

## CHAPTER FOUR

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MRS. EDNA WITH OTHER CHARACTERS TO OBTAIN MEANINGFUL DESCRIPTION OF THE NATURE OF HER CHARACTER AND FREEDOM

IV.1 *Mrs.Edna and Mr.Pontellier*

The characters of Mrs.Edna and Mr.Pontellier were represented as contradictory. While Mr.Pontellier was described as a man of full attention to things outside him, with a thought that he was a part of wider social system and society, put obligation and responsibilities as main priorities that should be most considered, Mrs.Edna was in the opposite way. Before she changed, she was a kind of obedient wife who gave herself up to raise her children in excellent care and to obey Mr.Pontellier's demand to act as good and loyal wife. Later she was described as a strong woman with a strong will of independence; a woman who put self-desires as main object of her life. All burdening hindrances, consisting of religious rules, social value, social responsibilities and commitment attached to her status as a married wife, were those which she tried to avoid. It was important for her to neglect her obligations, for this was the only way for her to be as she wanted, to be a living organism who had its own

private life that none else could claim to possess. This was the point of difference that made them both in disputes, and as usual, it was Mr.Pontellier who should withdraw from these riddling problems. It could be seen through the following dialogue between Mr.Pontellier and his wife:

"Mr.Pontellier had been a rather courteous husband so long as he met a certain tacit submissiveness in his wife. But her new and unexpected line of conduct completely bewildered him. It shocked him. Then her absolute disregard for her duties as a wife angered him. When Mr.Pontellier became rude, Edna grew insolent. She had resolved never to take another step backward.

"It seems to me the utmost folly for a woman at the head of a household, and the mother of children, to spend in an atelier (studio) days which would be better employed contriving for the comfort of her family.

"I feel like painting," answered Edna. "Perhaps I shan't always feel like it".

"Then in God's name paint! but don't let the family go to the devil. There's Madame Ratignolle; because she keeps up her music, she doesn't let everything

go to Chaos. And she's more of a musician than you are a painter".

"She isn't a musician, and I'm not a painter. It isn't on account of painting that I let things go."

"On account of what, then?"

"Oh! I don't know. Let me alone; You bother me."

...Her husband let her alone as she requested, and went away to his office...(Part XIX, p.57)

Their different point of view about the significance of social values also resulted in dispute. As have been pointed above, Mrs.Edna, different to Mr.Pontellier, was too much focused to herself that she neglected everything didn't concern to her desires, including social accounts among which was her reception agenda that she had religiously followed since her marriage six years before. Relating to it, this following dialogue gives us a clear picture.

"Tired out, Edna? Whom did you have? Many callers (guests coming to her reception)?" he asked. He tasted his soup and began to season it with pepper, salt, vinegar, mustard -- everything within reach.

"There were a good many." replied Edna, who was eating her soup with evident satisfaction. "I found

their cards when I got home; I was out."

"Out !" exclaimed her husband, with something genuine consternation in his voice as he laid down the vinegar cruel and looked at her through his glasses. "Why, what could have taken you out on Tuesday? What did you have to do ?"

"Nothing. I simply felt like going out, and I went out" . . .

"Well, I hope you left some suitable excuse," said her husband, somewhat appeased, as he added a dash of cayenne pepper to the soup.

"No, I left no excuse. I told Joe to say I was out, that was all".

"Why, my dear, I should think you'd understand by this time that people don't do such things; we've got to observe les convenances (proprieties, social conversations) if we ever expect to get on and keep up with procession. If you felt that you had to leave home this afternoon, you should have left some suitable explanation for your absence.

"This soup is really impossible; it is strange that woman hasn't learned yet to make a decent soup. Any free-lunch stand in town serves a better

one: Was Mrs. Belthrop here ?"

"Bring the tray with the cards, Joe. I don't remember who was there."

"The boy retired and returned after a moment, bringing the tiny silver tray, which was covered with ladies' visiting cards. He handed it to Mrs. Pontellier.

"Give it to Mr. Pontellier," She said.

"Joe offered to stop to Mr. Pontellier, and removed the soup.

Mr. Pontellier scanned the names of his wife's callers, reading some of them aloud, with comments as he read.

"The misses Delasidas", I worked a big deal in futures (Commodities bought and sold for delivery at a future time and thus a form of speculation) for their father this morning; nice girls; It's time they were getting married. "Mrs. Belthrop". I tell you what it is, Edna; you can't afford to snub Mrs. Belthrop. Why, Belthrop could buy and sell us ten times over. His business is worth a good, round sum to me. You'd better write her a note..."

"Mercy !" exclaimed Edna, who had been fuming.

"Why are you talking the thing so seriously and making such a fuss over it?"

"I am not making a fuss over it. But it's just such seeming trifles that we've got to take seriously; such things count."(Part XVII, p.51-52)

#### IV.2 *Mrs.Edna Pontellier and Robert*

Both are described to be a couple of lover which sprouted at the wrong time when Mrs.Edna Pontellier has been tied by marital status and subjected to social values which constrained her move in making love affair outside marriage. Only Mrs.Edna Pontellier, not included Robert, who experienced the phenomena of awakening that motivated her to seek much more freedom without even a little restraint. Thus it was not a problem at all to Mrs.Edna, but it really was to Robert to break all the rules. The love Mrs.Edna had for Robert was vehicle to gain her dream, which to do that would require much daring freedom, and the struggling process to that freedom leading her to self-identification and awareness. This love helped her to make herself to be true human, having, the new world where she found happiness and joy. She was quite ready to challenge any that was against it. Her strength and faith toward this line of life were getting bigger and bigger in such a sudden that none could prevent

her anymore, for it was much compatible or complement to her undercurrent development process. This love awoke her old dream that was even burried by her marriage with Mr. Pontellier. This awakening, firstly, embattled with the impulse of self-obedience to social system, of submission to her husband and to religion. But this only took less violent struggle than what Robert had been through to himself. His love to Mrs. Edna was a kind of torture to him since he thought of alleged consequences of breaking social values and norms if he continuously neglected them, or put them seconder to, for the sake of love. He was not as ready as Mrs. Edna, and thus not as free as her, in complying with self-desire and dream. He chose to suppress this emerging love rather than let it develop in a natural way. He fought his own impulse to wander love experience, not to follow its deviant stream and subdued to social rules and value. It took into account at the time when Madame Ratignolle warned him with a threatening tone that he should stay away from Mrs. Edna Pontellier. Since then he tried to keep distances from her and took his departure to Mexico as an excuse. He, at first, did not give the reason of his departure and coming back from Mexico to Mrs. Edna. It was his avoidance from her love that the only reason he had, but he tried to

conceal it from Mrs. Edna's inquiry. This following dialogue can give a clear description:

"...How long will you be gone?"

"Forever, perhaps. I don't know. It depends upon a good many things."

"Well, in case it shouldn't be forever, how long will it be?"

"I don't know"

"This seems to me perfectly preposterous and uncalled for. I don't like it. I don't understand your motive for silence and mystery, never saying a word to me about it this morning." He remained silent, not offering to defend himself. He only said, after a moment:

"Don't part from me in an ill-humor. I never knew you to be out of patience with me before".

"I don't want to part in any ill-humor," Said he.

"But can't you understand? I've grown used to seeing you, to having you with me all the time, and your action seems unfriendly, even unkind. You don't even offer an excuse for it. Why, I was planning to be together, thinking of how pleasant it would be to see you in the city next winter."



"So was I", he blurted. "Perhaps that's the --" He stood up suddenly and held out his hand. "Good by, my dear Mrs.Pontellier; good-by. You won't -- I hope you won't completely forget me". She clung to his hand, shiving to detain him."(Part XV, p.45-46)

In the same pattern, he never expressed the real reason of his coming back from Mexico. Even when he arrived in New Orleans he had tried not to visit her, as a matter of fact their meeting was rather coincidental and unexpected. It was Mr.Edna who was seeking the answer and pushing him to say so. The picture of her curiosity was clearly seen through her reaction when she read the letter mentioning that Robert would come for the next couple days:

"But why?" why is he coming? Oh, if 'thought -- "and she snatched the letters from the floor and turned the pages this way and that way, looking for the reason, which was left untold."(Part XXVI,48)

Her shove to make Robert to not mince matters can be seen through the following dialogue:

"Why have you kept away from me, Robert?" She asked, closing the book that lay open the table.

"Why are you so personal, Mrs. Pontellier? Why do you force me to idiotic subterfuges?" he exclaimed with sudden warmth. "I suppose there's no use telling you I've been very busy, or that I've been sick, or that I've been to see you and not found you at home. Please let me off with any or of those excuses."

"You are the embodiment of selfishness," she said. "You save yourself something -- I don't know what -- but there is some selfish motive, and in sparing yourself you never consider for a moment what I think, or how I feel your neglect and indifference. I suppose this is what you would call unwomanly; but I have got into a habit of expressing myself. It doesn't matter to me, and you may think me unwomanly if you like". (Part XXXVI, p.100-101)

Robert's choosing to not follow his affectionate love stream and his determination to leave her for the second time and for unlimited time had been the ruin of the object of Mrs. Edna's dream, but not her faith. She still could

easily change the object of her dream and heavily stood on freedom she believed would result in happiness and joy. With the disappearance of Robert, she could simply replaced him in her mind with some other existed figures. These following discriptive words and self dialogue after Robert's leave-taking citated from the novel can bring a clear picture:

"Despondency had come upon her there in the wakeful night, and had never lifted. There was no one thing in the world that she desired. There was no human being whom she wanted near her except Robert; and she even realized that the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone..." ( Part XXXIX, p.109)

#### IV.3. *Mrs.Edna Pontellier and Madame Ratignolle*

Both were a good couple of friend, and their meeting got started when Mrs.Edna Pontellier spent her summer time with family in Grand Isle. Besides her physical charm, Madam Ratignolle, like other Creoles, had characteristic of candor and frank attitude that attracted Mrs.Edna Pontellier who looked at it as strange and interesting pattern of behavior, this kind of pattern was also the point that gave much influente to Mrs.Edna relating to her idea of gaining much

freedom. The following description taken from novel can give a clear picture:

" That summer at Grand Isle she began to loosen a little the mantle of reserve that had always enveloped her. There may have been -- there most have been -- influences, both subtle and apparent, working in their several ways to induce her to do this; but the most obvious was the influence of Adele Ratignolle. The excessive physical charm of the Creole had first attracted her, for Edna a sensuous susceptibility to beauty. Then the candor of the woman's whole existence, which everyone might read, and which formed so striking a contrast to her own habitual reserve -- this might have furnished a link. Who can tell what metals the gods use in forging the subtle bond which we call sympathy, which we might as well call love. (Part VII, p.17)

Eventhough she was, as other common creoles also were, characterized for her frankness and straightforwardness in manner and attitude which had inspired Mr.Edna Pontellier to get more freedom in her conduct, Madame Ratignolle as a

matter of fact, was one of mother-women, a term referred to them who put their children and husbands as main of their concerns. She considered these matters as important things and felt surprised of Mrs.Edna's thought and wish of unusual freedom neglecting husband and children, eventhough Mrs.Edna had tried to express that her husband, not the children, that would be a victim of her deed, still Madam Ratignolle did not understand her since Mrs.Edna explained it with very pecualiar way.

Even there has been a several months after the last of their vacation in Grand Isle, their relationship as a good friend was nevertheless still continued in New Orleans. Mrs. Edna often kept visiting Ratignolle family to escape from gloming life and used their free tone to nurture her thirst from freedom.

Mrs.Madame Ratignolle worried of Mrs.Edna's possibly misleading self-focused awakening would lead her to a socially mistaken-love affair and to ruin of her family that has been well-built. Even since she knew that Mrs.Edna inclined to sink herself in the wave of freedom that would drag her away from family , particularly Mr.Pontellier, Madam Ratignolle had warned Robert with a tone of threat to leave Mrs.Edna Pontellier alone. In New Orleans several months after the last of their meeting in Grand Island, on

one of her visits to Mrs.Edna's new small house, she gave advice to her as a sign of Madam Ratignole's care and concern to Mrs.Edna as beloved friend. One of her advice is like following below reflecting of her worry just like in Robert case, that Mrs.Edna after the disappearance of Robert would make another affair with Alc e Robin and neglected the family:

"In some way you seem to me like a child, Edna. You seem to act without a certain amount of reflection which is necessary in this life. That is the reason I want to say you mustn't mind if I advise you to be careful while you are living here alone. Why don't you have some one come and stay with you? Wouldn't Mademoiselle Reisz come?"

"No; she wouldn't wish to come, and I shouldn't want her always with me".

"Well, the reason -- you know how evil-minded the world is -- some one was talking of Alc e Arobin visiting you. Of course, it wouldn't matter if Mr.Arobin had not such a dreadful reputation. Monsieur Ratignolle was telling me what his attention alone are considered enough to ruin a woman's name". (Part XXXIII,p.91)

She continued to give advices to Mrs.Edna. For example, in one occasion when Madame Ratignolle got sick and Mrs.Edna Pontellier went for a visit to her, she gave an advise to Mrs.Edna to not even neglect the childern. The description from the novel is like following :

She was still stunned and speechless with emotion when later she learned over her friend to kiss her and softly say goodbye. Adele, pressing her cheek, whispered in an exhausted voice: "Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children ! Remember them !" ( Part XXXVIII, p.105)

#### IV.4 *Mrs.Edna Pontellier and Alc e Arobin*

Alc e Arobin is a minor character, thus his character is only analyzed as long as it related to Mrs.Edna. Horse race was the one that made them to be acquainted. They had one common on it, considered it as good hobby, and winning from bets of horse race was the great pleasure. Their acquaintance grew deeper as they spent more time in horse races.

Alc e Arobin had bad reputation for his naughty and undiscipline in his past teenage, and this was that made

most people knew about him. He felt attracted to Mrs. Edna at the moment when he saw her in horse race. They had the same feeling about it, this made them quickly involved in intimate relationship. But Mrs. Edna only treated him as the replacement or substitute of Robert's position who had been absent in her daily life and let Rabin played a role that she wanted Robert to do in their relationship as a couple of lover. She herself did not have a love feeling to Robin, but only sensual enjoyment that Arobin, not Robert for his vacuum, could give to her. Since Robert's leaving for Mexico had made the object of her dream became blurred, then came Arobin to keep her reawakening. Her impression about him can be seen through the following discription cited from the novel:

"The afternoon was intensely interesting to her. The excitement came back upon her like a remitten fever. Her talk grew familiar and confidential. It was no labor to become intimate with Arobin..."  
(Part XXV, p.73)

In another occasion when Mrs. Edna Pontellier and Arobin kissed each other there was a feeling of awakening, even though Robert was not the one she felt in love with. It took



account as long as it provided her the stream of freedom. It can be seen through the following description:

She felt as if a mist has been lifted from her eyes, enabling her to look upon and comprehend the significance of life, that monster made up of beauty and brutality. But among the conflicting sensations which assailed her, there was neither shame or remorse. There was a dull pang of regret because it was not the kiss of love which had held this cup of life to her lips. ( Part XXVIII, p.80)

It was freedom that Mrs. Edna tried to seek from Arabin, a freedom that led her to the world of selfness where she could find happiness, unlimitedness, and unrestrainedness, just the same feeling that emerged when she saw the open wide-sea or when she walked through the high grass of meadow. To her, the thought of no end and begin as clear boundaries of sea and meadow grass was similar to that of her selfness-world where she felt fit in to live without any boundary or rules.