

## CHAPTER ONE

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

## I.1. Background of the Study

Freedom, especially women's, has long been considered as an increasingly important topic of discussions. Kate Chopin herself, among other authors, has continuously cried out for women's freedom against her society who had long denied it. Her demand for society recognition of women's freedom is particularly evident in her major work, *The Awakening* (Gottesman, 1979,480). Irrespective of its significance to women freedom issue, however, the version about women's freedom reflected in Mrs. Edna's character in *The Awakening* had actually aroused hostility and rejection among contemporary literary critics for its excess. As a result this work was commonly described as sordid, essentially vulgar, and morbid, eventhough it is now given an honoured place in America Literature for its esthetics (Gottesman, 1979, p.481). Considering this fact , the writer finds Mrs. Edna Pontellier's character is very significant object to analyze.

Regardless what literary critics say, however, freedom implied in Mrs.Edna Pontellier's character contains valuable message we have so far overridden. This is undoubfully

important to consider in order that we are not misleading or making a biased judgment about women's freedom offered by representative author. In another word, standing on objective ground is strongly required. This is what this thesis tries to cover in order to result in fair judgement and adequate perspective which might hopefully applicable to place women's position in the appropriate manner.

To begin with, it is necessary to delineate the definition of literature since the process of analysis itself is within art work which can not be isolated from other bodies of knowledge such as psychology and sociology, specifically it relates to the topics the thesis intends to unravel.

Literature is a product of human creative imagination created to be read, enjoyed, understood and utilized for the good of society. It is an expression of society that represents "Life", in large measure, a social reality. It contains the record of human values, their thoughts, their feeling, their problems and conflicts. So, whatever presented in a literary work may be related to the actual ones. Literature may be regarded as the chief art of mankind.

Literature of a people is the principle element of its culture. It contains the record of the people values, their thoughts, their problems and con-

flicts -- in short their way of life. Whether transmitted through the spoken or the written worlds, literature may fairly be regarded as the chief art of mankind ( Little, 1966; p. 1).

Literature can give pleasure, takes us from the real world to the dream one. But a good literature not only takes us into the dream world and gives us pleasure, it also deepens, broadens and sharpens our awareness of life. It takes us, through the imagination, deeper into the real world and it enables us to understand our troubles in life.

A good literature says something worthsaying, adds to understanding of life in the world around us. It embodies thoughts and feelings on matters of human importance ( Little, 1966; p. 2). Therefore, through a literary work, whether it is a poem, short story, novel or drama, we can study the aspects of human life.

As a part of a literary forms, the writer chooses novel as the subject for his thesis.

C. Hugh Holman in *Handbook to Literature* defines novel as a fictional prose narrative in which the representation of character occurs either in static condition or in the process of development as the result of events or actions (1986:335).

Novel is a portraits of life in miniature because problems and characters depicted in a novel are 'picked up' from real life. Compared to other literary genres, a novel allows the readers to catch more details about the story. This, resulted in a more or less easier way to grasp and understand the real essence of the story itself.

The writer himself regarded novel as a significant and complete literary form since in a novel, the author is able to construct the impression of the implied significance. Employing the form of a novel, the author is able to provide a way that will lead readers to her or his intended purpose or message in writing the novel. Choosing novel as the subject for the study, the writer comes to the opinion that with his or her authoritative voice over the novel, the author will be able to minimize any misguided interpretation about the message of the novel itself.

Kate Chopin (1851-1904) is one of American authors started writing career in the time when society experienced complex changes. Eventhough she did not intend to devote her life on literary writing, all of her novels, in more or less degree, deserve to have either great praise or critical analysis as part of the treasury of American literature.

Her capacity in making her characters look vivid and

real has been vastly acknowledged. She can manipulate the ideas and send descriptive meaning of her messages merely through her main well-design characters. This element develops in a greater extend in the line of complex human psyche as the plot run forward.

Her works can commonly be understood as an invitation to consider the world from the perspective of woman awakening to, protesting against, and offering alternatives for a world dominated by men and male interest and values. Her female characters suggest the capacity of human beings to live independently and with dignity in the face of community pressures, patriarchal power, and material deprivation. (Gottesman, 1979, p. 9)

*The Awakening* is her major work published in the year of 1899. It is about the young woman named Mrs. Pontellier who at the previous stage of her life had determinately decided to submit and devote to the man, Mr. Pontellier, whom she never felt in love with, and it had led her to the unexpected death of her soul; the family life had put her on the burdensome. Their marriage was based on her 'wrong fancy that there was a sympathy of thought and taste between them'. Deep inside, she was by nature full of life filled with the realm of dream.

These two antagonistic natures, between submission and

freedom started fighting each other when she spent her summer time in Grand Isle, New Orleans, where the common characteristics of the inhabitants she met contradicted to her one desire and supported the other. Their entire absence of prudery and freedom of expression had awaken her up to follow her forgotten and buried dream, the desire that would get stronger and stronger as her true love feeling grew bigger to another person with the cost of her deprived husband, family, children, and old fashioned life patterns. This dream was implanted in her subconscious which gave her forces to search for, in any cost, her self-identity. This self-identity and forces were feeding each other and empowered her to pace to a new light of life, to her 'awakening'. (Gottesman, 1979, p.481-7)

This phenomena and its strong prospect to uncover the basic idea of the work have been the most writer's interest to analyze it in a proper way.

## I.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To make a clear focus on the problems and to systemize the discussion, it needs to arise some questions that will be the starting point of analysis.

I.2.1. How is Mrs. Edna Pontellier's character relating to her freedom described ?

I.2.2. How should the concept of freedom implied in her character and awakening be objectively evaluated ?

### I.3 Objective of the Study

- In this thesis Mrs. Edna's character relating to her freedom is highlighted.
- The study also presents the analysis to objectively evaluate her freedom implied in her character and awakening whether it is appropriate or acceptable in her society at that time.
- This study is also hoped to be able to broaden and sharpen our knowledge horizontally or vertically on literature and especially Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.

### I.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The writer expects that this study will give a contribution to the body of knowledge of the understanding on the nature of literature, especially novels in 1900's era.

More specifically, it is hoped that we can see the spectrum of strong women's strong internal forces

and their undoubtful capacity to pursue worthy achievements. From this analysis the writer also hopes to be able to present a ground for treating their freedom with consideration of social context.

The writer hopes that this research will enlarge his knowledge about literature, also will sharpen his awareness about human experience and social phenomena. Hopefully, it will help the writer towards a better understanding about life itself and the relationship with other fellow human being.

At last, for the readers of this work, it is hoped that they will get something precious to enlarge the knowledge about life and all related to it.

#### I.5. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This study is concentrated on the analysis of Mrs.Edna's character and the nature of her freedom implied in the story through plot, characterization and setting.

The appropriatness of her freedom is then analyzed through psychological approaches and social approach.



## I.6. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In analysing Mrs. Pontellier as a major character and others as minor in line with the way they are physically and emotionally described together with plot and setting as internal aspect of the novel which deserves to be the first analysis before others, the writer decides to use the intrinsic approaches.

In evaluating the appropriateness of Mrs. Edna's freedom the writer applies two psychological approaches, including Freud's and humanistic concepts, and one sociological approach. Each of these approaches is oriented to promote negative and positive aspects of Mrs. Edna's freedom in her awakening.

## I.7 METHOD OF THE STUDY

The writer uses library research to collect some materials related to the topics of the study. Interpretating will be done in analysing the problems of the study.

The methodology of the study that is used is the descriptive method. The descriptive method will give

us some descriptions about the aspect of the literary work that is analyzed.

#### I.8 DEFINITION OF THE KEY TERMS

Impulse : a sudden spontaneous inclination or an excitement of the mind or spirit arising either directly from feeling or from some outer influence.

Freedom : the quality or state of being free, of not being coerced or constrained.

Awakening: awareness of something previously existed or unseen.

Desire : longing for something to be tasted, touched, experienced, possessed and so on.

It is important to note for *additional information* that the terms of impulse and drive or desire and dream are applied interchangeably. While impulse and drive refer to the energy which with Mrs. Edna is not yet familiar, desire and dream refer to energy she already comprehend. While the former, impulse and drive, comes from her subconscious, the latter is from her conscious. The change from the former to the latter signifies an awakening, that is the emergence of an awareness of the importance to

achieve something that has long been unfulfilled. In the case of Mrs. Edna, this something refers to true love.

The writer himself has a definite perspective about freedom. According to him freedom is a property of all rational beings. In this sense, it has a deniable relationship with morality whose existence signifies the rationality of human being. They support and limit each other. Considering to the topic, freedom is limited by human conception of morality. It means that there is not so-called absolute freedom. Everything that leads to absolute freedom can be considered erroneous.

## I.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first *Introduction* which consists of background of the study, statement of the problems, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, theoretical background, method of the study, definition of the key terms, organization of the paper and synopsis.

The second chapter is *Theoretical Framework* in which the writer will explain about the approaches

used in this analysis. In This chapter the writer is also explaining why these approaches are significant in this analysis.

*Analysis* chapters are including three, four, and five ones. In chapter three, the writer is making an elaborate analysis on plot, character and setting. In chapter four, the writer tries to explore the relationship between Mrs. Edna and other relevant characters. In chapter five, the writer is seeking to further evaluate the appropriateness of the concept of freedom implied in Mrs. Edna Pontellier's character through the psychological approaches and social approach.

Chapter six is *Conclusion*. The problems concerned with this thesis are going to be dissolved in this final chapter.