

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

This analysis will be divided into two parts according to the statement of the problems. The first part will tell about Undine's background and her marital life to those three men. Knowing her background will give us sight of her motive in pursuing her ambition through marriage. The second part will be about the ambitious Undine who tries to manipulate the social value of marriage in order to be able to marry an eligible man.

A. Undine's Motive in Pursuing her Ambition through Marriage

1. Undine's Background

In order to know more of Undine Spragg's ambition, we need to know of her background. Undine Spragg is an Apex girl. Apex is a place of a small town, which is located in Midwest. But, it is seen as a promising land where the retail business and industries grow rapidly. It is a place that gives a chance to anyone to gain success through business and industries. This happened because Midwest is the main traffic line connecting west and east. These two sides are connected by railway. The construction of this railway makes other supporting facilities develop as well. Besides that, the mine sources, such as coal mine, also gives big contribution for industries and businesses development in Apex. Those factors influence newcomers come to Apex in order to get better life. All newcomers come from various culture and backgrounds. According to Cayton, the

Midwesterners' character are shaped by the climate and human geography (521). This is why they are often characterized as practical, intolerant and greedy, and also as a people with a strong sense of how things ought to be. Undine's character, like any other Midwesterners, is someone who knows what she wants, and she will do anything to get her will. She is also practical in the sense that when she wants something she must have it instantly at the moment.

Undine's parent is a new rich people in Apex. At the beginning in Apex, the Spraggs have nothing. Undine's father is just a seller of hair-waver. Their life is full of struggle; until one day, the typhoid epidemic devastates Apex, which later it turns their life. In fact, Mr Spragg becomes rich after suggesting that the people of Apex should drink pure water by building the new *water-work*. This is the beginning of Mr Spragg's fortunes.

Mr Spragg had come to Apex as a poor boy, and their early married life had been a protracted struggle, darkened by domestic affliction. Two of their three children had died of typhoid in the epidemic which devastated Apex before the new-water works were built; and this calamity, by causing Mr Spragg to resolve that thereafter Apex should drink pure water, had led directly to the founding of his fortunes (57-58).

Apparently, the *new-water work* building is his way in finding great fortunes. The *new water-work* is some sort of dam that is used to purify the water so the people of Apex will be able to drink pure water. This has made him a wealthy and respectable man. Mr Spragg's achievement has shown that everyone

with no exception can be a wealthy and respectable man in the society regardless of his background. The society sees someone by what he has done and not by birth and rank. All men are equal in the sense of having the same opportunities to be successful and gaining great fortunes despite the differences in birth and rank. It can be said as one of the characteristics in open class society where everyone can achieve and pursue his dreams (Lerner 467). As the open class, the wealth and respect do not only belong to certain kind of person or group, but they belong to anyone who has strong will to pursue those wealth and respect. Mr Spragg is the example of it.

Mr Spragg proves that the idiom from “rags to richest” really works for him. However, as a new rich people, the Spraggs need some adjustment in order to be more accepted by the society. Of course, it does take effort to do so. When someone at the beginning was poor then suddenly became rich, he must change and adapt himself similar to the group where he belonged. The image that people have of a man’s class standing and his image of himself are important. They are demanded to “convert” into the right kind of associations, and those into the right kind of manners, clothes, behavior in which each person shapes himself to the model of the class to which he aspires (Lerner 528). The changing and adapting relate to clothes, houses, clubs, organizations, and above all visible sign of wealth. It means that there is some prerequisite for someone to be part of one’s group.

Changing and adapting himself is a must. Otherwise, the society will isolate him. It has become general convention among people in order to keep the exclusiveness of the member. It is used to differentiate one among others. It is

what the Spraggs are trying to do. They try to adapt and change themselves. First thing they do after getting the fortunes, the Spraggs move in to Mealey House. In Apex, the Spraggs live in Mealey House. Their house has fulfilled the prerequisite of the rich people's house in Apex. The Mealey house is one of the elegance houses in Apex. A house is social symbol. Social symbol deals with clothes, houses, clubs, organizations, and (above all) conspicuous sign of wealth that is used to impress others (Merrill 200). We can know one social status by seeing the house. Living in Mealey house shows that the Spraggs are wealthy.

Their new life as a rich people has made Undine's parents tend to give everything she wants. This is because her parents have known the feeling of being poor, they do not want her only child left to feel living in poverty any more. It is common for both men and women hoping to get a better life, if not by themselves at least through their children. As a result, they tend to grant all her wishes. The way her parents treat Undine, has made her an egoistic person. She always compels others to do as she wishes. Otherwise, she will pretend being ill-health. She uses her health condition as reason to force her parents whenever they do not follow her wishes. Alarming by her ill-health, her parents do as she wants. Indirectly, it influences Undine's personality. She becomes a woman who tends to be manipulative and used others for her own benefit. More over she is described as beautiful, and it gives her another benefit.

Undine was fiercely independent and yet passionately imitative.

She wanted to surprise every one by her dash and originality...

(16)

It stated clearly that Undine is a very independent woman. Despite her surroundings who influence her to be manipulative she is still an independent woman. It is the irony of Undine characters. In one side she uses other people for her own benefit as an indication that she needs others to achieve what she wants. On the other side she becomes very independent, showing as if she does not need anyone to get what she wants. As what her parents do, she also adapts and changes herself similar to her new group. It is not easy because there are differences between poor and rich. Once, when they were still poor they didn't think of their outfits or appearances. Instead, they only think about surviving their life. The appearances do not ever a matter for the poor. It does a great matter for the rich. Now, after her father has become rich and money has no longer become problems, appearance is a matter for Undine. As there is a big difference between the poor and rich, she needs a model in order to be accepted. Using her beauty, she dresses up like others who come from respectable background. She feels that she must perform herself in her best performance. Nonetheless, changing and adapting are process. It takes time and effort. She tries hard to be part of the rich society. She does not only imitate the way others talk or behave but also to get along well with the rich and respectable people.

After she becomes part of the rich, Undine still feels dissatisfied. Even so, she often feels envious for not having things as good as others. She shows her obvious feeling of jealousy to her parents in order to make them aware of her wants.

...she learned that even Indiana Frusk was to go on a month's visit to Buffalo it needed no artificial aids to emphasize the ravage of envy. Her parents, alarmed by her appearance, were at last convinced of the necessity of change, and timidly, tentatively, they transferred themselves for a month to a staring hotel on a glaring lake. (39)

All she wants are the best things for her. As a member of the society, she imitates the society itself. Undine is an imitator, but she only wants to imitate the best one. This shows that there is one similarity in purpose as well as in competition. It is the reflection of the society. At the beginning, the Spraggs had nothing. Then, they turn into having something. It is possible to be rich since the society gives much opportunities to get what one's wants. It is the conception of a classless society where people are recognized by ability and achievement. It is the achievement and success talked in the society. Still, it does not mean that social prestige and position are not a matter. It is still important although the concept is a classless society. The social prestige and position are social symbol. The social symbols are needed to identify to which group or class some one belongs. There are many social symbols, life style is included. Undine realizes this matter well. Having the wealth is not enough. She puts a lot of effort to have all those social symbols in order to be admitted. It is not so difficult since she has her mother's support. Mrs Spragg supports her because she wants Undine to get all the things she always dreams in the past which she could not have. It makes Undine feel that

she must have the best among the best. It shows how ambitious she is. She really works hard on it and she does it successfully.

At Apex, however she had belonged to a social club, and, until they moved to the Mealey House, had been kept busy by the incessant struggle with the domestic cares; whereas New York seemed to offer no field for any form of lady-like activity. (10)

It is clearly seen that in Apex Undine has managed successfully in gaining all she wants. She has been able to dress up like the high respectable people, talked like them, and the most important is that she has been part of the society where she always wants. Again, all she wants is the best of the best.

Undine is an ambitious person. Her achievement in Apex has not made her satisfied yet. Apex is never enough for her. She wants something else, bigger than Apex. Undine is too big for Apex. Apex is located in the mid-western. Midwestern people are characterized to be likely to look eastward for its patterns of living. Apex is a small town. She looks for something bigger than her home town. New York is all what she is looking for. She always dreams of New York and the people.

I'll never try anything again till I try New York. Now she had gained her point and tried New York and so far, it seemed with no better success (42).

Moving to New York is a great jump for her. It is what she always wants. Conquering New York and its people is her biggest ambition. In New York, things do not happen as she expects. Undine and her parents have difficulties in

adjusting themselves with the New York society. It is never easy for someone from a small city moving to a bigger one. New York is a big city where every thing works differently. The social standard of Apex is wealth, while in New York wealth is not enough. In Apex, the Spraggs have it all. They even have their own home. The fact that Undine belongs to social club is indicating that she and her parents are really recognized and accepted by the Apex's society. New York gives them stress and pressure for a period since they have to struggle in order to be accepted.

The failure and frustration for a period make them decide to take up a residence in the luxurious Stentorian Hotel. It is the place where most of the mid-westerners stay for the first time when they come in New York before they are officially accepted as a part of the New Yorkers. Undine knows a lot about New York from newspaper. She often reads about it and the people. Newspaper is the source of information and means of communication. The importance of newspaper as one of the source of information and also means of communication is represented by the appearance of Mrs Heeny's character. Mrs Heeny is a society manicure and masseuse. She is the one who gives Undine information about the New Yorkers. But, that is not the only thing Mrs Heeny does. Through Undine and her mother she plays double role of manipulator and friend.

It was Mrs Heeny who peopled the solitude of the long ghostly days with lively anecdotes of the Van Degens, the Driscolls, the Chauncey Ellings and the other social potentates whose least

doings Mrs Spragg and Undine had followed from afar in the Apex papers. (10)

Newspaper has an important role in shaping the public opinions. It happens since newspaper only represents the important matter. Its functions do not only give information and means of communication but also as means of publication. Media, in this case newspaper, has a linkage with wealth and power. It means that getting publicity is a prestigious thing. There is a belief that only the wealthy and the one with great power become the topic of a newspaper. What counts in American is not money alone-not even primarily-but closeness to the sources of power, publicity, and popular success (Lerner 483). Newspaper is one of the ways to introduce oneself to others and makes them aware for one's existence. Undine is an ambitious person who always wants all the best for her self, realizes the importance of newspaper.

...,and it was admiration, not love, that she wanted. She wanted to enjoy herself, and her conception of enjoyment was publicity, promiscuity- the band, the banners, the crowd, the close contact of covetous impulses, and the sense of walking among them in cool security. (157)

The quotation above indicates that newspaper gives her a chance to enter to the society where she always wants. She always wants to be the center of attention. It is her ambition to be able to enjoy herself. The concept of enjoyment for her is fame, wealth and adoration. Newspaper makes her possible to do so. The more

she is on the news the more famous she becomes. But, she cannot be the subject of news if she is a nobody. It is one thing that Undine really realizes.

Being rich in New York is not enough. It means, wealth and income are not the only factors for gaining the social advancement. One is demanded not only to have the “right kind” of manners, clothes, behavior, but also to be able to get along into the “right kind” of association. It is the people’s mind that by joining the “right kind” of association will give him access to those who have position and power.

It is not easy for Undine not only because of the money matter but also because she is a new comer and has not settled down yet. To achieve this entire thing she needs a lot of money and fame. For her, the only way is marriage since the society gives a lot of limitation for women to perform themselves in front of the public. It is the dilemma of a woman, in one side, she wants an adventurous and exciting life, but on the other hand she lives in a culture where she is not allowed to go on her own. Therefore she must find the marriageable male who will invest her with security and status (Lerner 600). There are many rules women should obey. There is nothing wrong with the rule because it is used as the social control. Rule is needed in order to avoid the disharmony among them. But, it becomes a problem when the rules given have decreased the freedom of women in expressing themselves. Moreover, women are allowed to play their role only in domestic life. They are not allowed to enter a public life. Since women are only allowed to deal with domestic matter, so the society sees a worker woman as

something taboo and inappropriate. Respectable women are not allowed to work. Only women that come from a lower-class can work.

2. Undine's Marital Life with Ralph Marvell

Undine's ambition is to conquer New York and to be part of it. She realizes that she does not only need wealth but also respectable position in front of the society. Those are the things she does not have in New York. The society does not allow her to enter public life to pursue her ambition. Entering the public life for women is indecent. Women are looked down by most men. That is why women are not supposed to work outside the house because they are considered as incapable of doing the job. Working outside means doing a work that has been dominated by male, such as in politic, business, etc. From those jobs women can make their own money. The women at the early age are only taught of doing the housewife's job. If they were taught or done something else it means that they were against the custom. For women, marriage has become the only way to support her and get the status in the group. That is why Undine uses marriage to pursue her ambition.

First, when arriving in New York she is unknown and knows nobody. Then, one night at a party she meets Ralph Marvell. Ralph invites Undine for dinner. Because she knows that Ralph comes from aristocratic family, she accepts Ralph's invitation.

There were to be no more mistakes and no more follies now! She was going to know the right people at last- she was going to get what she wanted. (p. 23)

Dining with someone like Ralph, whose background no longer needs to be questioned, will give her way to be accepted in New York society. Yet, it is not easy. She needs to adapt and adjust her appearances in order to be able to get along well with the old aristocratic people. The appearances are the visible sign of someone to which class or group one's belong. The more attractive one's appearance the higher prestige one has. People only talk and gather with others from the same group. This gives the feeling of security and comfort. To do so, Undine puts her best effort to perform herself as best as she can. She does not want to ruin her first chance to be part of the high society. She dresses herself in a new and best wardrobe. In a place where appearance is a matter, it is scandalous for woman to wear the same wardrobe within a week. That is why Undine demands new and best wardrobe from her father.

But all of that turn into disappointment. She feels very disappointed by the time she finds out that Ralph is not as rich as she thought. "Undine was disappointed at the Fairford dinner"(24).The dinner is not like what she expected. Fairford is known as the aristocratic family. Undine's expectation is understandable. Hearing the word aristocratic gives the sense of luxurious and splendour. It is not just about the house, clothes, and food that are supposed to be luxurious and splendid but also the very detail of almost everything. Undine feels the same way. She expects that having dinner at the Fairfords she will find luxury

and splendor. She feels more disappointed knowing that the Fairfords do not live in Fifth Avenue. Instead, they live in Thirty-Eight street, down beyond Park Avenue. The Fifth Avenue is an elite housing and only the rich live there. It is the place where Undine wants to live in. She has followed the news about Fifth Avenue since she was in Apex. However, since Ralph is an aristocrat, her disappointment at dinner does not change her mind that Ralph is her way to be able to put her with the “right people”. The aristocrats have an effect on the taste and intellectual life of America (Lerner 476). She assumes that all the disappointment at dinner is mainly because the Faiford as the aristocratic family has their own style.

However, the disappointment she has does not change her mind to marry him. Undine, whose ambition is to conquer New York, needs Ralph to complete the prerequisite of the rich. The aristocrat is at the top of social pyramid in American society. Eventhough the Americans are considered as classless, in a sense every one has the right to pursue the material succeed, birth and rank are still the standard. This is set by the aristocrat to defend their position from the new rich. Setting the standard will give the sense of exclusiveness that can differentiate the aristocrats from others. Undine realizes that wealth does not guarantee one’s acceptance into one’s group. The reason is that there should be someone who “recommends” her to the group. It makes the group feels comfortable to gather with Undine. People feel comfortable to gather with others when they feel that they have something to share with and something in common like knowing the same person. For this reason Undine agrees to marry Ralph. Marrying Ralph is

her first chance, as what she says to Elmer Moffat; "...it's my first chance – I can't lose it"(81)!

Undine knows that by marrying Ralph she will be provided with the thing she has not had yet i.e. the respectable name. It is a belief that respectable person is the one who can influence others. It deals with power. Having power will make everything easier to get. Besides, it will give a position in the society or at least will make someone easier to get into with the "right people". Here, Ralph as an aristocrat has what Undine has been looking for. Ralph is the "real thing" for her. Marrying Ralph will give her his family name. Her name is no longer Undine Spragg, but it is changed into Undine Marvell. This indicates that she has been part of the aristocrat family. Women's last name implies that women should depend her life if not on her father then on her husband. Before marriage a woman carries her father's name. After a woman is married, she has her husband's name. For Undine, her father's name in New York cannot give her access to pursue her ambition. The Spragg's name is a respectable name in Apex since it is suburb. Thing happens differently in New York. Most of the Apex people are newcomers who come there to find fortunes. Family name is not a matter in Apex. The only matter is achievement. This is why Apex is seen as a promising land. Meanwhile, New York is a big city where family name is a matter. The ideal of New York people is aristocrats where everything is measured from the aristocrats point of view. Because of this, it is her husband's name that can provide honor The adding of Marvell name is beneficial for her. It makes her automatically be part of the society where she always wants.

Nonetheless, it is true that Undine's marriage to Ralph gives her access to gather with "right people". But, her marital life is not like what she expected. Her husband does not have much money as she thought. In fact, within the last few weeks Mr Spragg has learned that New York marriage involves material obligations unknown to Apex (84). This means that Mr Spragg has to pay all the expenses of the wedding and the honeymoon. Although her father had told her that Ralph's financial situation is pathetic, she insists on going her plan. The reason why Undine goes on with her plan is that she does not want to lose her linkage with Marvell's set and she feels enough for always doing what her parents say (86-87). The Marvell's set for Undine is the group of the rich people of New York that she knows since she is in Apex. As a father, Mr Spragg does not want to make his only child disappointed, so he does as what Undine wants.

As a newly married couple, Undine and Ralph go for honeymoon. They spend their first honeymoon in the hills near Siena (99). Siena is located in Italy. It is a place for people who love to enjoy the natural beauty and want to avoid the crowd. Ralph likes Siena for its natural beauty because. He also likes it because there are not many people who come there. He dislikes the crowd. This is understandable because Ralph is described as a man who has gone through many experiences and met many people. Meanwhile Undine is the opposite of Ralph. She likes spending her time with the crowd. Since Undine dislikes the Siena, she asks Ralph to leave Siena and go to St Moritz in Switzerland. St Moritz is a place where rich Americans spend their summer. Undine wants to go there because she wants to meet a lot of people in St Moritz. Spending her time with the crowds is

what Undine wants and Ralph knows it (104). Ralph does not want to go to St Moritz not only because he dislikes the crowds but also because of his financial condition. All their expenses are paid by Undine's father. Ralph knows that his father-in-law has difficulty in finance, so he plans to minimize the expenses. Undine refuses it. She urges Ralph to go to St Moritz no matter what. Ralph must do what Undine wants because she always complains of her headache (106). Undine uses the health condition to make others do like what she likes. She has used this since she was a child. She knows that if she pretends to be ill-health, people will feel sorry for her and does as she wishes.

Finally, the couple goes to St Moritz despites the fact that they have problem in finance. Still, Undine does not want to go to St Moritz with cheap boat. Instead, she wants the expensive and luxurious boat (121). It seems that Undine does not care about their financial problems. For her, Ralph must be able to provide all her wants. She has put in her mind that married with Ralph will give her what she wants. It is what she expected from her marriage and she refuses to accept the fact that Ralph does not like what she thinks. She does not want to marry Ralph if her life remains the same as in Apex, where she cannot have what she wants (100). This indicates that Undine has high expectation that by marrying Ralph will make her to be aristocrat.

In St Moritz, both of Undine and Ralph walk on their own. Undine spends most of her time in Rue de la Paix to meet the crowds, while Ralph spends his time at the theatres, museums and galleries (122). Their journey to St Moritz cannot make them closer as couple. Instead, it makes them feel like strangers

because they have two different lives. This is not the thing that a newly married couple is supposed to have. They are supposed to do everything together and compromise their difference. This seems impossible since at the beginning Ralph and Undine already have quite different background. They fail to adapt themselves with their partner's habit.

Marriage is a sacred institution. Its purpose is to unify two different individuals from different background into a strong bond of commitment. It is hoped that a harmonization between those two individuals will be created through marriage. Undine and Ralph are two different individuals. Both have different concept of marriage. Ralph is described not only as an aristocrat but also as someone who believes that marriage is a matter of love, the source of happiness. It is opponent to Undine. For her, marriage is a way to pursue her ambition, as it is mentioned before that love is not what she needs. Instead, she needs an admiration. Of course, to be admired takes cost. Ralph can give her the position in the society. It makes her able to get into the "right people". Apparently, that is not enough. Both material and immaterial are needed to be really accepted into high society. Here, the immaterial is something that money cannot buy i.e. the position. Meanwhile, the material is dealing with finance. Ralph can write poetry and earn only three thousand a year (58). Money is the thing that Ralph unable to provide. It happens since Ralph is not as rich as what Undine thought of him. It is inappropriate for aristocrat to work because they are seen as the noble man. However, if they do, the only job for them is lawyer. Ralph does not want to be a lawyer. Ralph, like any other aristocrat, is very fond of art and literature. Instead

of being a lawyer, he wants to be a poet. He is a poet with a small income. With that amount of money, it is clear that he is unable to fulfill Undine's extravagance life.

But his wife's daily requirements, combined with her intermittent outbreaks of extravagance, had thrown out all his calculations, and they were already seriously exceeding their income. (105)

The quotation above shows that Undine's life style is extremely expensive, because she wants to amaze others. It is the irony of Undine that at one side she successfully gains position in the society. However, in the other side, she does not have enough money to keep up appearances. Ralph's disability in providing Undine with a big income makes her avoiding him. Undine and Ralph have never talked about anything since they were married except money, even their intimacy as a pretext of escaping from total absence of expression (128). It is obvious that their marriage is not happy. Ralph understands this because he knows what Mr and Mrs Spragg experiences in their marriage is the same as his marital life with Undine (107). A child imitates the parents. So, how the parents act and say will influence the child's attitudes.

Women are only introduced to domestic life and given the idea that one of their responsibilities in life is to feel satisfied with their life. As they feel satisfied with their marriage, they are not allowed to admit that there is something wrong with their marriage. That is why marriage full of pretense and silent is the language. Communication is needed in every kind of relationship, including marriage. The use of it is to avoid misunderstanding. It is also to create the

intimacy among married couple. Undine feels that Ralph is unable to give what she wants. As a result, she decides to get divorced from Ralph. Marrying Ralph seems opening her way into the society she wants to belong. It takes her to the peak of the New York society. Unfortunately, the only defect of Ralph is his disability to provide her with the material wealth. Sometimes money becomes important enough to cut across the field, that a marriage of love without money is intolerable fate, under the conventions there is a money base (Lerner 590). The ideal marriage deals with love. This is why marriage is a sacred institution. Nevertheless, since money is essential matter to survive in the world of materialism, where everything is measured with money, and it is not easy to get it, marrying without money is unacceptable. This happens to Undine. Therefore, she wants a divorce from Ralph. It is mainly because he cannot give her luxury, things that she always wants.

3. Undine's Marital Life with Raymond de Chelles

Separating from Ralph does not stop her to get what she wants. As mentioned before, all she wants is advancement and the best things for her. Since she wants advancement in her life, conquering the New York society is not enough for her. She wants something bigger than New York. It is Europe that she is looking for. Being part of Europe society is her ambition after conquering New York. Again, in order to be accepted as part of it, she must fulfill the prerequisite of the European. Still, wealth and position are the prerequisite for it. She has become a part of high society in New York, but not yet in Europe. It is her

ambition that she plans to pursue. The Americans see Europe as the center of civilization. Only the rich Americans can go there. New York is different from Europe, in this case Paris. Things work differently in Paris. Paris is the center of fashion as well as the center of amusement (118-119). This is no wonder why many rich Americans come to Paris. In New York, she is already part of the society, but not Paris. Again, she also needs someone to give her linkage to the high society of Europe. In Paris, she stays at the Hotel Nouveau Luxe. The Nouveau Luxe hotel is a place where most of the rich Americans stay when they come to Paris. The dining room at the Nouveau Luxe is described as the delusion of phantom society and the instinct which has driven a new class to bind themselves to slavish the imitation of the superseded, and their prompt and reverent faith in reality of the sham they have created (191-192). The description of Nouveau Luxe represents the character of the rich Americans. As a developing country, the Americans look for the ideal model for their national identity. They see Paris as the exact model because it is a center of civilization.

Undine's reason to stay in Nouveau Luxe because she feared to be associated with 'the wrong people'(252). Staying at the Nouveau Luxe will give her chance to be connected with the "right people". Getting a long with the right will bring her closer to her ambition. There, she meets Raymond de Chelles. He is the descendant of an aristocratic French family. As an aristocrat, Raymond has what Undine needs. He has wealth and the most important is the respectable name. Those will give her access to pursue her ambition. Since Undine is beautiful, it is not difficult to impress others, including Raymond. Apparently,

Raymond has already admired her. It is her benefit. Moreover, Raymond wants to marry her. Marrying Raymond will give her everything. It is not only wealth but also position. Nonetheless, it is not easy as Undine thought. There is obstacle from Madame de Trezac, her future mother-in-law. Madame de Trezac disagrees Raymond's plan of marrying Undine. She dislikes Undine because she is an American and she is a divorcee (273). Madame de Trezac dislikes Americans because she thinks that Americans are only a group of imitator with no sense of high class. Parisians, as well Madame de Trezac, cannot accept a divorced woman. This is why she disagrees Raymond's plan. Nevertheless, Raymond and Undine manage to marry.

Marriage is her way to pursue her ambition. While, her concept of happiness is when she is able to get all she wants. With Raymond, she has all.

The three months since her marriage had been more nearly like what she had dreamed of than any of her previous experiments in happiness (335).

Her marriage with Raymond gives her complete happiness. At last, Undine, now is the Marquise de Chelles, and has what she wants. Moreover, for the first time she is able to feel the triumph. Since her marriage to Raymond, she attends one party to another. It is what she always wants. However, her triumph does not last for long because her marital life is not as smooth as she plans. Since the beginning of her marriage there has been a problem with her mother in law. During her marriage, the problem has grown bigger. Moreover, Madame de Trezac considers Undine as less smart (376). The ideal woman for Madame de

Trezac is not only beautiful but also smart. For her, Undine is not smart enough because she does not know how to make response to others (376). It makes Undine uncomfortable. Moreover, she starts to feel that Raymond is a very jealous husband. She must report everything she does to him because Raymond wants Undine to be selective in choosing her friends (336). Raymond is a noble man. He has grown with the “voice” that tells him for not talking to ordinary man. This deals with the honor of the family name.

The problem comes to the peak by the time Raymond, a descendant of French aristocratic, finds out that Undine tries to arrange selling some of Chelles tapestries. Louis XV gives the tapestries. It is the family inheritance. As a French aristocrat, Raymond is demanded to hold tight on his tradition. It is his duty to keep his tradition for the honor of the family. It means that keeping his tapestries remain in the family is his obligation. It is the thing that Undine disables to understand.

You come among us speaking our language and not knowing what we mean; wanting the thing we want, and not knowing why we want them; aping our weaknesses, exaggerating our follies, ignoring or ridiculing all we care about...- and we're fools enough to imagine that because you copy our ways and pick up our slang you understand anything about the things that make life decent and honorable for us! (379-380)

For Raymond life is a matter of decency and honor. Selling his tapestries will be considered as indecent by the society since the tapestries are gift. Moreover, the

gift has become family inheritance. Selling it is a matter of honor. Undine whose background is not coming from an aristocrat cannot understand the meaning of the tapestries. For her, selling tapestries means a lot of money. These two individuals have reached the climax of their relationship. Undine's reason in selling the tapestries is that Raymond has finance difficulty. It does not mean that Raymond is poorer since their marriage. In fact, he gets little richer than before. Nevertheless, his obligation of paying his brother debts and keeping the Saint Desert has reduced his income. As a result, Undine is demanded to cope with the condition by reducing her expenses.

Raymond's difficulty in finance makes Undine unable to dress her up like what she wants. This makes her involve in trying to arrange the sale of tapestries. She believes that selling it will solve the financial problem. Therefore, she will be able to live like used to be. As her failure in selling the tapestries and the finance problem still haunts her, it leads her to get a divorce. She gets divorced from Raymond, as she got from Ralph, because Raymond is no longer able to provide her wants. Both two men have similarity. Undine realizes that even in open class society, wealth and power do not guarantee for some one to be at the top of social position. Instead, the descendant is the key of it. As the relationship among the society is emphasized on the kinship, here, the aristocrats, terms as the "old family", are considered as the older member of family. While, the new rich, terms as the "new family", is considered as the younger. Like any member of a family, the older has more respect from the younger. It implies that the older has more experience and knows many thing. Compared to other member of the society, this

gives them justification that they have more right. The aristocrats set the standard of social life. Undine marries Ralph and Raymond when she feels that they can give her benefit in pursuing her ambition. Then, she leaves them once she feels they are no longer give her benefit. Still, the reason why she leaves them is merely the financial matter.

4. Undine Marital Life with Elmer Moffat

Separating from Raymond, Undine has already had her prospective future husband. Elmer Moffat is her next husband. Elmer has known Undine since they were at Apex. They come from the same background. Undine comes from a poor family that finally manages herself to gain the social advancement. The same thing happens to Elmer. At the beginning, Elmer is nobody.

No one in Apex knew where the young Moffat had come from,...; but he managed to get himself invited to all the picnics and lodge sociables, and at a supper of the Phi Upsilon society,... he made the best speech that had been heard... The brothers of Undine's friends all pronounced him 'great'. (382)

No one seems to know Elmer family background. Someone with no background is categorized as a poor. Using his charming ability in speaking, Elmer not only manages to attract others, but also to be invited in a social gathering. Being invited on such occasion is a sign that Elmer has been accepted as part of them. Nonetheless, it does not mean that Elmer has completely accepted. The only reason the high society accept him is mainly because of his ability in speaking. In

Apex, Elmer spent most of his time at the bar, and there he got his ability in speaking (90). With this, Elmer is able to attract others. The same thing happens to Undine. She uses her beauty to attract others. With her beauty, she is able to put herself into high society by marrying aristocrats. While she is still marrying to Raymond and the financial problem arises among them, she meets Elmer. Apparently, Elmer is Undine's first husband before Ralph. Once in Apex, they were married and divorced shortly afterward.

But it was a marriage fast enough,..., I hadn't the cash or the pull to fight 'em. Uncle Abner was pretty big man out there,.. I always know when I'm licked; and I was licked that time. (p.325)

They divorced because Elmer at that time was a nobody. He does not have what Undine wants. Since he cannot give Undine wealth and position, he does nothing to keep his marriage. Now in New York, he has gained wealth and position. His luck begins by the time he meets Harmon B Driscoll. Harmon B Driscoll is a wealthy man in New York. He is the owner of Eubaw mine (73). Driscoll uses Elmer's ability in speaking. Then, Elmer moves into New York and becomes Driscoll's man.

By the time Undine meets him, she admires Elmer for what he has achieved. Seeing him brings her back to the time when she was in Apex. There is some sort of regret for divorcing Elmer. It makes her imagine of the possibility for not divorcing him. She imagines if she was not divorced Elmer she will have by now what Elmer has. It seems there is nothing impossible for her. Her imagination turns to reality. Elmer who always becomes her biggest admirer asks her to marry

him. He asks Undine to marry him because he knows that Raymond has no longer able to give what Undine wants. What she wants is wealth and position. Elmer has it, and that is what he offers. Of course, Undine does not reject it. Marrying Elmer will give her a great benefit. Her two previous marriages can only provide her wants partially. With Elmer, she has all. Elmer does not only give her wealth but also a linkage to the international community. It is possible since Elmer is a powerful man in Wall Street, whose business has been widely influenced. Elmer is known as a successful broker. A broker is considered more prestigious than any other jobs such as dentist because they rule the economy. It is her peak of her triumph. Even so, since Undine is a woman with the biggest ambition, those are not enough. She always wants more. It is true she has pursued her ambition on wealth and position. Still, she feels there is something she will never be able to achieve.

...there was something she could never get, something that neither beauty nor influence nor millions could ever buy for her. She could never be an Ambassador's wife. (413)

Being the Ambassador's wife is the thing she will be unable to achieve it. This happens because the society refuses to have an Ambassador's wife has ever been divorced. The Ambassador's position is the thing that neither beauty nor influence nor money can ever buy. This implies Undine is a woman who always use her beauty to get her what she wants.

B. Undine's Manipulation of the Social Value in order to Remarry

Undine is a member of a society. As member of the society, all her actions are influenced by the society. It does not mean that the influence given is in the sense of interference. Nevertheless, it is in the sense of controlling. The use of controlling one's action is to maintain the value that exists among the society. Social values include many things that persist in the society. Marriage as one of the thing that persist in society which has its own value. Every society has its own value. In Edith Wharton's *Custom of the Country*, Undine's character using marriage to pursue her ambition, finds challenge from the society. The challenge she gets is a result of value that persist in the society. The ambitious Undine often manipulates the social value for her own benefit. It implies that she does whatever it takes to get what she wants.

Undine realizes that she is part of the society; all her actions must be based on the value in order to avoid the negative image of self in front of the society. A good image is necessary to maintain the self-esteem in the society. This is what Undine does. She tries to manipulate the persistent value of marriage in order to be able to remarry. Marriage is a sacred institution. Its purpose is to unify two different individuals, and love is the bases. People believe that marriage is indissolubility. Marriage happens once in a lifetime. That is why divorce is considered as against the people's value. Marriage is for the whole life. Divorce is a scandal. It means that divorce cannot be tolerated. People believe that divorce is the things a marriage couple should avoid no matter what. Moreover, this will create negative image for the women. A divorced woman will be judged

negatively by the society. Woman is seen as innocent creature, that is why divorced women is regarded as little more than prostitute and they soon cast out by friends and relatives once they get divorce. Negative image given by the society will make women position even more difficult. The difficulties appear because women are also considered as dependent creatures. When a woman was born, she depends on her father until she gets married. Once she is married she no longer depends on her father but on her husband. As so, women are demanded to obey the men. It is because her life since her birth until her death depends on men. Therefore, if the divorce happens it is nobody's faults except the women. As a result, a divorced woman will not be accepted in the society. She will be considered as immoral. Here, Undine once has been married to Elmer, before Ralph, when she is still at Apex realized that she will not be able to marry Ralph if people know that she was a divorcee.

If any of his folks found out, they'd never let him to marry me –
never! And he wouldn't want to. (80)

The fact that she has been divorced to Elmer has raised the fear of not being able to marry Ralph. Her fear has caused her to hide her real status, a divorce woman from Ralph and his folks. Society will blame the woman if divorce ever happens. They just take it for granted without seeing the existing problems. The woman is considered as the source of the problems. A woman position will always be in the disadvantages position. While, for Undine, a divorce is allowed if a woman cannot get what she wants from the marriage.

..., if a girl marries a man who don't come up to what she expected,...it's to her credit to want to change. (68)

That is why Undine tries to hide her real status. The aristocrat has elegant manner as a standard of their high class, for example, they avoid as much as possible the topics of the unpleasantness such as disease, death, moral or even the controversial matter such as divorce to be the subject of polite conversation. It shows that people are more concerned with the appearance. She fears that the society will judge her negatively. She will not be able to marry Ralph. But of course, she does not want to create confrontation with the society so she tries to compromise it by manipulating the value. She manipulates it by hiding her real status as a divorced woman. She does marry Ralph without being known of her status.

After some times, for material reason Undine wants a divorce from Ralph and plans to marry Raymond de Chelles, a French aristocrat. At first in order to separate from Ralph, Mrs Rolliver tells her that she must get a divorce before remarrying (241). Since Undine wants to remarry, she follows Mrs Rolliver's suggestion to get a divorce from Ralph. Again, she finds another difficulty to do what she wants. Raymond is Catholic, while Undine is protestant. Her marital status is unacceptable for the Parisian society. Moreover, she is not Catholic. The Parisian, as Catholics, holds on the value that marriage is sacred. Two individuals are unified through marriage by God. Only God that can separate them. The vow saying that "until death does us apart" seems to represent the notion of what has been unified by God should not be broken by anyone for any reason. This is why

divorce is not allowed in Catholic. Once someone marries, it is for the whole life. Divorce is demoralized.

In the first place, between people in society a religious marriage is necessary; and, since the church doesn't recognize divorce, that's obviously out of the question. In France, a man of position who goes through the form of civil marriage with a divorced woman is simply ruining himself and her. (280)

For the Parisian who still holds on the traditional matter, marriage is not just about two people but also God. It involves God. Since it involves God, so, religious marriage is necessary. It is indecent for a man with position, such as Raymond, marrying a woman in the form of civil marriage. Even worse, the woman he plans to marry with is a divorced woman. Not only indecent, but it will give negative impact. Also, it is expected that the couple who plans to get married should be under the same belief. Otherwise, they cannot marry. Undine who is still bound with her marital status and belief must deal with the fact that marrying to Raymond is impossible. Quick learner as she is, is the indication of how smart she is in finding the weakness of everything in order to give her all she wants.

There, once again Undine tries to manipulate the social value to make her way smoother. Opening her way of marrying Raymond, she decides to convert herself into a Catholic. It does not matter for her since she is not religious. Her decision to convert is the first thing she does to take her closer with her plans to marry Raymond. After converting to a Catholic of course she must hold on the Catholic belief mentioning that marriage is for the whole life. It means there is no

divorce. It seems impossible since it has been the fact that she has married Ralph. Making it possible, as suggested by Madame de Trezac, Undine decides to annul her marriage (285).

Annulment of marriage is a legal process. It means that the marriage is cancelled. A man and woman are restored to their single status again just as if they had never been married. The annulment and divorce are not the same. In annulment, marriage is considered as never exist among the couple. But in divorce, marriage does exist and the couple decides to separate. The annulment of marriage is allowed since Catholic does not permit divorce. Undine believes that annulling her marriage will make her able to marry Raymond. Converting and annulling have made her able to marry Raymond de Chelles, a French aristocrat.

Similar to her previous marriage to Ralph which is ended in separation, Undine also wants to end her marriage with Raymond when finance problem arises. Since Undine has converted into a Catholic she cannot divorce Raymond. So, marrying Elmer seems to be impossible for her. Disobeying the value meaning against its people is the thing that Undine does not want to do. In order to compromise it, she reconverts to her original belief.

How could I get divorce? With my religion –‘

Why, you were born a Baptist, weren't you?... Who cares what they do over here? You're an American, ain't you? (400)

By reconvertng to her original belief, she will be able to get divorce from Raymond and marry Elmer. She does it easily since as mentioned before that each society has its own value. So, the New Yorker will not care about what she has

done in Paris, and vice versa. Here, in order to marry Elmer she manipulates the value by reconvertng to her own belief. One more time she does it well.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION