

## ABSTRACT

*The Awakening* is the best and most controversial work Kate Chopin ever wrote. It was written in 1899, the time when social changes and transition driven mostly by growing economical activities and industries affected the way people think and behave. Along with these changes, there were emerging demand for women's freedom which had been denied for decades. The meaning of 'awakening' itself refers to woman's awareness of how significant her freedom is as a means to obtain her ideal vis-a-vis social tradition which still is highly valued. While representing the voice for freedom, this novel also contains the conception of how much freedom women actually should have in order to be effective human being.

Analyzing all relevant aspects, including social conditions and mental states of Mrs. Edna which Kate Chopin puts as being incompatible, the writer hopes to be able to present objective appraisal of Mrs. Edna's freedom. The writer does so by focusing analysis on Mrs. Edna's character and anything significantly related to her freedom. It's done by applying intrinsic approach on which the writer heavily rely to explore internally-contained data and informations including plot, characterization, and setting. Psychological approaches are required to consider the lawlessness and indifference of Mrs. Edna's freedom to socially assumed responsibilities, values, and morals; and to point out its significance to humanity. Social or sociological approach is applied to refer to the strength of shared social value and to explain how the deviant like Mrs. Edna can not survive. The result of analysis hopefully can provide meaningful contribution to the nature of women's freedom in general.

## ABSTRAKSI

*The Awakening* adalah karya terbaik dan paling kontroversial Kate Chopin. Novel ini diterbitkan pada tahun 1899, yaitu pada saat terjadi gelombang perubahan-perubahan sosial dan transisi yang sebagian besar didorong oleh aktivitas-aktivitas ekonomi dan industri yang semakin meningkat dan mempengaruhi perubahan cara orang-orang berpikir dan berperilaku. Bersama-sama dengan perubahan-perubahan ini muncul tuntutan akan kebebasan wanita yang telah lama ditolak atau tidak diakui oleh masyarakat. Kata 'awakening' itu sendiri menunjuk pada kesadaran, dalam hal ini wanita, mengenai arti kebebasannya. Sementara mewakili tuntutan akan kebebasan, novel ini juga mengandung konsepsi mengenai seberapa besar kebebasan yang seharusnya dimiliki oleh wanita untuk menjadi manusia seutuhnya.

Dengan menganalisa semua aspek yang berkaitan, termasuk kondisi-kondisi sosial dan gejala-gejala emosi Mrs. Edna yang saling bertentangan, penulis berharap dapat menyajikan sebuah penilaian yang obyektif mengenai kebebasan Mrs. Edna. Ini dilakukan dengan memakai pendekatan intrinsik untuk memperoleh data-data dan informasi internal yang meliputi alur cerita, penokohan, dan latar. Pendekatan-pendekatan psikologi diperlukan untuk melihat sisi ketidakmoralan dari kebebasan Mrs. Edna, dan di sisi lainnya untuk mengungkapkan pentingnya kebebasan bagi manusia. Pendekatan sosial atau sosiologi digunakan untuk mengungkapkan kekuatan nilai sosial dan menjelaskan bagaimana individu seperti Mrs. Edna tidak dapat mempertahankan diri dari tekanan sosial. Hasil akhir dari analisa ini diharapkan dapat memberikan sumbangan yang penting didalam memahami kebebasan wanita yang ideal.

## THE AUTHOR AND HER WORKS

Kate O'Flaherty Chopin ( 1851- 1904) was descended through her mother from a french family which settled at old Kaskakia in the early part of the eighteenth century, and through her father, Thomas O'Flaherty, from an honorable Irish family which had for generations been land agents in the County Galway. Thomas, who had come to St. Louis a lad of eighteen, was markedly successful in business, but his death in the Gasconade Bridge disaster when his daughter Kate was a mere child prevented his influencing her. His lavish hospitality was continued by his wife Eliza (Faris) O'Flaherty, a society -loving woman of unusual beauty and force. From the perpetual callers and entertainment as well as from the troubles of the Civil War period the daughters's favorite refuge was a stepladder in the attic where she pored over the works of Scott, Fielding, and Spencer. Her schooling was rather irregular, and she herself attributed more of her education to her wide reading than to the music, French literature, theology, and elementary science which she was taught at the Sacred Heart Convent. After her graduation from there in 1868 she was for two years one of the belles of St. Louis. In June 1870, she married Oscar Chopin, a native of Louisiana, who was then working in a bank owned

by relatives. After a honeymoon in Europe, the move to the Southland which was undoubtedly the most important influence in Mrs. Chopin's literary development was made. In view of the fact that five sons were born in ten years in which her husband acted as a cotton factor in New Orleans and that she was immediately drawn into the social life of the city, it is not surprising that her debut as a writer was still postponed. Her husband's decision to manage his own and his younger sister's large plantation on the Red River brought her to a new and fascinating world, the world which is even yet best described in her short stories. At this home in Cloutiersville her only daughter was born and her husband died from a swamp fever in 1882. The difficulties of managing a large estate and her mother's desire to have the family reunited in St. Louis caused Mrs. Chopin to rent and to sell the plantation although she always loved and frequently revisited Natchitoches Parish.

One of the most modest and retiring of women, in her leisure she was induced to take up writing by friends who had been charmed by her letters. As she herself realized, her first novel, *At Fault*, published in her home city in 1890, is distinctly amateurish, its chief interest being in

the fact that the central character represents her mother. Her critical faculty, however, and her study of the French masters whom she admired and translated, notably De Maupassant and Daudet, produced in a short time an amazing development in technique. *The Youth's Companion*, *Harper's Young People*, and *Wide Awake* took all her children's stories; her work for mature readers appeared in such magazines as *The Century* and *Harper's*. She is known today, however, through her interpretations of the Creoles in her collections, *Bayou Folk* (1894) and *A Night in Acadie* (1897), and her second novel, *The Awakening* (1899).

Unquestionably Mrs. Chopin's stories rank very high in the local color movement of the nineties. Although some of them are mere sketches, a tale like "*Desiree's Baby*" could scarcely be excelled. All of her shorter pieces are marked by sympathy, a delicately objective treatment, and endings poignant in their restraint. These same qualities make *The Awakening* almost exotic. The sensuous loveliness of the description, the subtle symbolism, the jewel-like polish of each haunting episode, the masterly manner in which are unveiled the tumults of a woman's soul, all are Gallic in effect. It is one of the tragedies of recent American liter-

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ature that Mrs. Chopin should have written this book two decades in advance of its time, that she should have been so grievously hurt by the attacks of provincial critics as to lay aside her pen. Always a self-sacrificing mother, she devoted herself with special solicitude at this time to her son Jean. Renewed plans for work were prevented by her sudden death from a brain hemorrhage.

Mrs. Chopin's early photographs show her a charming girlish figure in the quaint costume of the mid-century. At the time she was writing which often accompanies black hair and which formed a marked contrast to her brilliant brown eyes and delicate complexion as well as her small plump figure caused by her friends to compare her to a French marquise. Always quiet and unassuming, she is said to have been a most stimulating listener ; undoubtedly to this fact, even though she never consciously sought for materials, must be attributed the range of her characterization - from the cotton-picking negro to great Creole ladies. As for her method of composition, the effortless ease of her style makes plausible the account of how she wrote a story as soon as the theme occurred to her, recopied it, and sent it off with practically no revision.

Kate Chopin has been categorized as one of authors

voicing women's interest in patriarchal society (Gottesman, 1979, p.10). Her emphasis on women's interest can be seen most clearly in *The Awakening*. The main feature of this work lies on incompatibility between woman's demand for freedom beyond society's capacity to tolerate. 'The Awakening' is a realistic novel about the sexual and artistic awakening of a young mother who abandons her family and eventually commits suicide. This work, roundly condemned in its time because of its sexual frankness, later received critical approval for the beauty of its writing and the modern sensibility (Seyersted, 1969, p. 40). More importantly, social background implied in the '*The Awakening*' as a matter a fact is the reflection of the transition period during which Kate Chopin elaborated this novel (Gottesman, 1979, p.8).

## SYNOPSIS

It was in Grand Isle, New Orleans, where Mrs. Pontellier started to have a new light of life. She spent summer time with her husband, Mr. Pontellier, in that place and met people who shocked her for their entire absence of prudery, and their freedom of expression at the time when she still valued a lofty chastity and obedience. It was with them she had her eyes open, and aware for the very first time that it was totally wrong for her to continue pretending to be a wife loving her husband she married without love. Mr. Pontellier's marital proposal was no more than an escape from her several failures to gain true loves; those that give her breath to live. This marriage by all means offered no true love, thus led her to such miserable life. In this gloomy marriage she put herself in total devotion to Mr. Pontellier's property and had no power to seek freedom for herself, she no more than a person with a dead soul and spirit. In the Grand Isle she found a rare chance for enlightenment to be the person she should had been, who possessed self-will, self-identity, and self-oriented life goals that she had lost as a result of non love-based marriage. At start, no

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wonder, it caused her in deep internal conflict to pick one of two contrasting paths. Being reinforced by her encounter with Robert, the person in Grand Isle she loved with, and connected to the true love she never had a chance to obtain, she finally led herself to be sunk in this impulse, reaching what enable her to be true human. She, as a woman who has weaknesses, proved that she had strong power to determine her own life, eventhough she had to fight against her husband.