannot survive without having luxury in her life. She also wants to have her wealth through a good marriage. This shows that her ego is highly exalted.

Her first attempt to reach her goal is her relationship with Dillworth. However, she fails because her ambition for money makes his mother afraid that all the money they have will be spent by Lily, and so she sends her son to India. The other chance occurs in Trenors’ house and he is Percy Gryce who is a very rich man. Although she is not interested in him at all, she tries to allure him during the night she spends at Bellomont with Trenors. While having dinner, she has the chance to observe Selden sitting next to Gryce. She tries to understand how he manages to get rid of the battle of wealth without having any wounds although he is a part of it:

“... It was rather that he had preserved a certain social detachment, a happy air of viewing the show objectively, of having points of contact outside the great gilt cage in which they were all huddled for the mob to gape at. How alluring the world outside the cage appeared to Lily, as she heard its door clang on her! In reality, as she knew, the door never clanged: it stood always open; but most of the captives were like flies in a bottle, and having once flown in, could never regain their freedom. It was Selden's distinction that he had never forgotten the way out.” (59)

When compared with Selden, she has much weaker will power than him. She is aware of the fact that the pompous life is like a cage with no way out. She knows that once a person comes in that cage, he cannot be free again. However, she does not have any attempts to get out of it although the doors are wide open. It is her determination that will set her free, but she cannot relinquish her dreams of the luxury and splendor. Therefore, she admires Selden as he never gets into the trap of wealth because he knows when he has to leave that bottle. He is careful of not becoming a real part of it. At that time, Lily herself wishes that she is not one of those flies in the bottle of wealth and imagines an ideal relationship with Selden. However, when she thinks deeply, “... in the world as it was, such a privilege was likely to cost more than it is worth.” (93) She thinks that it is worth spending a life with the one she loves, but the cost of that life will be more when compared to its benefits.

In the morning when she is expected to walk to the church with Gryce, she finds Selden and Bertha, who is the witch-like figure of the novel, sitting alone in a room. She is jealous of Selden, but she does not reveal her emotions. She leaves the room and begins to wander around toward the church slowly. Then, Selden catches up with her and they have their first conversation that makes the love between them clear. They discuss success and Lily defines it as “to get as much as one can out of life...” (72) Like many people in that age, Lily describes success in terms of material and financial grounds. She perceives ‘American Dream of Success’ properly, but cannot get to it. We understand that only having more is the meaning of life for her. On the other hand, Selden opposes this point of view and explains it as personal freedom:

“...from everything – from money, from poverty, from ease and anxiety, from all the material accidents. To keep a kind of republic of the spirit – that’s what I call success.” (73).

He says that if someone wants to be successful in life, his priority must not be material longings, but spirituality must govern the material world. For him, spirituality is more meaningful and important. This is the first indication of the fact that Selden wants her to be free of material longings. At this time, Lily thinks that he looks down on her ambitions, and he envisages a horrible future for her. This is an illusion: the magnificence of the milieu has blurred her mind so much that she cannot see realities or understand Selden thoroughly. Therefore, it seems much miserable when she hears the words from him. She misunderstands and questions why he treats her in this way:

“... Why do you make the things I have chosen seem hateful to me, if you have nothing to give me instead?”
 “No, I have nothing to give you instead,” he said, sitting up and turning so that he faced her. “If I had, it should be yours, you know.”(76).

Here, her quest for wealth and Selden’s material inadequacy are highlighted. When Lily asks him what he has to give her instead of wealth, he says if he has what she wants, he is ready to pay all of it for her, but as he does not, he keeps away from her. Then, Lily asks him if he wants to marry her or not. He confesses that if he has the means available, he will take the risk and marry her. It is interesting that love is not pronounced in such a matter as marriage. Although they love each other, the conversation revolves around possessions.

Spending the afternoon with Selden, Lily loses her chance to attract Percy Gryce because he leaves Bellomont all of a sudden. Afterwards, it is made clear that he leaves since he sees Lily gambling the night before. As he is wealthy and attached to the conventions of the society, he cannot accept Lily’s gambling on money. He condemns her and she becomes the victim of her material ambitions because she plays cards only for winning money – actually the real enemy of her, and it becomes a means driving her into unhappiness.

Lily's escape from Selden due to his lack of money is also obvious during the night at 'tableau vivant'. Lily and Selden sit on a bench and she again tells him that he has unfair opinions about her. Selden responds the statement saying "I think of you at any rate, God knows!" (145) He confesses that she is always in his mind and also in his heart by adding the expression "The only way I can help you is by loving you,...". (145) The answer Lily gives reveals her fear of being loved by him. She says, "Ah, love me, love me--but don't tell me so!"(145) She gets excited, but she is afraid because if he says he loves her, she can declare her own love for him and this causes her to distract her path to prosperity. Therefore, she wants him not to express his feelings. She sees love as a handicap to richness, not as the meaning of life. Thus, she prepares her own end.

In fact, another reason why they cannot come together is that Selden is very different from Lily in character and upbringing. His parents have never cared for money and avoided extravagance. After he has left the college, he "... had learned that there are as many ways of going without money as of spending it." (161) He is raised to know that there are some other ways to survive rather than spending money. Money is not the only thing that makes people content with life. Therefore, he is not so much sorry for his position and does not want more than he has unlike Lily.

Throughout the novel, Lily runs away from the chances of happiness and love with Selden and only meets him as a friend who shows her the true way to go. She only wants him to give her advice. She also loses the prospect of friendship with him when Selden sees her going out of Gus Trenor's house. In fact, Lily goes to his house as she is informed that his wife wants to see her. When she arrives there, she realizes that this is trap of Gus Trenor who has sexual inclinations to her. He wants her to pay her debts coming from the stock market investments by making love with him. As an honorable woman, she refuses his offer and leaves the house. Seeing her departure from the house, Selden is disappointed because he cannot understand how she lowers her dignity to this extent. He knows Trenor is a vindictive man and what he feels for Lily. He again listens to the voice of his rationale and condemns her though he does not know the exact reason why she is there. Hearing Selden's knowledge about the night at Trenors', Lily hates herself since she is about to lose her best friend. Afterwards, Selden tries not to enter the environment where Lily attends. However, he is in conflict with himself when

he thinks of whether he has a chance to see Lily on the Riviera, while she is on the cruise along with Dorsets. Still, “the news of her nearness was really affecting him.” (194) As he loves her, he cannot forget Lily and the idea of seeing her still excites him. She is the meaning of his life though he cannot put his love into words. He maintains a distance from Lily, but the knowledge that she is nearby makes him thrilled :

“... The feeling he had nourished and given prominence to was one of thankfulness for his escape: he was like a traveller so grateful for rescue from a dangerous accident that at first he is hardly conscious of his bruises. Now he suddenly felt the latent ache, and realized that after all he had not come off unhurt.”(194).

He remembers Lily’s association the wealthy life with the gilt cage confining people within, and her expressions about success and life in general have made him anxious and upset. Now he realizes that he has not been able to get out of it, either. He has wanted to escape from her, but he could not overcome his love. He has not been able to get out of the cage without being hurt, but not by his desire for wealth. What hurts him is his hidden love for Lily.

He is, at the same time, aware of the danger Lily is in. He knows that Bertha is jealous of Lily, and she will play her cards against her during the cruise. What he thinks becomes a reality, and during a dinner with the socialites, Bertha plays her last trump and rumours that Lily has seduced her husband on the yacht, which causes her to be expelled from the society.

That night, again Selden helps Lily to find a place to stay. He takes her to his cousin Gerty Farish who is a poor girl engaged in philanthropic activities. After that night Lily cannot improve her position in the eyes of the society, and she is also excluded from her aunt’s will. She is left just ten thousand dollars which is due to be paid only one year after. This event devastates Lily’s all economic expectations from her aunt. Her aunt is a traditional woman giving importance to Victorian values for women and she cannot tolerate the fact that a person who is from her family allows her name to be talked in an adulterous event. She does not want her own name to be spelled along with Lily’s; therefore, she declares that she does not have a niece like Lily by

preventing her from taking any more money from herself. She thinks that her aunt has believed the rumours because

“... Where a woman is concerned, it's the story that's easiest to believe. In this case it's a great deal easier to believe Bertha Dorset's story than mine, because she has a big house and an opera box, and it's convenient to be on good terms with her.”
(233)

Material possessions are those which protect everyone against misdoings. Lily draws attention to the distinction between the rich and poor. Rich people are more reliable in that society where the poor have even no words to say. She thinks that people believe what Bertha talks about her, because she is a prominent and wealthy woman. She has many properties to conceal her disgrace whereas Lily has nothing to defend herself. For a while, Lily works with Gerty, and afterwards Mrs. Fischer, who is always kind and helpful to Lily throughout the novel, arranges a job for her with Mattie Gormer, who is holding a party in Alaska and needs help. However, Lily misunderstands Mrs. Fischer's offer, saying: "To take me out of my friends' way, you mean?"(244) Lily thinks that she tries to prevent her from attending the group of wealthy people. Mrs. Fischer denies this accusation because her intention is not to hurt Lily. She only wants to keep her out of sight only for a short time. Then, she finds a job as a secretary next to Norma Hatch who has a wicked reputation, but she has to quit her job because Mrs. Hatch disregards a dishonest relationship arranged for a young man to get married with an old lady. In fact, Selden has warned her to leave the job, but out of pride, she cannot say she will do. After Selden leaves the place, she says she cannot work and gives up the job. Her last job experience which is millinery ends up in failure, too. She is made redundant as she cannot make hats as told.

Mrs. Fischer also suggests that she marry someone else. By doing this, people will not talk about her any more. One nominee is a newly-rich man, Simon Rosedale who wants to use Lily as an asset for his social climb. In fact, he is a good chance in terms of money, yet she does not find it morally true: she does not love him, and if she marries him, she thinks she will deceive both him and herself. The other is George Dorset whom she is rumored to have an adulterous relationship. The latter is even out of question. After the words rumored about them, she cannot bear seeing him, let alone

thinking of marriage with him. On the other hand, she does not marry Selden whom she really loves, either.

Losing her last marriage chances and being penniless, Lily settles a boarding house. She remembers the letters which she has bought from the maid working at Selden's apartment and are written to Selden by Bertha Dorset. However, she hesitates to use them since they will not only affect Bertha. She does not want Selden to be hurt because of her own selfishness. Therefore, she goes to Selden to say sorry for that she has not understood him and she confesses:

“... I have tried hard--but life is difficult, and I am a very useless person. I can hardly be said to have an independent existence. I was just a screw or a cog in the great machine I called life, and when I dropped out of it I found I was of no use anywhere else. What can one do when one finds that one only fits into one hole? One must get back to it or be thrown out into the rubbish heap--and you don't know what it's like in the rubbish heap!”(320)

She has lost her self-reliance and feels herself as a failure in life. She confesses that she has tried hard to improve her position, but she has failed. She understands that Selden is right in his attempts to make her get rid of her pursuit of money. She sees herself as a part of a machine which has no use after taken out of it. She has been a part of the wealthy set, but when excluded, she has lost her value and she is thrown into non-existence. She begins to live among the meaningless parts of the society which she is not raised for. She has no other terms to define herself apart from the wealthy set. She has been conditioned only for splendor and when it is gone, she becomes nothing. On the contrary, Selden has spirituality and the strong character which enable him to resist the difficulties he encounters. He can find other choices to deal with when he fails something.

She becomes aware of the mistakes she has done, but it is too late. She says she has come to him for the last time to leave Lily he knew there and to say goodbye to him. She breaks into tears and Selden wants to help her. She says he has told her once he could help her by loving, but it is she who has refused. When Selden leaves the room to make a cup of coffee, she throws the love letters into the fire, burning old and base Lily

together with them. When she is ready to leave, Selden states that she cannot go out of his life. This shows his love, but as she is determined to keep away from all of her past, she leaves his house.

After she has left, he cannot understand what Lily means by saying ‘Goodbye!’ and soon he realizes the barrier keeping them apart. He decides to correct things all at once. He intends to visit Lily and declare his emotions, but he does not have any time, because at that night, Lily drinks chloral which she has begun to take in order to sleep and has been warned not to exceed the dosage prescribed. However, this time she drinks more than ever since she really needs sleep. At the same night, she receives the cheque accounting for ten thousand dollars. She prepares her debt to Trenor in an envelope, leaving it open on the table. Then, she goes to sleep which will last forever.

In the morning, determined to say that he loves her, Selden arrives her room, and he encounters her dead body. He feels so sorry for her, and

“He saw that all the conditions of life had conspired to keep them apart; since his very detachment from the external influences which swayed her had increased his spiritual fastidiousness, and made it more difficult for him to live and love uncritically. But at least he *had* loved her, had been willing to stake his future on his faith in her, and if the moment had been fated to pass from them before they could seize it, he saw now that, for both, it had been saved whole out of the ruin of their lives.” (342)

When he sees Lily lying on her bed, he understands that everything in life has worked together in order to break them apart. The influence of the material things on her has made him spiritually unpleasant, and he could not help criticizing her values. He has loved her and been ready to put all he has at risk for her; however, the time which they have to grasp for their love has gone, and the lives of them has turned out to be a meaningless whole. Neither of them can say they love each other – Lily because of her quest for a rich husband and Selden because of his fear of her quest for wealth. He has thought that she will not accept his offer as he does not have the money Lily wants. Lily thought that he cannot provide her with the wealthy life she was raised for and desired most. Consequently, her crave for wealth and the luxurious life has surpassed her love. “He knelt by the bed and bent over her, draining their last moment to its lees; and in the

silence there passed between them the word which made all clear.” (342) This word is love which has never been confessed by them openly. Although they have loved each other, their love has been defeated by their desires and fears of money.

3.2. MORALITY

This section handles the moral values in terms of morality and individual conscience. As known, “Conscience is an ability or faculty or sense that distinguishes whether our actions are right or wrong. It leads to feelings of remorse when we do things that go against our moral values, and to feelings of rectitude or integrity when our actions conform to our moral values. It is also the attitude which informs our moral judgment before performing any action.”⁴⁴

The characters in the novels have to assess their conscience when they encounter the difficulty in choosing between right or wrong things according to the moral values of their society and to their own personal desires.

Newland Archer in **The Age of Innocence** and Ethan Frome in **Ethan Frome** listen to their consciences before they take the most important steps in their lives. They are about to do the wrong thing, but they are conducted to the right path by their conscience. The wrong thing is adultery, and it is contrary to the conventions of the society attributed to men. Both men are married, and they have some responsibilities for these women. As the heads of the family circle, they have to protect the women and their dignity and they are not supposed to betray their wives because adultery is not a reasonable thing according to the morals of the society. In addition, men are bound to maintain their marriages as it is, though unhappy.

At the beginning of **The Age of Innocence**, Newland Archer leads a conventional life with his family and his fiancée. One day, Ellen Olenska who is May’s cousin enters into their lives, but she is a woman who displays European values which are in opposition to May’s American childish manners. In addition, as she is thought to violate the conventions of New York society, she is not easily accepted by the people. The reason is that she leaves her husband and wants to get divorced. At first, Newland Archer does not want Ellen to be near to May because he is disturbed by Ellen’s position in the society. However, May wants him to treat her friendly and spend time with her. Therefore, he begins to visit her home, and he sends yellow roses, which have

⁴⁴ Wikipedia contributors. Conscience [Internet]. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia; 2008 Feb 4, 07:03 UTC [cited 2008 Feb 4]. Available from:<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Conscience&oldid=188979231>.

bad connotations, to her as he sends white lilies which symbolize purity and innocence to May every day. Therefore, May lays the foundations of their convergence.

Archer and Ellen also come closer when Ellen explains her decision about divorce from her husband Count Olenski. May's family wants Archer to deal with the matter himself. Initially, he gets angry, for he does not want to interfere in the situation and does not want to be seen with her as an engaged man. However, he reluctantly accepts the duty.

In the course of time, they fall in love, but they cannot actualize their love because Archer is now a married man and he is responsible for his wife. Even though he is married, he cannot forget about Ellen and he often finds excuses to see her. Even he wants to follow Ellen to Washington under the name of business although it means telling lies to his wife. He is not aware of the fact that May knows everything about their love affair; yet, she does not mind as she knows that her husband will come back at the end. Through the last pages of the novel, we see that May is right: One night, May wants to talk to Archer about Ellen. She says:

“... I know I've been unfair to her at times – perhaps we all have. You've understood her, no doubt, better than we did: you have always been kind to her. But what does it matter, now it's all over? - since she's going back to Europe so soon; since Granny approves and understands, and has arranged to make her independent of her husband - .” (194)

May knows Ellen is going back to Europe since she writes a note for May. Archer wants to see the note and is disappointed upon learning about her departure. However, he is relieved to hear that she does not return to her husband. He thinks he still can go after Ellen. Nevertheless, when May tells him that they are going to have a baby, this hope is gone. He immediately asks if she has ever talked about it to anybody else. May declares that only her mother and Ellen knows. At that time, the world of Archer is devastated by this fact. He understands Ellen leaves the city only for the baby. This shows Ellen's moral values are strong. Formerly Archer suggests that she become his mistress and she tells him she prefers leaving the city to living as a kept woman. When Archer wants to know her plan for them, Ellen says:

“For *us*? But there’s no *us* in that sense! We’re near each other only if we stay far from each other. Then we can be ourselves. Otherwise we’re only Newland Archer, the husband of Ellen Olenska’s cousin, and Ellen Olenska, the cousin of Newland Archer’s wife, trying to be happy behind the backs of the people who trust them.” (175)

The quotation is the indication of the social repression on the characters. They love each other, but in order to avoid the society’s opposition to adultery, they are going to wear masks before public. They will pretend as if they are only relatives because they know they cannot be happy while the others trust them in that they do not do anything to destroy the family circle. Now, it is not morally true to leave a baby without a father according to Ellen.

Therefore, Archer continues his life as a seemingly faithful husband and a loving father since with the news of May’s pregnancy,

“... he is restrained from leaving not by any objective and external force – but by the deep rooted conviction that his own moral duty must ultimately be defined by family obligations. The child that May carries represents a felt demand that has been internalized and thus that he cannot ignore.”⁴⁵

Although he keeps his love for Ellen in his heart to the end of the novel, he understands that he cannot leave May and his child alone. Immediately after he learns May’s pregnancy, his conscience reminds him of his duties as a husband and a father. Therefore, as a sensitive man, he gives up his hopeless love for the sake of his baby.

Ethan Frome is a man whose “duties as a son are discharged because he is a son; his duties as a husband are discharged because he is a husband. He does nothing by moral election. He must choose between his habituated duty to his wife and his duty and inclination to the girl he loves.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Cynthis Griffin Wolff, “*The Age of Innocence* As A Bildungsroman” in **The Age of Innocence**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003, p.432.

⁴⁶ Lionel Trilling, “The Morality of Inertia” in **Ethan Frome**, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995, p.128.

In the novel, Ethan's moral side first displays itself when he gives up his education on science and returns to look after his mother and the jobs at the farm because his father dies. As the only son of the family, this is his duty to look after them, but he becomes "one of those who have been chained to the soil by the duty of caring for a family of stricken elders - ..."⁴⁷ Still, he accepts his condition and stays at the farm with his mother. If he was not a conscientious boy, he would not come back to the farm leaving his parents to their fate's hands.

Secondly, Ethan Frome, like Newland Archer, gives up his love for Mattie for the sake of his sickly wife. Ethan is married Zeena who is a hypochondriac woman. She always complains about her health and she does not fulfill any duties as a housewife and a wife. She is, in fact, a burden on Ethan's shoulders both financially and spiritually. Her need for pills and her visits to the doctors add up to Ethan's impoverished life. One day, as Ellen enters into the world of Archer, his wife's cousin Mattie enters into their house to look after Zeena and to do the household. She comes to live with them because her father is a man who earns money in unlawful ways and exploits his relatives' money, too. After his death, her mother

"... died of disclosure, and Mattie, at twenty, was left alone to make her way on the fifty dollars obtained from the sale of her piano."
(25)

It is understood that her parents' deaths, leaves her penniless. So, she has to work, but the things she can do is limited. She can only make hats, recite only one line of the poem by Rosa Hartwick Thorpe, play some parts of *Carmen* which is a French Opera by Georges Bizet. She tries to improve her skills in stenography, book-keeping and working behind the counter of a store, yet her health begins to deteriorate. (26) Moreover, she is, naturally, not backed up by her relatives and she has to accept Zeena's offer to be the keeper of her and her house.

Thinking that she is "a hopeful young life" (15) when compared to his wife, Ethan begins to be attracted by her lively existence. Mattie enters into their life "like the lighting of a fire on a cold hearth." (15) It is mentioned before Ellen is everything that is

⁴⁷ "Three Lives in Supreme Torture"; Mrs. Wharton's "Ethan Frome" a Cruel, Compelling, Haunting Story of New England" in New York Times, New York, 1911.

not May. This is true for Zeena and Mattie. Mattie is young, beautiful and lively. She is “like a window that has caught the sunset” (15) whereas Zeena herself is the symbol of the cold of winter which bars all their actions in the novel. Throughout the novel, we see that Ethan regains his happiness after Mattie’s coming to the farm. He is only happy when she is around. He even begins to shave along with her arrival. When he is with Zeena, we again watch destitute and unhappy Ethan.

One night, Ethan goes to bring Mattie back home from a dance, and that night he expresses his love for her. She says she also likes him. However, they cannot enjoy their happiness because of both social conventions and Zeena. Victorian morality does not find adultery reasonable, and Zeena is jealous of Mattie. Out of envy, Zeena wants to send Mattie away because her aunt finds a new hired girl instead of her. She talks to Ethan about her decision to exclude Mattie from their life. Hearing that, Ethan is devastated as Archer is in **The Age of Innocence** when he hears Ellen is leaving the city, because like him, Ethan will lose the most meaningful thing in his life, too.

Ethan wants to go away with Mattie, but he does not have any money, and

“... Borrowing was out of the question: six months before he had given his only security to raise funds for necessary repairs to the mill, and he knew that without security no one at Starkfield would lend him ten dollars. The inexorable facts closed in on him like prison-warders handcuffing a convict. There was no way out-none. He was a prisoner for life, and now his one ray of light was to be extinguished.” (55)

Here Ethan’s financial problems are emphasized. He lives in a society which is avaricious and selfish. Therefore, he knows that nobody in the village will lend him money if he cannot guarantee he will pay back. So, as he is broke, he has no way out. He is confined to his poverty and he cannot find an exit to the happiness. Then, he chooses to tell a lie and comes by one of his neighbors, Mr. Hale. He intends to say Zeena does not feel well again, and he needs money for taking her to the doctor. Thus, he can borrow money from him and they have the chance to elope. However, Mrs. Hale says

“... I'm real sorry she's feeling so bad again! I hope he thinks he can do something for her. I don't know anybody round here's had more sickness than Zeena. I always tell Mr. Hale I don't know what she'd 'a' done if she hadn't 'a' had you to look after her; and I used to say the same thing 'bout your mother. You've had an awful mean time, Ethan Frome.” (58)

He cannot reach his goal because, all of a sudden, his conscience tells him he is taking advantage of two sympathetic persons to get money, and he cannot deceive these people who pity him (58-59).

Then, abandoning his hopes to find money, Ethan takes Mattie to the station. On the way, Mattie reminds him his promise that he will take her to the coasting, but suddenly she says:

“Right into the big elm. You said you could. So ‘t we’d never have to leave each other any more.” (67-68)

Here Mattie means committing suicide instead of living apart. At first, Ethan thinks that this is madness, but when Mattie tells him she is going to be mad if she leaves him, Ethan gives in to the idea. In fact, this shows Mattie’s selfishness. She wants to die, for if she goes away without Ethan, she does not have anything to get by or nobody to depend on. She also uses Ethan’s affection for her own benefit by saying:

"Ethan, where'll I go if I leave you? I don't know how to get along alone. You said so yourself just now. Nobody but you was ever good to me. And there'll be that strange girl in the house... and she'll sleep in my bed, where I used to lay nights and listen to hear you come up the stairs..." (68)

Under the influence of her words, he agrees to do what she wants. As they go farther, the big elm tree, which symbolizes strength of will (which is in contrast with Ethan’s), comes closer and bigger, and at that time,

“...his wife's face, with twisted monstrous lineaments, thrust itself between him and his goal...” (69)

Suddenly, he visualizes his wilted and ugly wife and at that time his conscience reminds him he is responsible for his wife on the grounds that she is sick (!) and needs to be looked after.

In addition, he thinks monetary problems they have. If he dies, his wife cannot overcome the debts on her own:

“... what of Zeena's fate? Farm and mill were mortgaged to the limit of their value, and even if she found a purchaser-in itself an unlikely chance-it was doubtful if she could clear a thousand dollars on the sale. Meanwhile, how could she keep the farm going? It was only by incessant labour and personal supervision that Ethan drew a meagre living from his land, and his wife, even if she were in better health than she imagined, could never carry such a burden alone.” (54)

Since they are poor and living under hard conditions in a small village, his wife cannot maintain the failing farm and saw-mill when she is left alone. After his death, she will not find any way to make a living.

When considering these, Ethan, at the last minute, gives up committing suicide and like Archer, listens to the voice of his conscience and does not leave his wife on her own. However, they still have an accident. Although he is disabled after the accident, he continues to live with his wife. He does what is right morally.

In **The House of Mirth**, we see another form of morality. Lily, as told in “Social Conventions” section, is a woman in the quest for wealth in order to obtain a status among the prosperous people in the society. She tries to attract rich men, but in fact she loves Lawrence Selden coming from middle class. During her efforts to gain a prominent place in the wealthy set, she does not play her actual role. Indeed, she does not have enough money and she

“... is invited to parties and trips abroad because of her beauty and her ability to add a splash of life to an otherwise dull gathering of people. Her high society friends observe and judge her every move, but do not penetrate the surface of her being to understand who she is and why she does the things

she does. The poorer Lily becomes, the more the people who are supposed to be her friends stand back and watch. In fact, they patiently await their opportunity to add their “dramatic contribution to the wasting of Lily”⁴⁸

This quotation is the evidence of the fact that physical appearance is superior to inner qualities. Everything is based on money and people are respected in terms of their wealth. This shows the ugliness of relationships among people in a society dominated by Victorian values. Lily becomes the prey of such a society through the end of the novel when Bertha Dorset invites her to a cruise in Mediterranean along with her husband George Dorset and a young man called Ned Silverton. Bertha is a vicious woman who takes pleasure in making people around her, notably her husband, sorry. So, Bertha’s aim at calling Lily is to make her go out of the scene. In fact, what she is after is best understood from Mrs. Fisher’s words. She tells Selden who is worried about Lily’s company with Bertha:

“... Bertha is jealous of her success here and at Cannes, and I shouldn't be surprised if there were a break any day. Lily's only safeguard is that Bertha needs her badly--oh, very badly. The Silverton affair is in the acute stage: it's necessary that George's attention should be pretty continuously distracted. And I'm bound to say Lily *does* distract it: I believe he'd marry her tomorrow if he found out there was anything wrong with Bertha. But you know him--he's as blind as he's jealous; and of course Lily's present business is to keep him blind.” (196)

It is clear that Lily is in an intriguing incidence. Bertha has an extramarital affair with Ned Silverton and she does not want her husband George to learn about this. Lily will distract him and they will have a good time in the absence of George. However, Bertha spreads the rumor that Lily has a relationship with her husband. In that society, as discussed before, adultery of a woman was not acceptable. Therefore, after the cruise, this event causes Lily to be completely excluded from the wealthy set.

⁴⁸ Amanda Lesak, “The Challenge of Adaptation: The Inadaptability of Lily Bart and The House of Mirth”, **Fixing a Hole: Bridging the Gap between Text and Performance**, Senior Seminar in English, State University of West Georgia, Fall 2001, p.91.

Indeed, these all result from Bertha's jealousy of Lily. Lily is an attractive woman and she is easily accepted in a circle. Bertha designs this scenario as she cannot help the royalty's fondness of Lily. She gets so jealous that she behaves ruthlessly. Before that event, Lily also learns that Bertha is the woman who arranges the marriage between Percy Gryce and Evie Van Osburgh. (Percy Gryce is her prey in the beginning of the novel, but Lily loses her chance to get married with him because she prefers to spend time with Selden whom she truly loves.) She does whatever she can so as to secure her own position in the society. In this context, she exploits all of Lily's hopes for a better life.

Lily has an advantage over Bertha. Once sitting in her room, she has a woman visitor called Mrs. Haffen. She is the maid at Selden's apartment. They only meet at the beginning of the novel when Selden invites her to tea. While Lily is leaving the apartment, Mrs. Haffen sees her and thinks that she is the lover of Selden. Therefore, when she finds some love letters written to Selden, she brings them to Lily. Although she does not have enough money, Lily buys the letters from the woman because she sees that they are written by Bertha Dorset (although the relationship between them is not evidently stated in the novel). In fact, Lily buys the letters as she thinks that if someone else gets the letters, he could use them to hurt Selden. In fact, she herself does not use the letters, either. Her life ends up in a boarding house because of Bertha Dorset, and she has a treasure in her hands to turn Bertha's life upside down.

However, she thinks that when the mystery of the letters is revealed, Selden will also suffer from it. Lily loves him and does not want Selden to lose his position because of her own vengeance. Her conscience leads her to the right path, and when she goes to say goodbye to Selden, she takes the letters with her and at Selden's house, she throws them into the fire without anybody knowing. If she listened to her emotions, she would take her revenge from Bertha; on the other hand, she maybe would lose Selden to the end of her life even at least as a friend.

4.0. CONCLUSION

During the *Gilded Age*, America was becoming a wealthy nation, surpassing its rivals. There was a rapid growth in every field of life: railroads, stock market, banks and trade. This entailed a shift in socio-cultural life, too. As people began to earn much money, they reflected their wealth in their material values. They started to build grand houses like mansions and gave extravagant parties. They wore their best dresses and jewels in these parties to show their richness. As they lacked taste of beauty, they bought expensive furniture although it was ugly. They were not interested in the physical magnificence of their properties. They regarded wealth as a means of competing one another in the social circle.

In such an environment, relationships among people were hypocritical and pious although they were innocent when looked from outside. They seemed to have values such as family honour and gentility. This was the picture seen, but in fact, it was a corrupt society. Material possessions and physical appearance were important. They pretended to like one another, and even they made loveless marriages. They had to wear masks in public not to contradict the values of this prosperous milieu although they had different desires. All of these pretensions led to distinction between Old and New New Yorkers; new New Yorkers were newly-rich and composed the bourgeoisie. While old New Yorkers gave importance to the social conventions and they were more honest and balanced, New ones were only busy with making money and showing it off. Therefore, we can say that Wharton in these novels satirizes American Dream of Success through her depictions of these people because they were in pursuit of gaining status and wealth and for this aim they sacrificed their personalities.

In **The Age of Innocence** (1920) and **The House of Mirth** (1905), the society is haunted by splendor and magnificence. Even the people are always referred by their family names and hierarchy is everything for them. The characters all have distinguished status before the eyes of the public, and therefore, they cannot do anything to violate the established order. The one attempting to destroy this order is immediately excluded from the group because they live in an atmosphere where they could only survive if they are adherent to its conventions. The protagonist Newland Archer in **The Age of Innocence** is negatively affected by his actions opposing the ideas and manners of the public. He is engaged with May Welland who is the symbol of every pleasant

feature according to the Victorian decorum, but he is in love with Countess Ellen Olenska, who is thought to commit adultery and is not accepted into the society. Over time, he realizes that people including his family circle are aware of his love, and that any small effort to reveal his emotions can destroy his social position as both the heir of a prominent family and as a privileged lawyer. Therefore, he chooses to end his passion for Ellen and marries May because both families want these two prominent figures to unite. He prefers to do what the social environment requires him to. He is driven into the role of an ordinary married man whose responsibilities are his wife and children.

Lily Bart, in **The House of Mirth**, like Newland Archer, sacrifices her true feelings to social necessities. She lives in a wealthy society, but she does not have any financial support except for the little money coming from her aunt. Because of her upbringing by her mother, she hates vulgarity and poverty, and she thinks that she must find a rich man to marry if she wants to survive among the prosperous people. She does everything such as gambling and having friendships with wealthy men in order to obtain richness. In fact, she does not approve her mother's ideas; however, she cannot help pursuing wealth as she is raised to do it. On the other hand, she loves Lawrence Selden who is not a member of the rich group. She thinks he will not provide her with the unconstrained lifestyle she is used to. Therefore, she ignores Selden's affectionate feelings about her. At the end, losing both her means and true love, she dies.

It is obvious that both characters are under the influence of the conventions of the society and their families. They are the victims of the norms and they surrender to the strict regulations which lead them to be strangled in unhappiness. In a society woven with Victorian values, they are helpless and their needs and desires are of secondary importance. "... they are unable to gratify their deeper selves because of the demands of strait-laced society."⁴⁹ The expectations of the narrow-minded society overwhelm their inner world. For Archer, fear of losing his status causes him to give up his love for Ellen

⁴⁹ David P. Barash, "Biology Lurks Beneath: Bioliterary Explorations of the Individual versus Society" in *Evolutionary Psychology*, Volume 2, Seattle: University of Washington, Department of Psychology, 2004, p. 210

and he is defeated by his social priorities for the sake of his wife and children. For Lily, her ambition to maintain the noticeable place among the rich gives way to her death.

On the other hand, as they are raised to adhere to the social conventions, they make themselves scapegoats. They are under the pressure of their families even if they are either intellectual like Archer or uneducated like Lily. They cannot realize freely what they want because their lives are trapped by the familial priorities. Archer's family wants him to make a decent marriage with May, and Lily's mother wants her daughter to follow the traces of wealth, which means a rich husband. Consequently, it can be concluded that Wharton in these novels creates unhappy and hopeless characters. Archer and Lily always disregard the voices of their hearts and allow the conventions to defeat them.

Another unhappy character of Wharton is Ethan Frome in **Ethan Frome** (1911). He wants to go to the college to finish his science education and to settle in a large town. However, his dreams are tumbled. As the only son of his family, he is expected to look after his mother who is mentally ill and to deal with the farm after his father's death because the works on the failing farm are to be handled. His duties as a son require him to obey the social codes attached to the children. Therefore, he relinquishes his aims to be an engineer, and comes back to the farm, leading a poor life. Not being able to handle everything on his own, he invites Zenobia (Zeena) who comes and helps him for his mother's care and housework. After his mother's death, he asks her to marry only out of fear of loneliness. This loveless marriage bears its negative results soon and Zeena turns out to be a hypochondriac woman stifling his spirit and wearing him away financially because of her medical expenses. One day, everything in Ethan's life changes with Mattie coming to the farm. Living a destitute life with Zeena, Ethan falls in love with her and his love is mutual. When Zeena is aware of his love and wants to send her from the house, they decide to commit suicide. At the last minute, Ethan remembers his duties for his wife and avoids the suicide, but it is too late. They are saved from the attempt, becoming crippled.

Morality also affects the characters in terms of conscience in these novels. Archer seeks for a reunion with Ellen, whatever it costs. However, he learns that May is pregnant and his conscience tells him to stay with his family. Ellen loves Archer, but when she is informed of the baby before Archer, she decides to leave the city in order

not to leave the baby without parental affection. Lily has a chance to be accepted again into the wealthy set from which she is expelled. She has love letters written by Bertha Dorset who is the cause of Lily's exclusion from the society to Lawrence Selden. This is not an acceptable thing in that Victorian society as she is a married woman. Still, Lily does not use them to blackmail her, because the young man is Selden whom she is truly in love with. If she reveals the mystery of the letters, he will be destroyed, too. Therefore, she upholds her conditions and prefers to die as a conscientious woman. Ethan Frome gives up committing suicide because they are poor and his wife cannot struggle with the failing saw-mill, a poor farm and debts. So, he does the right thing. Although they do not die and are crippled, Ethan is relieved not to leave his helpless wife alone.

Wharton only writes about the problems of the characters. She does not give a solution or have an outlet for the problems. We only know the reasons leading the characters into dilemmas, but we are not told about the solutions. Although this shows her being a modern writer, she is generally regarded as a novelist of manners.

Women characters deserve to be analyzed in terms of gender. Most of them are uneducated and brought up to please men. They are only defined by the names and status of their husbands and families. For them only physical appearance is important. They are devoid of spirituality and always try to betray others and undermine the others' positions, especially in the characterization of Bertha Dorset and Grace Stepney in **The House of Mirth**. They ensnare the others and use their failures as steps for their own successes.

5.0. EDITH WHARTON'S CHRONOLOGY

1862: Edith Newbold Jones was born on January 24, New York City.

1866-72: She lived and travelled in France, Germany, Italy, and Spain with family.

1872-79: She lived in New York City during winters; she spent summers in Newport.

1876-77: She wrote her first story called "Fast and Loose" which received negative reviews.

1878: She compiled her 29 poems in the book called **Verses** privately published by her mother.

1879: Her debut was made into the society at a ball and she met Harry Stevens whom she got engaged.

1880-82: She traveled in France and Italy, and because of father's illness, they lived in Rome.

1882: Her father died, and they returned to New York City. By the way, Edith and Harry broke up because of his mother's opposition.

1883: She met her friend Walter Berry who had an influence on literary profession.

1885: She got married to Edward (Teddy) R. Wharton.

1889: Her first poems were published in *Scribner's Magazine*.

1891: "Mrs. Manstey's View" and "The Muse's Tragedy" were published in *Scribner's Magazine*. She wrote the *The Bunner Sisters*, but it was not published until 1917.

1893: "The Fullness of Life" was published in *Scribner's Magazine*.

1894: “That Good May Come” was published in *Scribner’s Magazine*.

1895: “The Lamp of Psyche” was published in Scribner’s Magazine. In addition, “The Valley of Childish Things, and Other Emblems” was published in *Century Magazine*.

1897: Wharton and Ogden Codman wrote **The Decoration of Houses** in which they changed the Victorian style in architecture.

1898: “House of the Dead Hand” was published in *Atlantic Monthly*. “The Pelican” was published in *Scribner’s Magazine*. She had a nervous breakdown because of her contradiction between her roles as a married woman and a writer.

1899: Her first short story collection “The Greater Inclination” was published by *Scribner’s Magazine*. The book included “The Pelican,” “The Coward,” “A Cup of Cold Water,” “A Journey,” “The Portrait,” “Souls Belated,” and “The Twilight of the God”

1900: “April Showers” was published in *Youth’s Companion*. The Touchstone began to be published in serials in *Scribner’s Magazine*. In addition, “Copy” and “The Duchess at Prayer” were published in *Scribner’s Magazine*.

“The Rembrandt” was published in *Hearst’s International-Cosmopolitan* and “The Line of Least Resistance” was published in *Lippincott’s*.

1901: “The Recovery” and “The Moving Finger” were published in *Harper’s Magazine*. In April, *Scribner’s Magazine* published “Crucial Instances” which included the stories called “The Duchess at Prayer,” “The Angel at the Grave,” “The Recovery,” “Copy,” “The Rembrandt,” “The Moving Finger,” and “The Confessional.

In this year, her mother died. Wharton began to build The Mount in Lenox, Massachusetts.

1902: “Valley of Decision” published by *Scribner’s*. The Joy of Living which is the translation of the play *Es Lebe das Leben* by Hermann Sudermann was published as a book by *Scribner’s*.

“The Reckoning” published in *Harper’s Magazine*.

She moved into The Mount in September.

“The Lady’s Maid’s Bell” in *Scribner’s Magazine* and “The Mission of Jane” in *Harper’s Magazine* were published.

1903: **Sanctuary** was published by *Scribner’s*. “The Dilettante” was published in *Harper’s Magazine*.

Her husband begins to have mental and physical breakdowns.

Meanwhile, her friendship began with Henry James.

“Expiation” was published in *Hearst’s International-Cosmopolitan*.

“A Venetian Night’s Entertainment” was published in *Scribner’s Magazine*.

1904: “The Other Two” was published in *Collier’s*. In *Harper Magazine*, “The Letter” and “The Quicksand” were published in *Harper’s Magazine*.

“The Last Asset” and “The Pot Boiler” were published in *Scribner’s Magazine*.

Another short story collection called **The Descent of Man and Other Stories** was published by Scribner’s, including “The Descent of Man,” “The Mission of Jane,” “The Other Two,” “The Quicksand,” “The Dilettante,” “The Reckoning,” “Expiation,” “The Lady’s Maid’s Bell,” and “A Venetian Night’s Entertainment”.

Italian Villas and Their Gardens was published by The Century Company. It was an essay collection.

1905: **The House of Mirth** with which she took her place in American Literature was published by *Scribner’s*.

Italian Backgrounds – another essay collection – was published by *Scribner's*.

“The Introducers” was published in *Ainslee's*.

1906: “The Hermit and the Wild Woman” was published in *Scribner's Magazine*.

“In Trust” was published in *Booklover's*.

1907: She moved to Paris. She traveled in France by her automobile with Teddy and Henry James. She loved driving very much.

Madame de Treymes and **The Fruit of the Tree** were published by *Scribner's*.

She met Morton Fullerton with whom she had a three-year love affair.

1908: Her essays on travel **A Motor-Flight through France** was published by *Scribner's*.

“The Choice” was published in *Century Magazine*.

“The Verdict” and “The Pretext” were published in *Scribner's Magazine*.

“Les Metteurs en Scène” was published in *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

Short story collection **The Hermit and the Wild Woman** was published by Scribner's, including “The Hermit and the Wild Woman,” “The Last Asset,” “In Trust,” “The Pretext,” “The Verdict,” “The Pot Boiler,” and “The Best Man”.

1909: Her poetry collection *Artemis to Actaeon and Other Verses* was published by *Scribner's*.

“The Daunt Diana”, “Full Circle”, “His Father's Son” and “The Debt” were published in *Scribner's Magazine*.

She learns that her husband has a love affair and spends some of her money for his mistress.

1910: “Afterward” and “The Letters” were published in the January issue of *Century Magazine*.

“The Eyes” and “The Legend” were published in the June issue of *Scribner’s Magazine*.

Her first ghost story collection **Tales of Men and Ghosts** was published by *Scribner’s* which included “The Bolted Door,” “His Father’s Son,” “The Daunt Diana,” “The Debt,” “Full Circle,” “The Legend,” “The Eyes,” “The Blond Beast,” “Afterward,” and “The Letters”.

1911: Ethan Frome was published.

“Autre Temps” was published in *Century Magazine*.

“Xingu” was published in *Scribner’s Magazine*.

She left her husband and settled in France.

1912: The Reef was published by *Appleton and Company*. “The Long Run” was published in *Atlantic Monthly*

1913: The Custom of the Country was published by *Scribner’s*.

She began to write **Literature**, but when World War I began, she gave up writing it.

She got divorced from Teddy.

1914: “The Triumph of Night” was published in *Scribner’s Magazine*. She traveled in Africa with friends. She did relief work during the war and she helped refugees.

1915: She organized Children of Flanders Committee in order to help Belgian orphans.

She visited front lines and battle areas and she wrote articles about war experiences.

Fighting France, from Dunkerque to Belfort was published by *Scribner’s*

1916: So as to help war charities, she wrote **Book of the Homeless which is a gift book**. It was published by *Scribner's*.

She was awarded the title of Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor.

“Kerfol” was published in *Scribner's Magazine*.

Her close friend Henry James died.

1917: *Summer* was published by *Appleton*.

Xingu and Other Stories was published by *Scribner's* including “Xingu,” “Coming Home,” “Autre Temps,” “Kerfol,” “The Long Run,” “The Triumph of Night,” “The Choice,” and “Bunner Sisters”.

She traveled to Morocco with her friends.

1918: “The Refugees” was published in Saturday Evening Post.

The Marne was published in Saturday Evening Post and in *Appleton* as a book.

She bought Pavillon Colombe outside of Paris.

1919: French Ways and Their Meaning (essay collection) was published by *Appleton*.

The Belgian government awarded her the title of Chevalier of the Order of Leopold.

“The Seed of Faith” was published in *Scribner's Magazine*.

“Writing a War Story” was published in *Woman's Home Companion*.

1920: The Age of Innocence was published by *Appleton*.

In Morocco was published by *Scribner's*.

1921: She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for **The Age of Innocence**

1922: The Glimpses of the Moon was published by *Appleton*

1923: A Son at the Front was published by *Scribner's*.

She was awarded Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Yale University. She was the first woman honored by Yale.

She returned to America to receive her degree. This was her only and first visit since 1913.

1924: "The Temperate Zone" was published in *Pictorial Review*.

Old New York was published by Appleton, including "False Dawn," "The Old Maid," "The Spark," and "New Year's Day".

1925: The Mother's Recompense was published by *Appleton*.

"Miss Mary Pask" was published in April issue of *Pictorial Review*.

The Writing of Fiction - five-essay collection – was published by *Scribner's*.

1926: "The Young Gentlemen" was published in *Pictorial Review*.

Her second ghost story collection **Here and Beyond** was published by Appleton, including "Bewitched," "Miss Mary Pask," "The Young Gentlemen," "The Seed of the Faith," "The Temperate Zone," and "Velvet Ear Pads".

"A Bottle of Perrier" was published in *Saturday Evening Post*.

1927: Twilight Sleep was published by *Appleton*.

Her friend Walter Berry died.

"Atrophy" was published in *Ladies' Home Journal*.

1928: The Children was published by *Appleton*.

"After Holbein" was published in *Saturday Evening Post*.

“Mr. Jones” was published in *Ladies’ Home Journal*

1929: Hudson River Bracketed was published by *Appleton*.

1930: “Diagnosis” was published in *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

Certain People was published by *Appleton*, including the stories “Atrophy,” “After Holbein,” “Dieu d’Amour,” “The Refugees,” and “Mr. Jones”.

She was elected to American Academy of Arts and Letters.

1931: “Pomegranate Seed” was published in *Saturday Evening Post*.

1932: The Gods Arrive was published by *Appleton*. This book was a sequel to *Hudson River Bracketed*.

“A Glimpse” was published in *Saturday Evening Post*.

“Joy in the House” was published in *Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine*.

1933: Human Nature was published by *Appleton*, including “Her Son,” “The Day of the Funeral,” “A Glimpse,” “Joy in the House,” and “Diagnosis”.

“The Looking Glass” was published in *Hearst’s International-Cosmopolitan*.

1934: A Backward Glance was published by *Appleton-Century*.

“Roman Fever” was published in *Liberty*.

1935: “Permanent Wave” was published in *Redbook*.

1936: “Confession” was published in *Hearst’s International-Cosmopolitan*.

The World Over was published by *Appleton-Century*; including “Charm Incorporated,” “Pomegranate Seed,” “Permanent Wave,” “Confession,” “Roman Fever,” “The Looking Glass,” and “Duration”.

1937: Ghosts was published by *Appleton-Century*; including “Pomegranate Seed,” “All Souls,” “A Bottle of Perrier,” “The Eyes,” and “The Lady’s Maid’s Bell”.

She died after a stroke on August 11 at Pavillon Colombe and buried on August 14 in Cimetière des Gonards, Versailles.

1938: Her unfinished novel **The Buccaneers** was published after her death by *Appleton*.

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She was born in 1979, in Kayseri. She completed her primary school education in Elazığ and she finished her high school education in Erzurum. She received her bachelor's degree from the department of American Culture and Literature at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey, in 2002. She has been working as an English teacher in private courses since then. She is married to an English teacher and has a son.