

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

Reading a literary work is not only a matter of looking for pleasure, but also learning about life. We can find many things closely related to our daily life such as love, marriage and death. Literary work can represent our daily life through the characters appearing. Through literary work we can also learn about the teaching and the beauty of life.

Jones Jr. (1968:1) in *An Outline of Literature* states, "literature is simply another way can experience the world around through our imagination, feeling and thought. Literature in its broadest sense includes all written materials." Literature gives pleasure is information too. Furthermore, literature can be a picture of social life. The readers will get the lesson of moral values of other within literature. Griffith, (1990:3) in *Writing Essays about Literature* says as follows: "Literature is subject matter that creates certain expectations in your audience. Because literature is a complex product of the imagination, readers of essays about literature expect you to interpret, to explain, to clarify, to analyze, and to give the meaning of it." Literature gives us some information of various experiences that are likely to be the basic view of leading on the course of human life. It describes the condition and the problems of society and experiences of someone as an individual and as a part of social experiences.

In this thesis the writer takes a text of novel entitled *Ethan Frome* by Edith Wharton to be the topic of analysis. Edith Wharton is one of the American writers who use the symbols in her work and it is proved in *Ethan Frome*. She uses seasonal symbols in this novel to heighten the tragedy in the novel. Hornby (1987:876) in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* says that a symbol is “sign, mark, and objects, looked upon as representing something.” It means that symbol may be roughly defined as something that means more than what it is. Symbol can also be related to the other elements, such as characters, settings, and plot of the story itself. In the novel, symbols may show the reader about what happens in the story.

The symbols are important in literary work. They may represent the character's behavior or the character's action, but we can only observe them if we understand the text deeply (Kennedy, 1983:147). Symbols can also give a certain sense of the whole story of the novel. Symbols can be same things in the environment or simply words put in the work to symbolize something else that the readers have to be able to catch the meaning.

The writer chooses the title “*Masculinity Crises and the Related Symbols in Edith Wharton's Ethan Frome*” for several reasons. This work is interesting since it clearly explains the symbols that show the crisis of masculinity from the main character. Besides showing his way to face the reality in life. This novel is meaningful for all readers in any situation and time. Although this novel shows Edith Wharton's pessimism in facing the life, but it is an interesting novel to read. Having read this novel, the writer finds the ideas behind symbols that appear in

the story by following the main character's action. Symbols also hold the important role in this story because most symbols represent the main character condition and situation.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

In this thesis the problems are formulated to answer the following questions:

1. What are the crises of masculinity suffered by the main character?
2. What are the causes of the crises of masculinity?
3. What are the symbols that convey the crises of masculinity?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To describe the crises of masculinity suffered by the main character.
2. To know the causes of the crises of masculinity.
3. To analyze the symbols that convey the crises of masculinity.

### **1.4 Limitation of the Problems**

Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* consists of so many problems that appear in every chapter, but the writer will discuss the masculinity crisis suffered by the main character, the causes of the masculinity crisis, and symbols that convey the crisis of masculinity.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The readers will have the deeper understanding of the problems that appear in the novel especially in masculinity crisis, the causes of the masculinity crisis, and the symbols related to the masculinity crisis.

The writer also hopes that the result of this study will enrich the research in the field of literature. It may be considered as additional source for those who are interested in studying literature and also in understanding literary work from different points of view.