

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the present writer would like to draw a conclusion of what has been discussed previously. Having analysed the portrayal of the contrasting woman characters in Edith Wharton's The Age of Innocence, the present writer is of the opinion that the women characters are in contrast to each other because their society creates them to be so. Now, the present writer would like to elaborate her conclusion.

The first character analysed is May Welland, who is a member of the upper class of New York society. The society where she lives is conventional society that in 1870's sets strict rules for the people who live there. The strict rules are formed to control the behaviour of members of the upper class. May Welland is also conventional; she still honors the norms highly. She behaves according to what the society wants people to do. Besides, she is always polite, submissive and always does anything properly but she is innocent. The present writer finds that her innocence is constructed by her hypocrisy. The society where she lives is full of hypocrisy. People who are the members of the upper class society are governed by strict rules, but not

all of them can follow that rules. On top of that, some of the people break the rules and pretend to be pure. That is why the present writer thinks that the people, including May Welland, live in the hypocrite society which causes her to be hypocrite. She chooses to live in her conventional way although she is not really happy with her life. She prefers to get a good reputation although she has to live an unhappy marriage.

The present writer is of the opinion that the second woman character, Ellen Olenska is depicted as an unconventional and independent woman. Ellen, who was born in New York and has grown up in France, is a woman who represents the women who are free, not bound by the custom that she does not really understand. For that reason, she gets a bad reputation. Ellen, then, goes back to France to continue her life to be free and to be herself. She chooses to get a happy life and to be independent because she will get hurt if she only does the right things for the sake of her society.

The author employs these two woman characters to criticize the society, where women do not have a right to be free. Edith Wharton uses these contrasting woman characters to draw a picture of the people who do not realize that they have lived just for the sake of the hypocrite society. Having a background similar to the society in the novel, Edith Wharton had almost the same experiences as the woman characters in the novel do. Edith was born in America, got married and moved to Europe but her marriage was not happy. Because of her experiences, she wanted to show that women always became the victims of men, even when it was the men who did the wrong thing. This can be seen through May, whose husband has a lover but

who pretends to believe that he is loyal. Moreover, it can also be seen through Ellen, when her husband runs away with his mistress. She wants to get divorced but the society does not approve of it. She faces a dilemma: she wants to be free but she does not want to be shunned by the society. From the portrayal of May Welland and Ellen Olenska, the present writer finds that they have become victims of their society. The present writer is of the opinion that the norms of the society should not sacrifice women's right. Women should be allowed to be more independent and to have freedom to make decisions for themselves.

Edith Wharton also wants to show the reader that people try to protect themselves and care for their family name more when they inherit a lot of wealth and good status from their ancestors. They do not want to get a bad reputation, so they follow the rules and norms that are used to control themselves. However, not all the members obey the rules. Some people do break the rules but they pretend as if they were pure.

The present writer is of the opinion that this novel gives the reader a message that it is good for one to obey the norms of the society as long as they are appropriate. Yet, one does not have to be hypocrite. Hypocrisy will not make people happy but it will make them suffer from their own behaviours. The present writer finds that in this modern era, similar problems also happen to people around us. People with bad backgrounds will get a strong stigma when they enter a new society. This will even get worse when the new society belongs to the upper class, where the norms show

that the people are respectable. The message also reminds us that although we live in a modern era, some people who still like to live in a conventional way of life.

The present writer is of the opinion that the novel has successfully delivered another message through these two woman characters. The portrayal of these contrasting women also makes the novel more interesting. However contrast the characters are, they still have to conform to the rule of the same society. Moreover, the present writer concludes that Wharton created the woman character to represents herself as a woman generally who become the victims of the double standards. Women always become the second class of a society. Wharton also shows the struggle between individual versus community and concerns to the women's changing roles in their society.