CONFLICTS IN A MARRIAGE LIFE AS SEEN IN EDITH WHARTON'S

ETHAN FROME

A Thesis

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the Sarjana Sastra Degree in English Letters.

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ABSTRACT


This thesis concerns Ethan Frome, a novel written by Edith Wharton. The novel tells the story of a couple who are married without love. The novel is interesting to be analyzed because after reading this novel we can get some understanding about a marriage without love and the bad impact of it. We can see it through the story in the novel that love has big influence in a marriage life because without love in a marriage life it seems impossible to reach happiness.

There are three problems stated in this study. The first problem is how the main character's characterization are described in the novel. The second problem is what possible conflicts arose from the marriage without love as seen in the novel. The third is what are the result of marriage without love to the couple as seen in the novel. Therefore, there are three objectives in the study. The first one is to understand the characterization of Ethan Frome. Secondly is to find out the possible conflicts that arised from the marriage without love in a family. The third is to find out the results of marriage without love.

The method employed in this study is library research. The sources are obtained from the novel itself, criticism and other sources related to the novel. The approach used in the study is psychological approach. The theories that are used in this thesis are: Literary Theory on Character and Characterization, Literary Theory on Plot, Literary Theory on Conflict, Theory on Marriage, and Theory on Conflict in Marriage.

The conclusion from the analysis is a marriage should be based on love. It is a very important aspect, and it might lead to destruction if the couple does not have it. It is what was happening to Ethan and Zeena. They are married without love and their marriage life did not seem as a marriage. The relationship between the husband and the wife was not harmonious. Having analyzed the story, I found out that Ethan's marriage was not success. It was all because their marriage is not based on love from the start, so the marriage in their family bring a bad impact in their life. They cannot feel what they suppose to feel as a normal couple. Finally, it created an affair, in this case an affair between Ethan and Mattie.
ABSTRAK


Dari analisa yang sudah ditulakan oleh penulis dapat diambil kesimpulan bahwa dalam sebuah pernikahan sebaiknya didasari oleh cinta. Ini adalah hal yang paling penting, dan hal ini juga dapat meminimalisir kehacuran dalam suatu kehidupan pernikahan. Hal inilah yang terjadi pada Ethan dan Zeena. Mereka menikah tanpa cinta dan kehidupan pernikahan mereka tidak terlihat sebagaimana suatu pernikahan yang sebenarnya. Hubungan mereka sebagai pasangan suami istri sangat tidak harmonis. Setelah menganalisa novel ini, penulis mengetahui bahwa pernikahan antara Ethan dan Zeena tidak berjalan dengan sukses. Hal ini terjadi karena pernikahan mereka tidak didasari cinta sejak dari awal sehingga pernikahan mereka membawa dampak yang buruk dalam kehidupan mereka. Mereka tidak dapat merasakan apa yang seharusnya dirasakan oleh pasangan suami istri pada umumnya.
Pada akhirnya hasil yang dihasilkan dari pernikahan tanpa cinta tersebut adalah adanya sebuah perselingkuhan, dalam hal ini adlah perselingkuhan antara Ethan dan Mattie.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study


Edith Newbold Wharton who was born on January 24, 1862 took up the profession of writing as a therapeutic measure for her own amusement for the pain caused by her ex-husband’s mental illness. Her childhood was lonely and isolated. Her novels that have similar dilemmas as _Ethan Frome_ are _The House of Mirth_ (1905) and _The Age of Innocence_ (1920). She was the first woman to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1921 for _The Age of Innocence_. She held salon where the gifted intellectuals of her time gathered to discuss and share ideas. Teddy Roosevelt, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway were all guests of hers at one time or another. (The World Book Encyclopedia, 1971:217).

_Ethan Frome_ is an interesting novel to read. This novel was written by Edith Wharton, a female novelist from The United States. In _Ethan Frome_, Wharton talks about the marriage without love between Ethan and Zeena. This novel shows that love is very important in a marriage life. If there is no love in a marriage life there will be no happiness in it.
As we can see in the story the marriage between Ethan and Zeena is not based on love so there is no harmony or happiness in their marriage. In a marriage, it is very important to give our spouse attention and love. Good communication is also important for the spouse because with communication they can share what they need and feel.

There are some reasons why the writer of this thesis has taken Wharton's novel *Ethan Frome*. Firstly, it is because of the story which is very interesting for the writer, it means that after reading this story the writer can get an understanding about marriage itself and also realize that marriage is a serious thing so that we have to be careful before we make a decision to get married to someone, and secondly this novel talks about a universal subject that is love. It is universal because love always becomes an interesting subject or topic to be discussed and it interests the writer to know how love can give an influence in someone's marriage.

Among Wharton's great works, I am interested in analyzing the novel titled *Ethan Frome* because it is a novel that shows human relationships in a marriage life and also the result of a marriage without love between two persons, in this case Ethan and Zeena. This novel shows the complicated relationship between Ethan and Zeena as husband and wife. They married but the situation in their family never look like a real happy couple's marriage.

Something that makes me interested in analyzing the novel is that by reading a novel like this I can have a description about human relationship as well and also understand that it is very important to have an understanding about marriage itself.
My opinion before I read this novel was that there will be no problem in someone’s marriage life if it is not based on love.

I can say this because I have found some people’s marriages that are not based on love. They said that they are getting married just because they have to obey their parents in order to make their parents happy. Besides that there are some people who are married because their family has a big debt to someone and they have to pay it in a short time, and if they cannot pay it soon sometimes they force their children to pay for it by marriage and they never think about the result of the marriage itself.

Pierce Dufoyer in his book, The Choice of A Husband gives a definition of a marriage as the following; “A marriage is the complete and harmonious communion of two human beings of different sex” (1964:21).

From his opinion it is clear that marriage is a serious thing. The complete and harmonious communion of two human beings of different sex needs serious preparation dealing with a long process in advance to understand each other well. Prior to the final point, it might be said that marriage is the last step of human relationship of two different sexes to go to a kind of complete and harmonious relationship.

Marriage is not a happy beginning but it is hoped to be happy forever. It means that marriage is a serious thing. It is hoped to happen just once during a lifetime. Marriage is not just for fun but it brings responsibility to the couple to keep it.
It is not easy combining ideas of marriage between the two persons who are involved in the marriage.

Unfortunately the couple in the novel *Ethan Frome* imagine that marriage is just a kind of pleasure and brings happiness. They forget that marriage will give them many problems as well. These problems might create some conflicts that lead them into an uncomfortable relationship. They might not realize this since they still handle the idea that marriage is just a kind of pleasure that will give them happiness forever.

*Ethan Frome* has a lot of interesting things to be analyzed. One of them is the bad impact of a marriage without love in a family. There is something wrong with the marriage of Ethan and Zeena that creates some conflicts in their married life. Their marriage is not based on love from the start. They are married just because each of them needs someone who can accompany them.

The marriage between Ethan and Zeena is in trouble but they still try to keep it. Unfortunately, Ethan cannot bear it any longer. One day Ethan feels that he needs someone who can give him true love and make him happy when they are together. That is why Ethan starts to have an affair with somebody else, or in this case Mattie (Zeena's cousin). Though he gets what he needs, still he cannot make a decision whether or not he will leave his wife and go with another woman.

In analyzing the problems happening in a couple married without love, I am going to use a psychological approach, because it deals with the state of mind of the characters.
B. Problem Formulation

Based on the story of the novel and the background for the choice of the subject, the writer has three problems to be discussed in this thesis, they are:
1. How are the main character’s characterization described in the novel?
2. What are the possible conflicts arising from the marriage without love as seen in Ethan Frome?
3. What are the results of marriage without love to the couple as seen in Ethan Frome?

C. Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to analyze and to answer the previous problems as clear as possible. Based on the problem formulation, the objectives of the study of this thesis are:

1. To understand the characterization of the main character in the novel.
2. To find out the possible conflicts that arised from the marriage without love in a family.
3. To find out the results of marriage without love.

D. Benefits of the Study

Some people might think that reading literary works is just wasting their time especially in the globalization age that is full of competition. They prefer to read scientific books rather than literary works because scientific books are more
"profitable" than literary works. It is not absolutely wrong since they do not realize the great function of literature.

Reading a novel might take time. Considering the outcome the readers take, the time that is taken is nothing. Besides, literature can bring pleasure as well. By reading a novel as a kind of habit, it will create good reading skills. Therefore, people get some benefits by reading a novel after all.

It is hoped that this study might give a contribution to the couples who want to bring a loving relationship into marriage. After all marriage is a serious thing, so good preparation before getting married is something important to get a happy marriage not only in the beginning but also till the end of time. At least this analysis can be used as a source of their consideration to take a final decision.

By remembering that marriage is a serious thing, it will be better for couples who are involved in a marriage to remember their commitment to get a successful marriage.

By appreciating Ethan Frome, the readers will have some insights of the Wharton's works and also of the author herself. It is important for the students of English Letters. While improving reader's visions of marriage, the study will have to improve their understanding of marriage and the human relationship as well. For one who intentionally or unintentionally reads this thesis, hopefully, the analysis helps them to realize how wonderful literature is and enriches their knowledge about marriage and human relationships.
A. Review of Related Studies

There are some criticisms about Edith Wharton's in general. Harmon Gow and Geoffrey Walton said that Wharton's has very good technique such as her creativity in writing. It means that Wharton's writing ability came forth beautifully in her writing and her creativity was displayed with the presence of the narrator by showing the moral disintegration and unguided convention that are existing generally of the late 19th-century. (A Critical Interpretation, 1970:118).

All of these suggest a physical and mental terrain that holds little promise for those doomed to spend "too many winters" within its bound. The blazing blue skies of deep winter and the hard glitter of the snowy hills are beautiful, but they are invariably followed by sunless cold and pitiless storms, which serve to isolate still more the already remote villages and farms. The faint curls of smoke that rise from the chimneys of the scattered frame structures, the only signs of life in winter, suggest that human beings and their affairs are feeble and powerless in the face of nature's indifference and force. (Encyclopedia Americana, 1995:607).

Another facet of Edith's career was her friendship with Henry James whose influence on her writing is inestimable. Wharton is often compared to Henry James because most of their works depict an orderly, mannered world of delicate scruples and quite heroism, where common place tragedy, usually of their own devising,

In The World Book Encyclopedia, Harry H. Clark criticized Edith Wharton as a writer known for her stories about society life, especially of the wealthy class of society in New York City. It means that Wharton shows a quality that deserves respect toward society life. She pictured the characteristics of the conventional society and contrasted them with the ruthless characteristics she considered to be the cause of the new society. (1971:217).

Moreover, James K. Folsom in Encyclopedia Americana described Edith Wharton’s childhood as being rather lonely and isolated. He discovered that Wharton decided to be a writer after her husband got a serious mental illness. Folsom said that before some of her verse had been published, she wrote stories just for her own amusement. (1995:686).

Wharton pointed out that Ethan Frome was a tragic story of thwarted passion, in which the starkness of the natural world and the limited lives of the people who inhabit it are inextricably intertwined. This complex narrative structure enables the writer to present convincingly a story of the interior lives of people who would be unlikely to speak of it themselves and who are in fact characterized by their isolation from the outside world. (Encyclopedia Americana, 1995:607).

Some critics also wrote criticism about Ethan Frome itself. They said that Ethan Frome was among her best work. They see it from the style that is very short and the plot is uncomplicated because Wharton is a great observer of human nature,
her sensitivity to natural beauty and human psychology make the novel a convincing and powerful portrait of rural life. (Encyclopedia Americana, 1995:608).

The relatively straightforward tale of doomed love of Ethan and Mattie is presented to the reader by a narrator who is, we are told, basing his story on superficial observation of town life and a few incomplete conversations with townspeople, who have described to him events of thirty years before. This complex narrative structure enables the writer to present convincingly a story of the interior life of people who would be unlikely to speak of it themselves and who are in fact characterized by their isolation from the outside world. The narrator gains great insight into the torment of a triangle of central characters, each trapped by previous and present suffering. The description of the progressing tragic fates of Ethan Frome, his wife Zeena, and his lover, Mattie Silver, conveys Edith Wharton’s underlying themes of human will destined for defeat and man’s struggle with nature, death, and isolation. (http://www.wweilatan.tripod.com/archives/ethan.doc).

As we can see from the criticisms above, there is no one criticizing the conflict in Ethan’s marriage. Most of the criticisms are about society life and about Edith Wharton (the writer) of this novel. That is why I chose this topic, to analyze more deeply the content of the novel. In this case, about the conflict in Ethan Frome’s marriage. This study concerns with conflicting idea of marriage of a couple which cause some conflicts of their marriage life.
B. Review of Related Theories

1. Literary Theory on Character and Characterization

Since the conflict appears in the story, the character can not be separated from the conflict. Therefore, the theories of character and characterization are needed here in order to give a description of character’s attributes.

Character, the base of the word characterization, is a personage who typifies some certain qualities. The person is explained not as an individualized personality but as an example of “some voice or virtue or type, such as a bumpkin, a happy milkmaid” (Holman, 1986: 81).

According to Abrams, in his book A Glossary of Literary Terms, characters are the person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the readers as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say- the dialogue- and by what they do- the action (1981: 20).

Holman and Horman, in the book A Handbook to Literature, say that characterization is the creation of the imaginary personages who exist for the readers as lifelike (1986: 81). Here, we can see that both character and characterization are related to each other.

According to Holman and Horman, there are three basic methods of characterization:

a. The explicit presentation of the character by the author through direct explanation, whether in a block’s introductory or throughout the work which is illustrated by action.
b. The presentation of the character in action therefore the reader will be able to conclude the attributes of the character from the actions.

c. The representation from within a character, without comment on the character by the author, of the impact of actions and emotions on the character’s inner self, with the expectation that the reader will come to a clear understanding of the attributes of the character (1986: 81).

It is very important for the dialogue and the action to understand more about the characters in a story. On the basis of importance, according to Koesnosoro in his *Anatomy of Prose Fiction* (1988:67), there are two types of characters; main or major character and minor character. Main character is the most important character in a story. Basically, a story is about this character, but he cannot stand on his own; he needs other characters to make the story more lifelike. Minor characters are characters of less importance than the main character.

Further explanation, Perrine distinguishes the characters based on the presentation. He says in his book that an author may present his characters either directly or indirectly. In direct presentation, the author tells the readers about what a character is like by exposition or analysis or the other character in the story tells the readers what he is like. In indirect presentation, the author shows the character in action. ” We will find out what he is like through his action, his thoughts, and his words. (Perrine, 1974:68).

Characterization is the method used by a writer to develop a character. According to Koesnosoro, characterization must observe at least three principles.
"First, the characters must be consistent in their behavior: they must not behave one way on one occasion and a different way on another unless they are clearly motivated in whatever they do, especially when there is any change in their behavior: we must be able to understand the reasons for what they do, if not immediately, at least by the end of the story. Third, the characters must be plausible or lifelike, credible, realistic, probable." (Koesnosoboeto, 1988:66).

2. Literary Theory on Plot

Stanton says in his book *An Introduction to Fiction* that a plot includes casually linked events, that is, events that directly caused or resulted from other events, and cannot be omitted without breaking the line of action. He also adds that these events may include not only physical occurrences, like a speech or action, but also a character change of attitude (1965:14). Still according to Stanton, the plot has its own rules, i.e. it must have a beginning, middle, and end (1965:15).

In reading a novel, we are brought into the chronological sequence of the events and the actions done by the characters. This sequence is well planned which may bring understanding and satisfaction to us. Without the plot, we will never have a story since the story is built within the plot. Murphy in his book *Understanding Unseen* states that:

Plot is a carefully thought-out plan in which all the events, all the actions and reactions of the characters, contribute towards the forward movement of the story. The story then moves on, carrying the reader with it up and over a series of crests until the climax of the story is reached and everything is resolved, generally to the reader's satisfaction. (1972: 134).
He adds that not all novels have neat plots since the author has his own method of writing and aims in writing the novel which influence the way he sets the plot.

Robert and Jacobs in *Fiction: An Introduction to Reading and Writing* define plot as “a plan or groundwork for a story, based on conflicting human motivation, with the action resulting from believable and realistic human response” (1986: 8). In other words, the sequence of the novel must be integrated with human motivation.

Plot is an important element of a story. We can understand a story by understanding its events and its links of cause and effect. Plot has its own law as stated by Kenney that the writers are expected to follow certain laws in forming the plot of his story. First, “a story must have a true beginning, middle and end” (1966: 14). This law, however, does not mean to bind the writers by temporal sequence in moving from beginning through middle and end as Kenney adds “the pattern of beginning-middle-end is therefore a pattern of choice” (1966: 14).

In other words, the writer has freedom to start the story at one point and to end it at another one. Second, the story must be plausible and logical. Kenney states that a story is plausible when it is true to itself. He writes “the law of plausibility is important because of the demand that a story must be realistic” (1966: 20). Third, the story should be occasionally surprising us as he writes “we want to be surprised. The movement of a plot comes chiefly from its ability to arouse questions in our minds, appealing to our curiosity, hope and fear” (1966: 21). The fourth law in governing plot is that a plot should arouse suspense or the outcome of the story. According to
Kenney, the suspense is more than a matter of knowing how things will come out. The simplest meaning of suspense is that there is something we want to know.

Exposition is the opening part of the novel. Roberts and Jacobs (1986: 89) in their book entitled *Fiction: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*, describe that "exposition is the lying out, the putting forth, of the material in the story: the main characters, their background, their characteristics, goals, limitation, and potentials."

Exposition presents everything that is going to be important in the story. Exposition is normally a primary function of the beginning of a story. However, it is not necessarily limited to the beginning of a story, but it may be found anywhere.

Exposition is followed by the rising action or complication. "The author introduces a series of events related by cause" in this part (Roberts and Jacobs, 1986: 90). Each event intensifies the conflict as stated by Robert and Jacobs:

The complication marks the onset of the major conflict in the story. The participants are the protagonists and antagonists, together with whatever ideas and values they represent, such as good and evil, individualism and collectivization, childhood and age, love and hate, intelligence and stupidity, knowledge and ignorance, freedom and slavery, desire and resistance, and the like. (1986: 90).

The complication leads us to the crisis. Roberts and Jacobs writes "the crisis is the turning point, the separation between what has gone before and what will come after" (1986: 90). According to them, the crisis is "usually a decision or action undertaken in an effort to resolve the conflict, but it is important to stress that the crisis, though a result of operating forces and decisions, may not produce the intended results." (1986: 90).
From the crisis, the story rises toward a climax. The climax is "the highest point in the action, in which the conflict and the tension are brought to the fullest extent" (1986: 20). The final part of the story is resolution or denouement, which shows how the conflict is settled. It is the set of action which brings the story to its conclusion.

3. Literary Theory on Conflict

Sometimes character in the literary work has developed their characters by some conflicts that appear in the story. Especially, if the characters have great contribution in producing a good story specifically on revealing conflict. Based on that aspect, a fictionality story finds its way to express the idea. (Danzinger and Jackson, 1961:20).

Henceforth Perine (1974:44) states that conflict itself is a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or will between two individual, or among people in the story. Dealt with the conflict, there are two kinds of conflicts; external and internal conflict.

Stanton (1965:16) explains that internal conflict is conflict between two desires within a character or between a character and his or her environment. External conflict means coming from outside of characters such as people or other characters and society.

Beaty and Hunter, in their book New World Literature, say that most people try hard to avoid conflict. The people prefer to live without complication. Nevertheless, no one escapes conflict for long, even without wars or large scale
disagreement (1989: 778). Dealing with their statement, then we know that conflicts, indeed, exist in our lives. Each person is different. He or she has his or her own view in thinking about something. Hence, differences can lead to certain conflicts in a relationship.

Redman (1964: 363) asserts that a conflict is the struggle between two opposing forces, ideas, or belief. According to him, there are two kinds of conflict. They are inner or internal conflict and external conflict. The inner or internal conflict means a struggle within the heart and mind of the protagonist, while the external conflict means a struggle between the protagonist and an outside force.

Redman also suggests that to find out the conflict in the play, the first thing to do is sign the problems in the story including the character’s attitude toward the problem. In this way, the conflict between characters will be clearly identified. Furthermore, we are able to know the end and the result of the conflict. Stanton adds that the external and internal conflicts will preliminary remark a central conflict. A central conflict is always fundamental and contrasting qualities of force (1965).

4. Theory on Marriage

In Webster, New Twentieth Century Dictionary unabridge second edition, the word marriage (1972:1103) has certain meanings as follows:

a. The state of being married; relation between husband and wife; married life-wedloke, matrimony.

b. The act of marrying, wedding.
c. The rite of form used in marrying.

d. Any close or intimate union.

Schwartz (1956:218) defines marriage as a permanent union between a man or woman and legalized by the authority of the state. Relating with permanent union, it is hoped that marriage happens just once during the life time and it cannot be separated, except the death.

Furthermore, Stanford insists that marriage is a kind of relationship to human beings. Marriage is a vital relationship to human beings for the growth and development (Stanford, 1988:169).

In other words it can be said that marriage is a kind of ‘tool’ to create human beings maturity. It can be reached by the process of relationship during their marriage. When the process is success then there will be happiness.

In Jack Dominian’s book entitled Marital Breakdown, the word marriage can be explained like this. Marriage in Western societies has been considered throughout the centuries as a solemn, life-long contract between a man and a woman, conferring mutual rights and obligations in their sexual, material and social life. Marriage has been dealt with almost exclusively in these legal term, the law defining the formal conditions which bring such a unique institution into being and similarity when it has failed prescribing the conditions under which it can be dissolved (1968:15).

Marriage is a return to such a close and intimate union, which allows the spouses to act as agents for further growth in their respective personalities as well as providing the requirements for procreation and the rearing of children (1986:40).
5. Theory on Conflict in Marriage

Conflict in marriage, according to Bowman (1954:217) is something that may happen in marriage. When an individual chooses a marriage, to a considerable degree he chooses the conflict that his or her marriage will entail. In other words it is a risk that may come along when people decide to get married. The sense of who I am, conviction, ideas, hope of marriage will open to confirmation or to challenge and change. However, every marriage is a complex pattern of interaction and expectations. There will be some problem that bring conflict.

Dobos (1983:74) holds the idea that conflict in marriage happens because there is a difference between reality and expectation. The idea that marriage is full of happiness since there is togetherness is not absolutely true. When there is a different expectation and reality there must be a conflict. To deal with the situation, the important thing is how the couple manages their conflict. The individuals need communication of their thoughts and feelings. It shows that communication takes play in a conflict of marriage.

Conflict may force into a crisis of marriage. Schwarz (1956:234) says that the roots of crisis are insufficient instinct for a proper choice of partner and insufficient word strength to accept and carry out the responsibilities insured by entering into marriage.
C. Theoretical Ground

This study concerns the conflicting ideas of marriage of a couple which causes conflicts in their marriage and finally brings them into a broken marriage. The writer wants to explain the theoretical review into five parts. The first part is a theoretical description about character and characterization, the writer uses it because it is applied to solve the problem of the main character. In *Ethan Frome* (1911), we can find various characters with their characteristics. Characters are people who are involved in the problems. Therefore it is also better to know about their characterizations. It is necessary to apply theories of character and characterization to know what kind of characteristics they have.

Second, the writer uses the theory on plot because this thesis deals with the contribution of conflict toward the character. The plot has a great influence toward changes in the major character's personality, action, and way of thinking in the story. Through the sequences of events provided in the plot, it will be easier for the writer to understand exactly what kind of characteristics the major characters have in the novel. Third, the writer will find out types of conflict provided in the story. The theory on conflict is used to describe the conflicts of the main character in the story.

Fourth, the theory of marriage is also used in this thesis. The theory on marriage will explain the idea of marriage as either a human relationship or institution. The last theory is the theory on conflict in a marriage. The theories of Bowman, Dobos and Schwarz about conflict in marriage are also applied in this thesis, those theories more or less have the same ideas and support one another. In
this theory we can get some understanding about the things that can create conflicts in marriage. This theory can be used to avoid a conflict that will arise in marriage. The writer chose the above theories to get a better understanding of conflicts in marriage and about marriage itself.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Object of the Study

This thesis deals with a literary work, namely a novel as the object of the study. The novel which the writer analyzed in this thesis is *Ethan Frome*, a novel written by Edith Wharton which was published in 1911 by Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York. This novel consists of 141 pages and is divided into nine chapters (ed. 15th *Edith Wharton and Other Stories*, 1995).

Among Wharton’s great works, *Ethan Frome* is considered as her greatest tragic love story (The Columbia Encyclopedia 1995: 2136). It can be said it is a tragic love story because this novel does not have a happy ending. At the end of the story Ethan and Mattie try to commit suicide although their effort fail.

Ethan was a young man who had to take care of his mother until she died. Ethan was afraid of being lonely during the winter so he married his mother’s nurse, Zeena, who was an older woman. They had planned to move to a big city and to start a new life. Lack of fertile land and not enough money prevented their dreams from coming true. Zeena became sick and Ethan realized that he was never getting out of Starkfield.

After a while, Zeena stopped complaining and Ethan stopped listening. Their house became silent and cold. All of that changed when Mattie, Zeena’s cousin, came to stay with them. She was a young, vibrant woman who brought life to the house. Ethan ended up falling in love with her. She offered the warm
qualities and a relationship that Zeena never showed. Ethan did Mattie’s chores around the house for her and sneaked extra time with her. Ethan found a companion who showed interest in him. It was almost like a childhood crush. Zeena was very suspicious of their relationship. The conflict in their marriage started after they realized that both of them could not appreciate and love each other anymore.

The last straw was when Mattie broke the pickle dish while Zeena was away. This was significant because the pickle dish had never been used because it was the nicest thing that Ethan and Zeena owned. Zeena got rid of Mattie with the excuse that she needed a new nurse and they could not afford to keep both women. Mattie had no place to go. Ethan stood up to Zeena and insisted that he would take her to the train. On the way to the train they stopped the sleigh to ride down a hill. After doing so, Mattie decided that they should commit suicide together so that they would never have to be alone. They attempted to commit suicide by sleighing into a tree but they were unsuccessful and both ended up with permanent physical injuries. Finally, they lived together miserably with Zeena taking care of them.

B. Approach

To analyze the problem formulated in this study, I apply a psychological approach. I apply the approach because in this study I am going to find out the possible conflicts that arise from marriage without love and the result of a marriage without love to the couple.
In analyzing the problems happening to a couple married without love, it is necessary to deal with the psychological aspect. Thus, it will be proper to apply psychological approach because it deals with the state of mind of the characters. Moreover, character is one of the subjects of Psychology. It involves patterns of behavior, thoughts, and feelings. Psychological approach, therefore, will help me to reveal the issue of this study because it views a literary work based on psychological interpretation.

According to Rohrberger and Woods (1971:13), psychological approach is an approach to literature which "involves the effort to locate and demonstrate certain recurrent patterns" and which refers to a different body of knowledge, that is Psychology. In applying this approach, psychological theories are generally used as the interpretive tools. This is also stressed by Leary (1976:57) who states that psychological approach "applies principles of modern psychology to characters or situations within a work of literature or to the person who wrote that work."

C. Method of the Study

The first step is by making the limitation of problems discussed in this novel because the limitation can border the topic that will be discussed. The limitation can guide the discussion still in the right track. This thesis chooses the problem that can lead to answer Wharton’s conflict in a marriage; therefore there are three problems in this thesis. The first problem is aimed to understand the characterization of the main character described in the novel. The second
problem is aimed to look for the possible conflicts arisen from marriage without love in the novel. The third problem is aimed to look for the result from marriage without love in the novel. In this step also, the method is chosen to answer the limited problem.

Finding references in the library is the second step to answer the problem. References can be found in the library and also from internet that can support to answer the problem. The references are very useful because this thesis will get added information related to the novel. The theories that can be used to analyze this novel can be taken from the references. Afterwards, I tried to find criticism of the novel and the author and also some psychological theories found in Laurence Perrine’s *Literature, Structure, Sound and Sense*, Abrams *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Holman and Harmon *A Handbook to Literature*, Stanton *An Introduction to Fiction*, Robert and Jacobs *Fiction: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. Those books helped me to appreciate, and to add understanding and information about the novel and the author. Furthermore, some psychological theories taken from those books, hopefully, will help me to analyze the problem of this study.

The third step is to understand the work well. The work is read several times until the points that can answer the problem can be found. The story is very important because the important point is laid in the story from the novel. Because the form of this literary work is a novel then the story holds big roses in conveying the author’s idea.
The fourth step is relating parts into whole. This step tries to make the information from step two and three become one but not all information can be unified because some of the information may not have a relation to answer the problem. Therefore in this step the information that can answer the problem is gathered to analyze the novel. In this step this thesis begins to analyze the novel based on the theories and references that have had to answer the problem.

The fifth step is making conclusion toward the analysis. This step is the conclusion of the analysis of the novel. This step chooses the important points in the analysis and makes them one or two paragraphs to state the important points. Therefore this step gathers the important points in analysis and put the points in one chapter called conclusion.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

This chapter is intended to answer the questions that are stated in the problem formulation. Chapter four consists of three parts. The first part is the main character characterization. In this part I will describe the main character in general. The second part is the description of Ethan’s marriage as seen in the novel. In this section I will discuss the possible conflicts arised from marriage without love toward Ethan’s family in the novel. The third part is about the marriage without love reflected through Ethan’s character. In this section I will analyze the result of marriage without love seen in Ethan Frome.

A. The Main Characters that are Described in the Novel

Ethan Frome is the central character of the novel. He is a lame, grizzled, and ruined man both in body and spirit. Ethan Frome is a tragic story of thwarted passion, in which the starkness of the natural world inhibits the limited lives of the people and makes him unable to fulfill his desire to run away with his lover, Mattie Silver. Ethan pursued studies in science and technology very briefly after high school (which means that he is clever), but his father’s death and his mother’s illness forced him back to the Frome farm. And as Harmon says in the introduction: “Oh, as that: I guess it’s always Ethan doing the caring.” (p.9)
It seems that Ethan is a responsible person but his responsibility has prevented him from leaving Starkfield. After his father’s death, his mother soon became ill and sick in her head. Ethan had become very lonely from caring for his ill parents, from being isolated from the rest of town, that he was actually glad when Zeena volunteered to help him nurse his mother. He was desperate for human companionship in that cold, bleak, somber winter.

One of the reasons why Ethan is not able to achieve his dreams to be an engineer is the condition of Starkfield itself that forces him to go back to his farm, and finally unable to continue his studies. Ethan regards it as both a terrible and harmful place which he cannot move away from. “Guess he’s been in Starkfield too many winters. Most of the smart ones get away.” (p.8).

This quote depicts how lonely and isolated Ethan must feel after having lived in Starkfield too long and experiencing too many tragedies. Although he is clever in his studies, Ethan was unsuccessful to escape his hard life in Starkfield. He feels like a prisoner that is unable to escape from the dreadful days of the long, bleak winter.

After his mother’s death, he hastily married Zeena out of loneliness but unfortunately she quickly became as sickly and silent as his mother had been. At first, Ethan had great ambitions of moving out of the small town Starkfield to a large city to become an engineer. However, his plans became impossible to carry out because of Zeena’s worsening hypochondria and unwillingness to live in a place where he would not be the center of attention.
The connection between the land and the people is a recurring theme of the novel. The narrator is amazed by the harshness of the Starkfield winters, and through his experience of the winter he comes to understand the character of the people. In her introduction to the novel, Wharton talks of the “outcropping granite” of New England, the powerful severity of its land and people. This connection between land and people is very much a part of naturalism; the environment is a powerful shaper of man’s fate, and the novel represents this relationship by constantly describing the power and cruelty of the Starkfield winter.

(http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/frome/themes.html, 28 April, 2002.)

From the quotation above the setting of the story is described as a miserable place as mentioned before. The situation of the town influences much of the people who live there. The character of Ethan is also described as a miserable person, one of the results is that he looks older than his age. This is described in the quotation below:

There was something bleak and unapproachable in his face, and he was so stiffened and grizzled that I took him for an oldman and was surprised to hear that he was no more than fifty-two. (p.7).

Based on the description of Ethan’s character that he is a lame, grizzled, and ruined man both in body and spirit who lives in a very isolated and rough area, we can argue that his attitude is the result of the hard situation in Starkfield. The harsh situation in Starkfield actually affects not only Ethan but also all the people of Starkfield. The environment is a powerful shaper of man’s fate and the novel represents this relationship by constantly describing the power and cruelty of the Starkfield winter.

The isolated situation both physical and emotional remarks that in a town like Starkfield, the life of the people is harsh enough so they have little time to alleviate
the pain and troubles of others. When winters come, the people cannot do anything but stay at home and this is like being in a prison in their own home.

He seemed a part of the mute melancholy landscape, an incarnation of its frozen woe, with all that was warm and entient in him vase bound below the surface, but there was nothing unfriendly in his silence. (p.13).

Ethan's character is described as a silent person just like the winter itself. Ethan used to get lonely and this becomes a kind of habit to Ethan. He is silent as winter.

Ethan Frome is presented as a tragic figure, his tragic flaw, his weakness, is his loneliness which gives rise to his fantasies. He dreams of escaping the dreadfulness of his farm and leading a life outside of Starkfield. He also dreams of having Mattie for his wife. But like a robot, he goes through life, trudging to the Post Office each day and allowing his sickly wife to control his fate. At the same time, he is aware of his real situation, his "responsibility" to Zeena and his farm. He sees his problem in terms of two poles; his life with Mattie is endlessly sweet, and life with Zeena is completely sour and hopeless.

Ethan does not know how to deal with the problem, for he has had limited experience; his life has been spent toiling on the farm. His one experience outside of Starkfield, while he briefly attended college, however, has given him a taste of other possibilities in life.

He is basically a sensitive and intelligent man, but he is chained to his existence on the farm. He was forced to leave college to care for his aging and ailing parents. He married Zeena because he feared loneliness and felt he owed her
something for her help with his parents. He worked diligently on the farm, never enjoying leisure or social connection. But his circumstances have made him jealous, controlling, and weak. To satisfy his own selfish needs for communication and connection, he preys on the vulnerable and innocent Mattie Silver and wins her love. Then he refuses to stand up to his wife to protect Mattie. He allows her to be sent away, for he feels powerless against Zeena. In truth, he becomes his own hopelessness.

Ethan is a tragic hero because of the condition of the place—winter, not his wife (man against nature).

"Once I happened to speak of an engineering job I had been on the previous year in Florida and of the contrast between the winter landscape about us and that in which I had found myself the year before; and to my surprise Frome said suddenly: "Yes: I was down there once, and for a good while afterward I could call up the sight of it in winter. But now it's all snowed under." (p.13).

The harshness and power of the land are mirrored by Ethan Frome, whose body still exudes strength despite its lameness. However, he is a "ruin of a man", and his face shows how much he has suffered. Rural New England in winter is a land under siege, with tiny towns and tinier farms like little islands separated by vast expanses of cold and snow. The isolation is both physical and emotional. The isolation becomes personal for Ethan Frome, whose tragedy has removed him from the other people of Starkfield. In a town like Starkfield, people's lives are harsh enough so they have little time to alleviate the pain and troubles of others.

Ethan has to leave his study at Worcester because he has to go back to Starkfield to work on his father's land (because his father is dead).
"Four or five years earlier he had taken a year's course at a technological college at Worcester, ...His father's death, and the misfortunes following it, had put a premature end to Ethan's studies..." (p.19).

"His unfinished studies had given force to this sensibility and even in his unhappiest moments field and to him with a deep and powerful persuasion... he was the sole victim of this mournful privilege." (p.23).

Ethan's father death ended Ethan's higher education in Worcester, as Ethan had to return home to care for his mother and the farm. He began studies but had to cut them short after the death of his father. Because of financial limitations, Ethan had no choice but to return home and care for his mother and the farm. Eventhough he had gone to a technical college for a year and had been interested in physics, the death of his father and the misfortunes following it ended the possibility of study, and through that, escape from the constricting life of Starkfield. The impossibility of fulfilling his academic dreams becomes the forerunner of multiple instances of suffering and defeat during Ethan's life.

Zeena is depicted as a harpy who is old, ugly, bitter, and mean. However, Zeena is a clever woman as well, and she easily manipulates Ethan to get her away. Even her silences are intentional and filled with meaning. Since Mattie is a threat to her marriage and security, she takes matters into her own hands. However, because of her suffering, whether real or imagined, she has grown hard and cold. She lives in a world of silence, and Ethan can never remember her laughing any time during their seven year marriage. The only time in the novel that her real emotions come out is over the breaking of the pickle dish. She becomes hysterical over the loss and carries the pieces around like a dead body, it is the picture of a truly pathetic character.
Zeena never changes in the novel. She started off as a means, cold, pathetic figure, and she is the same way as she takes care of Mattie and Ethan at the end of the novel.

It is important to remember that the central story in Ethan Frome is developed through Ethan himself. This means that Mattie is basically seen through his thoughts and feelings. She is portrayed as lively, attractive, responsive, and innocent. She listens endlessly, makes no demands, and in her reduced state, returns Ethan’s affections.

She has arrived at the Frome farm one year previous to the story because at the age of twenty, she has orphaned and is penniless. She has tried various jobs, but none of them has worked out because of her poor health. She has not asked her relatives for help, for she knows that her father has lost money for them. Therefore, she comes to the farm to help with the chores and with Zeena so that she can have a place to live. Farm life, however, does not suit her. Born and raised in Stamford, she is not accustomed to the country or to manual labor.

Mattie has a mind of her own, she shows she is capable of thinking for herself. She is obviously aware of Ethan’s growing affection for her, and she encourages it, even though she does not openly express her own affection until the end of the novel. Her background, silence, and misery make it believable that she would be frightened of going away from Starkfield and trying to live on her own. She has no resources and no self-confidence. As a result, she is the one that suggests a mutual suicide for Ethan and herself. When the accident fails to accomplish its
purpose, the reader is also prepared to accept the fact that Mattie has turned into a cripple that is a worse harpy than Zeena herself.

B. The Possible Conflicts Arose from the Marriage without Love as Seen in Ethan Frome.

1. Inner Conflict

Ethan's marriage as we can see in the novel is not really good. The relationship between Ethan and his wife Zeena is also not very nice. As we know, marriage is a kind of human relationship. It is a union between men and women who love and understand each other. Both of them want to get satisfaction and intimacy. If there is no such kind like that, it is impossible for a couple to reach happiness in their marriage life.

Ethan's marriage is influenced by the environment or the place where he lives. Edith Wharton in Ethan Frome uses Starkfield as the setting, which is described as a terrible place, especially in winter. It forces most people away from it because it is so cold. Ethan lives in Starkfield with his father and mother. They have their own farm in Starkfield and Ethan's parents have a big influence in Ethan's life. Before Ethan's father died, the old man gave away much of the family wealth. Not long after that Ethan's mother got sick and Zeena was the one taking care of them until Ethan's mother died.

His father's death, and the misfortunes following it, had put a premature end to Ethan's studies; but though they had not gone far enough to be of much practical use they had fed his fancy and made
him aware of huge cloudy meanings behind the daily face of things. (p.19).

After Ethan’s parents died, Ethan starts to feel lonely without his parents. Only Zeena at that time that accompanies him. Ethan realizes that he needs someone to accompany him, and that was Zeena. There was nobody else there who could accompany him. Ethan and Zeena met everyday, and that makes Ethan marry Zeena. Ethan never thinks about the result of it. He just thinks that at that time he needs someone to accompany him.

Ethan was twenty-one years old when he married Zenobia, a distant cousin who nursed his sick mother during her last illness. It was a wedding without love. This wedding started when both of them realized that Zeena had no home of her own, and Ethan was lonely, so they were married. Before they married, Zeena’s talkativeness had been pleasing to Ethan during his mother’s illness, but it was quickly subsided, however, and within a year of their marriage Zeena’s sickness made Ethan became increasingly dissatisfied with his life.

But it was not only that the coming to his house of a bit of hopeful young life was like the lighting of a fire on a cold hearth. The girl was more than the bright serviceable creature he had thought her. She had an eye to see and an ear to hear: he could show her things and tell her things, and taste the bliss of feeling that all he imparted left long reverberations and echoes he could wake at will. (p.22).

The arrival of Mattie Silver brightened the gloomy house considerably. Mattie, Zeena’s cousin, had come to Starkfield partly because she had no other place to go and partly because Zeena felt in need of a companion around the house. Ethan saw in Mattie’s goodness and beauty every fine quality that Zeena lacked.
When Zeena suggested that Ethan help Mattie find a husband, he began to realize how much he was attracted to the girl. There is a dance in the basement of the Church, and Ethan positions himself by the window so he can see what is going on. He is there to pick up Mattie Silver, the cousin of his wife. He strains to catch a glimpse of Mattie but when he finds her, she is dancing with Denis Eady, the son of the Irish grocer. Ethan feels an intense surge of jealousy when he sees the happiness on Mattie’s face and the look of ownership on Eady’s.

Mattie has lived at the Frome farm for over a year. She came to be the help for Ethan’s wife, Zeena. In exchange for her house keeping, Mattie gets free room and board, but receives no pay. On these nights when she goes for a dance or other social event in town, it is Ethan’s job to escort her back. After a hard day of work the extra two miles to and from town is tiring, but Ethan loves the time alone with Mattie. Like him, she is sensitive to natural beauty, in her he has found someone to talk about the beauty of the land and the small bits of science he knows. Her vitality invigorates him. He has fallen in love with her.

On his way home with her, Ethan felt his love for Mattie more than ever, for on that occasion as on others, she flattered him by asking him question about astronomy. The contrast between Zeena and Mattie impressed him more and more.

Zeena had always been what Starkfield called “sickly”, and Frome had to admit that, if she were as ailing as she believed, she needed the help of a stronger arm than the one which lay so lightly in his during the night walk to the farm.(p.24).

Zenobia is a sickly, whining woman, but she sometimes surprises Ethan by proving more observant than he had hoped. She has noticed that since Mattie’s
coming, Ethan has been shaving everyday. She mentioned the change obliquely, surprising Ethan because he had assumed that Zeena was oblivious to everything but her own endless parade of health problems. Ethan's isolation on the farm has been relieved by Mattie Silver. She seems to share a love for natural beauty, and Ethan finally has someone with whom he can talk. But Ethan is already married. His marriage is a loveless match with a sick and whining woman.

They walked around to the back of the house, between the rigid gooseberry bushes. It was Zeena's habit, when they came back late from the village, to leave the key of the kitchen door under the mat. "It's not there!" he said, straightening himself with a start....(p.33).

When Ethan and Mattie pass the Frome graveyard, Ethan feels that the graves offer a promise of stability. Before, the graves always seemed to mock his desire to leave Starkfield. Near the end of the walk, Mattie stumbles and Ethan draws his arm up around her for support. It is the first time they have had contact so close, and they remain linked this way until they reached the door of the house. Usually, Zeena leaves the key for them under the mat. But the key is not there, and Ethan worries that something has happened. He hears noises inside the house, and the door opens then revealing Zeena.

"I guess I won't come up yet awhile, "he said, turning as if to go back to the kitchen.... That's so. It is powerful cold down here, "Ethan assented; and with lowered head he went up in his wife's wake, and followed her across the threshold of their room.(p.34).

Zeena says that she felt too ill to sleep. That night, Ethan dislikes the idea of Mattie seeing him go up to bed with his wife. He tries to invent some excuse for staying downstairs for a bit longer, but the fire is already out and this behavior seems
strange. After Zeena's surprise at his suggestion as well as what seems to be a warning glance from Mattie, Ethan gives in and goes upstairs with his wife.

Ethan's felt confusedly there were many things he ought to think about, but through his tingling veins and tired brain only one sensation throbbed: the warmth of Mattie's. (p.35).

Ethan's passion for Mattie has become more difficult to control. Although a few days ago the thought of kissing Mattie would never have occurred to him, now the desire to do so is becoming irresistible. He once contented himself with fantasies of simply being allowed to stay near her, now he is thinking about having her physically. Zeena is only twenty-eight years old, but she is prematurely an old woman. The physical descriptions of her make clear that she cannot be an object of erotic desire. Ethan is twenty-one, and Zeena arouses no passion in him.

2. Interpersonal Conflicts

As we can see in the story, the marriage between Ethan and Zeena is not based on love so there is no harmony or happiness in their marriage. In a marriage, it is very important to give our spouse attention and love. Good communication is also important for the spouse because with communication they can share what they need and feel.

When Zeena knows about the affair between her husband and Mattie, she asks Mattie to leave the house. However, Ethan wants Mattie to stay because she has helped them since Zeena became sick. Ethan always tried to prevent Mattie from going with the reason that Mattie is her cousin. For this reason Zeena and Ethan are
in quarrel. Because Zeena is isolated from the world, naturally she chooses to be sick because sickness promises adventure in its possible complications, sudden curtes, and monotony. Zeena’s actual illnesses add to her own personal suffering, and this in turn forces isolated Starkfield to become the Frome’s permanent residence.

Ethan’s hand dropped from the door-knob, which he had held clenched since he had drawn on Mattie. His wife’s retort was like a knife-cut across the sinews and he felt suddenly weak and powerless. He had meant to humble himself, to argue that Mattie’s keep didn’t cost much, after all, that he could make out to buy a stove and fix up a place in the attic for the hired girl- but Zeena’s words revealed the peril of such pleadings. (p.66).

When Ethan looks at Zeena, whose illness worsens by time, he sees that she was no longer the listless creature who had lived at his side in a state of sullen self-absorption, but a mysterious alien presence, an evil energy secreted from the long years of silent brooding. Zeena, knowing that her marriage is an unhappy one, also notices the progression of Ethan and Mattie’s relationship, and reacts by increasing antagonism in the house hold to make their suffering equal to her own.

“Well, Zeena, he ventured from the threshold.
She did not move, and he continued: “Supper’s about ready. Ain’t you coming?”
She replied: “I don’t feel as if I could touch a morsel.” (p.61).

“He wants I should have a hired girl. He says I oughtn’t to have to do a single thing around the house.”
“A hired girl?” Ethan stood transfixed. (p.63).

Ethan goes up to ask Zeena down to supper. Zeena, tells him, ominously, that she is sicker than he realizes. She has “complications”. Ethan is torn between hoping for her death and feeling pity for her, but his compassion is stronger than his selfishness. Zeena is picky and irritable. She tells him that the doctor thinks she
should rest for months, without doing any work whatsoever. The doctor has recomended a hired girl, and Zeena has already contracted one to come. Ethan becomes angry because he simply does not have the money for it.

It was the first scene of open anger between the couple in their sad seven years together, and Ethan felt as if he had lost an irretrievable advantage in descending to the level of recrimination. (p.64)

Zeena lashes back, saying that she became ill tending Ethan’s own mother. The fight is open, it is the only time in their marriage that Zeena and Ethan have shown so much open anger. They bicker over costs, and Zeena brings up the promised money for the lumber delivery. Ethan is caught in his lie, and he lacks the skill to evade it.

“Ethan- Zeena!” Mattie’s voice sounded gaily from the landing, “do you know what time it is? Supper’s been ready half an hour.” Inside the room there was a moment’s silence; then Zeena called out from her seat: “I’m not coming down to supper.” “Oh, I’m sorry! Aren’t you well? Sha’n’t I bring you up a bite of something?”

Ethan roused himself with an effort and opened the door. “Go along down, Matt. Zeena’s just a little tired. I’m coming.” (p.66).

Zeena also points out that their expenses will be less now that Mattie will be leaving. Ethan is horrified because he had not even considered that Mattie would be sent away. Mattie comes up to call them down for dinner, but Zeena responds that she will not be having dinner. Mattie goes back downstairs. Ethan tries to persuade Zeena to let Mattie stay, but Zeena is adamant.

“You’re a bad girl, Mattie Silver, and I always known it. It’s the way your father begun, and I was warned of it when I took you, and I tried to keep my things where you couldn’t get at ‘em- and now you’ve took from me the one I cared for most of all- “ (p.72).
Zeena comes downstairs, having decided to eat dinner after all. She speaks in her flat whine, eating and telling them stories about the intestinal problems of her friends and relatives in Bettsbridge. After dinner, she has heartburn and goes to get some special stomach powders, she returns furious, tears in her eyes, the broken bits of the pickle-dish in her hands. Ethan tries to blame it on the cat, but Mattie admits that she brought down the pickle-dish to try and make the table look pretty. Zeena has never used it, even when company has come over, and she is mad with grief and rage.

C. The Result of Marriage without Love to the Couple as Seen in Ethan Frome

There is a proverb saying that even though we keep a bad thing carefully, one day the smell will arise. We cannot deny that. The same is true as what was happening in the story. Even though Ethan and Mattie kept their relationship from Zeena, she finally found it out. In her insistence that Mattie be sent away, Zeena gave the first real hint that she might have been aware of gossip about her husband and Mattie.

The story itself is about a couple that marries without love. They are Ethan and Zenobia, or Zeena. How could they marry without love? It was the condition which leads them to get married. They got married because of the pitifulness. He was desperate for human companionship in that cold, bleak, somber winter. At that time, Ethan needed someone to talk with. When his mother died, he felt very lonely.

Then his mother got queer and dragged along for years as weak as a baby; and his wife Zeena, she’s always been the greatest hand at
doctoring in the county. Sickness and trouble. That's what Ethan's had
his plate full up with, ever since the very first helping. (p.12).

Every couple married with the aim to reach a happy family, to love each other
until death do they part. But here, in Ethan Frome, it was hard to reach that goal
because they could never force their feelings. They married without love. That was
why they seemed to put away so-called love and romanticism.

He and Zeena had not exchanged a word after the door of their room
had closed on them. Ethan undressed hurriedly and blew out the light
so that he should not see her when he took his place at her side. (p.35).

At first, their marriage was normal, in the sense that they ran their lives just
like other people. Then it turned out as the time went. Zeena's talkativeness, which
has been pleasing to Ethan during his mother's illness, quickly subsided, and within a
year of their marriage Zeena developed the sickliness that was to plague her husband
all her life.

A marriage without love can be justified if finally both the husband and the
wife could adapt to each other. They can have the sense of responsibility and
understanding of each other and build a happy family. In the story, it seemed that
both of them, Ethan and Zeena, did not have the feeling of understanding. They ran
their lives as it was. Ethan with his works and Zeena with her works. They seemed to
ignore each other. Zeena never cared what her husband did and vice versa.

It was a fact that since mattie Silver's coming he had taken to shaving
everyday; but his wife always seemed to be a sleep when he left her
side in the winter darkness, and he had stupidly assumed that she would
not notice any change in his appearance. Once or twice in the past he
had been faintly disquieted by Zenobia's way of letting things happen
without seeming to remark them. (p.26).
Usually, a marriage without love has lots of consequences. Moreover if the marriage is a forced one. In building a family, love is very important. Without love it seems impossible.

Ethan Frome married Zenobia just because both of them had no other closer people around. Based on the loveless marriage, their relationship was not normal. Physically, Zeena was not an attractive woman. She had a flat breast and she suffered from asthma. For her illness she spent her husband’s money a lot, and this made him mad.

The money or its absence influences the life of Ethan Frome because considering how often money is mentioned in the novel, it must be important in the life of the main character. But usually it is a lack of money that affects Ethan. Before Ethan’s father died, the old man, in his delirium, gave away much of the family wealth. Therefore, Ethan starts out with little money. And when he marries Zeena, he remains poor because Zeena spends the little he earns on doctors and patent medicines.

Zeena’s illness traps Ethan on the farm, depletes his resources, and enables him to spend and evening alone with Mattie. Ethan would never have known Mattie at all if illnesses had not taken his parent’s lives. The characters suffer from dead souls. Although Ethan remains intact physically, he might as well be dead.

Mattie enters Ethan’s life because her father bilked money from his wife’s relatives. When he died, his debts could not be paid. Cast out of her family, Mattie
came penniless to Starkfield. It is the absence of money, too, that prevents Ethan from escaping to the West with Mattie. The final blow-up between Ethan and Zeena occurs over money. Zeena has hired a new girl to replace Mattie. Because Ethan cannot afford both to pay the new girl and to feed Mattie, Mattie must go.

Zeena always came back laden with expensive remedies, and her last visit to Springfield had been commemorated by her paying twenty dollars for an electric battery of which she had never been able to learn the use. (p.38).

When a wife can no longer give what her husband needs, then the husband will try to find something new and better. This is the center where the conflict will arise. A less cared husband, like Ethan, will try to find something new. In the story, he found it in Mattie, Zeena's cousin. Then he started to fall in love with her. He started to care about his appearance.

It was the fact that since Mattie Silver's coming he had taken to shaving everyday. (p.26).

Ethan then fell in love with Mattie. What was in his mind was just Mattie. Zeena was no longer important for him.

Of late, however, there had been no room in his thoughts for such vague apprehensions. Zeena herself, for an oppressive reality, had faded into an insubstantial shade. (p.26).

All his life was lived in the sight and sound of Mattie Silver, and he could no longer conceive of it's being otherwise. (p.26).

The presence of Mattie had brought something new for him, just like sunshine after the rain. His life was not for Zeena anymore, because he had found
Mattie. Her presence brought a new spirit in Ethan’s life. She cheered Ethan’s life with her lovely characters.

The absence of Zeena supports Ethan feeling to Mattie, moreover it is added by the cold weather of winter.

All the way down to the village he continued to think of his return to Mattie... but it was surprising what a homelike look the mere fact of Zeena’s absence gave it... For the first time they would be alone together indoors, and they would sit there, one on each side of the stove, like a married couple. he in his stocking feet and smoking pipe, she laughing and talking in that funny way she had, which always as new to him as if he had never heard before. (p.40).

Winter in Starkfield influences the relationship between Ethan Frome and Mattie Silver, his lover, which grows closer day by day. Ethan always picks up Mattie from church and it continues when both of them are left at home by Zeena, who wants to see a doctor.

“During the winter months there was no stage between Starkfield and Bettsbridge, the trains which stopped at Corbury Flats were slow and infrequent. A Rapid calculation showed Ethan that Zeena could not be back at the farm before the following evening...” (p.38).

During that night, Ethan and Mattie talked casually about the day but both were excited and nervous about being alone together. Ethan feels as though there is an intimacy between the two of them. His imagination begins to run away with him as he envisions spending the rest of his life with Mattie but ironically Ethan will go on spending his evenings with Mattie not in the way he thinks.
When Zeena knows about Ethan's affair with Mattie, she asks Mattie to leave the house, and Ethan has a plan to run away with Mattie.

"The inexorable facts closed in on him like prison-warders handcuffing a convict. There was no way out-alone. He was prisoner for life, and now his one way of light was to be extinguished." (p.75).

When Zeena knew about Ethan's affair with Mattie, she asked Mattie to leave the house. The most terrible thing was that he was willing to leave Zeena and go with Mattie. At first Ethan insisted on letting Mattie stay there still, but Zeena refused.

He continued with rising vehemence: "you can't put her out of the house like a thief-a poor girl without friends or money. She's done her best for you and she got no place to go. You may forget she's your kin but everybody else remember it..." (p.66).

When they had no other way to keep their love, they decided to commit suicide by riding a sleigh and collide into a big elm tree. They wanted to die together if they could not live together. Ethan takes Mattie down to a quiet spot in the woods. They talk sweetly to each other, more open in their affection than ever before.

...she put her lips close against his ear to say: "right into the big elm. You said you could. So 't we'd never have to leave each other anymore...I am not crazy; but I will be if I leave you. (p.92).

As they near the edge of the town, Ethan persuades Mattie to come sledding with him. It is their last chance to go coasting down the hill. They find a sled and go down, despite the fact that it is twilight and the light is the most confusing of any time of day. The first trip down is exhilarating, Ethan steers well and they reach the bottom safely. They climb up the hill and realize fully that soon they will never see
each other again. Both begin to cry, unable to leave each other, telling each other that they cannot bear to be apart. Mattie asks Ethan to take her down the hill again, straight into the big elm. She does not want to live without him. They get into the sled for a second ride down, Ethan in front this time. He will not be able to steer, but the track will carry them down straight into the tree. They go down the hill, but they do not die. Ethan comes to, disoriented. He is in unbelievable pain. He realizes he is holding Mattie who is still alive.

"Ethan, where'll I go if I leave you? I don't know how to get along alone... Nobody but you was ever good to me... (p.93).

Both of them want to commit a suicide together but they fail and suffer a lot after the accident. Although at last Ethan has his own mind to do something, still he fails. They failed, however, to hit the tree with force sufficient to kill them. The death became the living death, for in the accident Mattie suffered a permanent spinal injury and Ethan an incurable lameness.

At the end of the story, the person who then received Mattie into her home, who waited on her, and who cooked for Ethan was Zeena. Finally, Zeena could accept both of them in her house. After the accident, Zeena took care of both of them.

Anyhow, when she heard o' the accident she came right in and stayed with Ethan over to the minister's, where they'd carried him. And as soon as the doctors said that Mattie could be moved, Zeena sent for her and took her back to the farm..."Yes, there she's been. "Mrs. Hale continued, and Zeena's done for her, and done for Ethan, as good as
she could. It was a miracle, considering how sick she was- but she seemed to be raised right up just when the call came to her... (p.99).

The end of the story was very tragic. It was not a good solution, but at least all of them could live together, although one of them should be willing to sacrifice the feelings. In this case, Zeena was the most suffered person. She already lost her husband’s love, and she had to take care of the girl who stole her husband’s love. She can now afford to care for Ethan and Mattie because she no longer needs to worry about losing Ethan. If her earlier hypochondria was a way of controlling Ethan, it is no longer necessary. He is lame and needs her, in a similar way, Mattie no longer poses any kind of threat. All is stable at the Frome farm and there is no longer any way for Zeena to lose control of the situation.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

After analysing the conflicts in a marriage reflected in *Ethan Frome* I came to the conclusion that Ethan is basically a sensitive and intelligent man, but he is chained to his existence on the farm. He was forced to leave college to care for his aging and ailing parents. He married Zeena because he feared loneliness and felt he owed her something for her help to his parents. He has worked diligently on the farm, never enjoying leisure or social connection. To satisfy his own selfish needs for communication and connection, he preys on the vulnerable and innocent Mattie Silver and wins her love.

A marriage should be based on love. It is a very important aspect, and it might lead to destruction if the couple does not have it. It is what was happening to Ethan and Zeena. They married without love and their marriage did not seem to be a marriage. The relationship between the husband and the wife was not harmonious.

After analyzing the factors that made Ethan’s marriage unhappy, we can conclude that their marriage is weak because it was built based on unhealthy reason. Ethan marries Zeena simply because he is afraid of being left alone in Starkfield. He does not believe in himself that he can face problems alone. He needs someone, and it is Zeena. It is an unhealthy reason because it will break their relationship. Ethan marries Zeena because he needs someone to get through life in Starkfield. When she
is finally sick and unable to accompany him, he turns his love to another woman for the same reason that he married Zeena.

We can see three failure of Ethan after we analyze the novel. This is shown through marrying his wife, not being able to stand up to his wife, and his involvement concerning the "smash up". The first failure as shown in the book is through the relationship of Ethan and his wife. He married her because she had tried to help his mother recover from an illness, and once his mother died he could not bear the thought of living in the house alone. His wife was seven years his senior and always seemed to have some kind of illness. It seemed all she ever did was complain, and he resented this because it stifled his growing soul. Since his wife was continuously ill, and her cousin needed a place to stay, they took her in to help around the house. Ethan took an immediate propensity to her cousin, Mattie, because she brought a bright light into his dismal day. He seemed to have found someone that cared for him, always happy and could share his youth, unlike his sickly wife who always nagged him. He longed to be with Mattie, however he had loyalty to his wife. Being married to the wrong person proved to be Ethan’s first failure.

Ethan's second failure was not being able to stand up to his wife. His wife claimed that a new doctor said that she was extremely sick, and needed more help around the house. She told him without any discussion that Mattie had to go. Ethan could not find the words to make her alter her decision. His wife also decided that Mattie had to leave the next day and Ethan could not do anything about it. It was stated in the book that his wife had the upper hand in the house by the line “Now she
had mastered him and he obeyed her.” Ethan just could not find the right things to say and it was because of his failure of not being able to stand up to his wife, he was going to lose the only thing that made him happy.

Ethan’s last failure was the way he modified his and Mattie’s lives regarding the “smash up.” He so desperately wanted to run away with Mattie, but he could not because his practical sense told him it was not feasible to do so. Mattie wanted so desperately to be with Ethan, that she suggested that the way to stay together forever, was to die together. It was Ethan’s job to steer into the tree with the sled so that it looked like an accidental death instead of suicide. Instead it just injured them, and these injuries stayed with them forever. In this way Ethan had his last failure in not succeeding to die with his love, instead he had to live with the guilt from his wife, the injured Mattie, and broken dreams.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendix 1

BIOGRAPHY

Edith Wharton was born in New York, N.Y., into a wealthy and socially prominent family. She was educated privately by European governesses. Her early years Wharton spent rather with books than participating in the activities of high society. In 1885 she married with no great enthusiasm Edward Wharton, a Boston banker, who was twelve years her senior. Wharton's role as a wife with social responsibilities and her writing ambitions resulted in nervous collapse. She had started to compose poems in her teens and she was advised that writing might help her poverty recover.

Wharton's first book, The Decoration of Houses, appeared in 1897. This novella waited for its publication for a long time and her early stories did not deal with New York high society, but urban finally appeared in Xingu and Other Stories (1916). Her husband started to spend money on young women, and show increasing signs of mental instability. In 1906-1909 Wharton had an affair with the American journalist Morton Fullerton, the great love of her life. In her letters to Fullerton, published in The Letters of Edith Wharton (1988) she often expressed her hurt feelings when he toyed with her affections - "didn't you see how my heart broke with the thought that, if I had been younger & prettier, everything might have been different."
The Whartons spent much time in Europe from 1906. Although she maintained after their divorce in 1913 a residence in the U.S., she continued to live in France, where she spent the rest of her life. She became a literary hostess to young writers at her Paris apartment and her garden home in the south of France. Among her friends were Henry James, Walter Berry and Bernard Berenson, with whom she traveled in Germany in 1913.

In the 1890s Wharton started to contribute to *Scribner's Magazine*, but later, even at the height of her fame, she had problems with magazine censorship. 'The Day of the Funeral' was considered "too strong" for the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1931. 'Beatrice Palmato', a story of incest, was never finished, but it gave fuel to speculations that Wharton herself was a victim of abuse. She once wrote: "Brains & culture seem non-existent from one end of the social scale to the other, & half the morons yell for filth, & the other half continue to put pants on the piano-legs." Wharton's first collection of short stories appeared in the late 1890s.

Wharton gained first success with her book *The House of Mirth* (1905), a story of a beautiful but poor woman, Lily Bart, trying to survive in the pitiless New York City. It was followed several other novels set in New York. *The Custom of The Country* (1913) was a story of a young ambitious woman. Through the spoilt and selfish heroine Wharton draws a revealing and ironic picture of social behavior inside the doors of upper-class America.
Among Wharton's most famous novels only *The Age of Innocence*, which was filmed in 1993. The story described the frustrated love of a New York lawyer, Newland Archer, for unconventional, artistic Ellen Olenska, the separated wife of a dissolute Polish count. Wharton contrasts the manner of the New World with those of Old Europe. Finally Archer marries his calculating fiancée May, representing the 19th-century domestic virtues. Archer's decision promotes his family's wealth underlined the novel's point that individual happiness is secondary to the continuation of the prevailing culture.

Wharton's other major works include the long tale *Ethan Frome* (1911) which was set in impoverished rural New England. *The Reef* (1912) show influence of Henry James, whom Wharton knew during the last 12 years of his life. During a fit of depression in 1909, James burned most of his personal papers, including his correspondence with Wharton, but the two writers enjoyed each other's company though they weren't lovers. Wharton campaigned to win James the Nobel Prize for Literature, and secretly diverted some of her own royalties to James to help her famous senior colleague in his financial worries.

The novel *Hudson River Bracketed* (1929) and its sequel *The Gods Arrive* (1932) compared the cultures of Europe and the sections of the U.S. she knew. Wharton also wrote poems, essays, travel books, and her autobiography, *A Backward Glance* (1934). In her short stories Wharton wrote about women in turn-of-the-
century America, their loveless marriages, social responsibilities, expensive tastes, and longing for freedom.

Wharton's last novel, *The Buccaneers* (1938), was left unfinished, but her literary executor had the novel published in 1938. Wharton died in France, St.-Brice-sous-Ferêt, on August 11, 1937. *The Buccaneers*, a story about Wharton's own New York City generation, was later completed by Marion Mainwaring. Wharton's work was regarded from her death into the 1970s as anti-modernist, but biographies and movies, such as Martin Scorsese's adaptation of her novel *The Age of Innocence* (1993), aroused new interest in her work.
Appendix 2

SUMMARY

Ethan Frome lives in Starkfield, a small village and small community with his wife Zeena Zenobia and his wife’s cousin, Mattie Silver. Ethan was a young man who had to take care of his mother until she died. Ethan was afraid of being lonely during the winter so he married his mother’s nurse, Zeena, who was an older woman. Ethan lives in an unhappy marriage because of his wife, Zeena, who is being sick. They had planned to move to a big city and to start a new life. Lack of fertile and not enough money prevented their dreams from coming true. Zeena became sick and Ethan realized that he was never getting out of Starkfield.

Their house became silent and cold. All of that changed when Mattie, Zeena’s cousin, came to stay with them. Mattie was the one who does the housing and prepares for everything. Ethan who feels that his marriage is very unhappy then finds something different in Mattie and Ethan ended up falling in love with her. She offered the warm qualities that Zeena never showed. Ethan did Mattie’s chores around the house for her and sneaked extra time with her.

The last straw was when Mattie broke the pickle dish while Zeena was away. This was significant because the pickle dish had never been used because it was the nicest thing that Ethan and Mattie owned. Zeena got rid of Mattie with the excuse that she needed a new nurse and they could not afford to keep both women. Mattie had no place to go. Ethan stood up to Zeena and insisted that he would take her to the
train. On the way to the tain they stopped the sleigh to ride down a hill. After doing so, Mattie decided that they should commit suicide together so that they would never have to be alone. They attempted to commit suicide by sleighing into a tree but they were unsuccessful and both ended up with permanent physical injuries. Finally, they lived together miserably with Zeena taking care of them.