

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The present writer has decided to analyse novel as she finds that novel is more interesting than the other literary genres. According to Harry Shaw in The Dictionary of Literary Terms, a novel is ‘... a lengthy fictitious prose narrative portraying characters and presenting an organized series of events and setting.... Every novel is an account of life, involves characters, action, setting, plot and theme’(Shaw, 1905:2570). In reading novel the present writer can get detailed description about the characters and other elements of novel.

The present writer chooses The Age of Innocence, a novel by Edith Wharton, an American novelist. Most of her stories are about the life and customs of upper class society in New York in 1870’s. She also won the Pulitzer Prize in 1921 for this novel, which shows her contribution to the American literature. The present writer is eager to analyse the novel, especially its portrayal of the woman characters. She decides to analyse the characters because the novel focuses on the generation of the high class of old New York society through the characters. The present writer would

like to analyse how the custom at that time bound the people and how the society in New York was governed by strict rules.

Having read the novel, the present writer decides to analyse the portrayal of the contrasting woman characters by using sociological approach. She finds that there is a significant problem in the society related to the characters. Kennedy and Gioia say that ‘Sociological approach also analyses the social content of literary work--what cultural, economic or political values a particular text implicitly and explicitly promotes’. (Kennedy and Gioia, 2002:2194). With their statement about sociological approach in mind, the present writer would like to reveal the social content (society and custom) of New York society through the woman characters.

May Welland is conventional and she represents the old New York. She is still bound to the custom and is not brave to break the rules. The other woman character, Ellen Olenska, is depicted as a woman who represents the outsider, who becomes a new member of New York society. New York society gives a bad reputation to her because she breaks the rules of the custom. The present writer will focus on these two characters. She will describe the ways they differ and the way people treat them in the society.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems of this study are formulated as follows:

1. How does the author portray the contrasting woman characters in the novel?
2. What are the purposes of the author in creating such contrast?

URPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study has following purposes:

1. to show the ways the author portrays the contrasting woman characters.
2. to show the author's purposes of creating such contrast in her novel.

METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

The method used in the research is library research. The present writer reads the primary text, The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton. Then, she reads some references which deal with some theories and the works and biography of the author. She also looks for some information concerning the topic discussed in the Internet. After she collects the data, which are appropriate to support her thesis, she begins to analyse them. She uses the sociological approach to analyse the portrayal of the woman characters. Finally, she tries to draw some conclusions of what has been analysed.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis begins with the Preface, which is followed by the Abstract. In Chapter One there is the Introduction, where the present writer presents the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. Portrayal of the Contrasting Woman Characters in Wharton's The Age of Innocence is presented in Chapter Two,

while the Conclusion is in Chapter Three. This thesis ends with the Bibliography, which contains a list of references used by the present writer in writing her thesis. The Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Novelist are presented in the Appendices.

