

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE AWAKENING BY KATE CHOPIN

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Abstract

This objective of this study is to explore Edna's effort to deal with the perspective of Creole society in the Awakening Novel. This research used descriptive qualitative method in order to analyze the novel. In addition, the research applied the social perspective approach with the use of Berger's theory. The result of this research shows that Creoles believe that women are feeble, should maintain silence, submit to their husband's authority, and serve as mothers. The Creole has also subjected Edna to oppression. Edna faces difficulties in her efforts to establish her Creole identity as a victim of discrimination, Edna gradually reveals her response to patriarchy and then Edna's efforts is she defies Creole norms by falling in love with Robert Lebrun, sending her children to live with their grandmother, leaving her husband's home, and having an affair based solely on physical attraction with Alcee Arobin before committing suicide.

Keywords: The Portrayal, Creola Society, Social Perspective, The Awakening

INTRODUCTION

In the nineteenth century described about the position of women in America evolved throughout the same period. Evangelical Protestantism and the evolution of women's ideas and behaviour were two critical intertwined developments in American social and cultural history. The man were seen as morally superior to woman in colonial America. In a society with a tight patriarchal structure, males were in charge of all money, political influence, and decisions about religion, morality, and other issues of good and wrong. In contrast, women belonged to the private world of seclusion, family, and morality. Catherine Beecher believed each sex was superior in its domain, leading to equality.

As briefly story in what novel tells about Creole culture and norms, Creole is the name of a community of Americans of

French (or Spanish) descent who live in New Orleans. As a person of American-French descent "Creole", believed that his lineage was more honorable than other breeds. These cultural and norms confine woman to the every wish of their husbands. Thus, women who aspire to be individualistic suffer under the intense regulations of the Creole culture. Edna, originally an American girl, struggles to adapt to the Creole way of life. While directly juxtaposed by her peer, Adele. Madame Ratignolle chooses to abide by her husband's wishes and offer her body as an instrument to create a family, which is highly valued by the Creoles. The Creole culture expects the women in society to place the responsibility of caring for their children above every other responsibility.

In Kate Chopin's The Awakening, Creole culture and norms subjectify women through imprisonment of the Creole culture

and norms. These cultural and norms. Adele prides herself in acting as the prime role model for all other women in her society and sets an example by only allowing about six months of recovery time between bearing children. Due to Adele's unwavering dedication to having and caring for children, society idolizes her family. Therefore this novel is interesting to be analyzed since it provides an insight into the life issues, especially about one of them the perspective of creola society towards women in *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociology and literature. Sociology is one of the essentially, an objective study of man in society, the study on social institutions and of social processes; it seeks to answer the question of how society is possible, how it works, why it persists. Meanwhile, literature is a reading that contains elements of entertainment, education, and information. It is an author's creative work poured in beautiful language. Literature stimulates the sensitivity of its readers. It presents various aspects of life and even constantly parses life, or may be, a reflection of life. Nowadays, sociological literature has much been paid attention to help people in understanding human life (Saraswati, 2003:). This is because literature, as a microcosm of human existence, contains many reflections of real-world events and occurrences. Sociology as terminology firstly stated by Auguste Comte in 1839 is known as the study about general society (Santosa, WH & Wahyuningtyas,S: 2011). On the other hand, we might also argue that existence in a community requires mutually influential social contact. This encounter happened for the first time in a home where the children and the father connected. The interactions between family

members will lead to forming relationships with others. The surrounding environment will influence community connection patterns. In rural communities, interactions are more interwoven than in cities. Moreover, Handinoto (1992) says that social life is generally more strengthened by work or position possessed and bound by status that is what happened to people living in the city. This gives rise to the formation of social stratification in society. High paying job and prestigious will increase one's prestige. Alternatively, if low-paying employment does not guarantee honor, distinction, fascinating work, or promotion chances, there may be alternative incentives.

Females 19 Century

During the early nineteenth century, the country was swept by the evangelical flames of the Second Great Awakening. Painting of a wealthy lady carrying a lace fan, the Second Great Awakening saw the birth of a more active and positive religious sensibility. During the same decades, the role of women in the United States evolved. These two critical developments in the social and cultural history of the United States, evangelical Protestantism and the alteration of women's ways of thinking and living, were interconnected. During revivals, the average convert was a young woman, and it was often via these early converts that her family members were converted. The theological and moral authority supplied by such an experience contributed to the redefinition of being a woman. The Market Revolution, the second major revolution of the time, also had a crucial effect on the evolution of gender roles. The Market Revolution refers to the commercialization of economic life and the collapse of subsistence agriculture as the predominant way of life in the United . In the beginning, factories arose. As textiles were increasingly created in mills such as Lowell,

Massachusetts, middle-class women spent much less time spinning and weaving fabric

As women's domestic output decreased and their traditional economic function reduced, the "home" became a subject of discussion and an ideal to be admired. Less a site of work than a spiritually sanitised sanctuary from the bustle of economic life, the home was where women raised men and children to be morally superior individuals. It may be stated that what we consider to be the typical "house" was a nineteenth-century American innovation.

In colonial America, males were seen as superior to women in every manner, including morals. In a society governed by a rigid patriarchal hierarchy, males controlled not just money and political power, but also the upbringing of their children, religious issues, and all problems of good and evil. However, towards the beginning of the nineteenth century, many Americans witnessed a gender revolution. What we now consider archaic and even repressive was novel and possibly freeing at the time.

The idea of "separate spheres" held that a woman's sphere consisted of the realms of privacy, family, and morality, while a man's sphere consisted of the realms of economic struggle, political manoeuvring, and social rivalry. Catherine Beecher asserted that each sex was superior within its own realm, achieving a kind of equality. Beecher thought that "women are elevated to equality with the other sexes only in America." This very powerful lady, the daughter of the eminent clergyman Lyman Beecher and the sister of the novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, wrote in her "Treatise on Domestic Economy" the following: "Group of women." "In civil and political affairs, American women have no interest or concern, except insofar as they sympathies with their family and personal friends; however, in all cases in which they

do feel a concern, their opinions and feelings are given equal or even greater weight than those of the other sex.

Numerous social reform initiatives sprang from this notion of the family as a locus of moral purity. In conjunction with the theological optimism of the Second Great Awakening, the worship of the power of the home led to the transformation of established institutions and the establishment of new ones. Penitentiaries, asylums, temperance groups, and schools all aimed to reform persons in environments fashioned after the middle-class American household of the North.

Since women ruled the house owing to their "natural" moral superiority, they had a unique voice in these changes, if not actual political authority. At least among the middle class, womanhood signified moral power; thus, the lives of actual women were altered. The career of Dorothea Dix, for example, would have been inconceivable without this new attribution of moral authority and the asylum movement, which was predicated on the assumption that a home-like atmosphere could nurture individuals back to psychological health.

Background of The Novel

The creole In general, the word "Creole" was first employed between the 16th and 18th centuries to identify white people born in Spanish America to Spanish parents from American residents. Creole also refers to a person who was born in Spain. In Louisiana in the United States it refers, in some context, to French-speaking white descendants of early French and Spanish settlers and in the other contexts, to mulattos speaking a form of French and Spanish (Warren E. Preece (Ed.), 1984: 233). Moreover, Creole society is unlike any other in the United States. Occupying in the southern of Louisiana and part of Alabama and eastern Missouri, the

Creoles are the descendants of French and Spanish colonists of the eighteenth century (Walker, 1979: 60).

Walker notes in her book that some of them (Creoles) become extremely rich as sugar cane growers, while others are less successful monetarily. However, they all form a cultural grouping united by Catholicism, strong family connections, and the French language. Clement Eaton (in Walker, 1979: 61) states that —the Creoles, to a greater degree than the Anglo America, lived a life of sensations and careless enjoyment. They enjoyed dancing, gambling, fishing, feasting, playing the fiddle, and living without much regard for the future. Thus, Walker explains various explanations for the Creoles' reputation for their laid-back demeanor. One is Christianity. Most of them are Catholic and celebrate Mardi Gras before Lent. New Orland is known as Southern Babylon because Creole men openly supported quadroom and octoroon mistresses. In quadrooms, there is one-fourth Negro blood, which is regarded to be entirely Negro, and the mother of quadroom females will be pleased if her daughter marries a rich white man.

Creoles did not go westward in quest of extensive land tracts, as did most colonists. In 1860, they comprised around one-third of the population of New Orland, where they were pleased to stay. (Around 45 percent of the state's white population resided in New Orleans, which was the capital state until recently.) These spirits stun tourists or foreigners who do not yet comprehend the peculiarity of this civilization, causing Creoles to often clash with Anglo-American society.

In the Creole family the father is dominant. The men like to go to the cafes to discuss business, play dominoes, and have a drink while women should spend their time to

make sure the house becomes comfortable for the family (Walker, 1979: 60). The position of the Creole men is very high in the society because their family needs them to get the money to buy the daily needs. That is why they are very dominant in the Creole society (Bauman, 2002: part 13).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method was applied for this research. This study was taken from the original novels entitled *The Awakening*, which were written by Kate Chopin. *The Awakening* is a novel by Kate Chopin, first published in 1899. Set in New Orleans and on the Louisiana Gulf coast at the end of the 19th century, the plot centres on Edna Pontellier and her struggle between her increasingly unorthodox views on femininity and motherhood with the prevailing social attitudes of the turn of the century American South.

To support the discussion, the researcher used some related books, journals, thesis, and other written materials dealing with the study to support the main data. In this case, the researcher also needed lots of information related to the social perspective and phenomena in American in the 19th century that related with the awakening novel. After the data had been collected, then it will be analyzed in the following steps: first, researcher defined the problems that related the main character in dealing with Creola society. Second, the researcher analyzed data especially social perspective of Creola towards women in the awakening. Third, the researcher explores Edna's effort to deal with the perspective of creola society in the *Awakening* novel.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The result of the study reveals the Creola's society views the women and Edna's effort to deal with the perspective of Creola's society towards women in *The Awakening* novel.

1. Edna's effort to deal with the perspective of Creola's society towards women in *The Awakening* Novel

Discrimination will only create a disappointment; it happens because everybody needs to express their ideas or dreams. When somebody gets discrimination from other, he or she will fight against it to get his or her freedom.

Edna Pontellier is also committed to combating the patriarchy in Creole society. She combats the discrimination she faces by deviating from Creole norms. She challenges the preconception that women are feeble, should observe the husband's orders, remain mute, and do not receive equal opportunities in job distribution. She also encounters Creole discrimination, which prevents her from pursuing her artistic passion, forces her to devote her life to serving her husband and children, and views her as a possession.

In the beginning of the novel, Edna is shown as a repressed, traditional women as data described as follow below:

Data 1

Mr. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the worldn within and bout her (Chopin, 1981:33)

She does not want to be prevented from being an independent woman by society, so she is willing to violate Creole norms.

However, her efforts are unpopular from the Creole perspective. She only desires an existence as enjoyable as swimming in the ocean as data described as follow below:

Data 2

The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clearing, murmuring, and inviting the soul to wander for a spell in the abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation. The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace. (Chopin,198:34).

However, she gets the problem to find joys in her life. The discrimination that Edna gets from the society forces her to get struggle. She has no option except fighting back to find the equality in her live and her identity as a free woman like her expression as data explained as follow below:

Data 3

Perhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer, rather than to remain a dupe to illusions all one's life (Chopin,1981:292)

Finally, Edna becomes emotionally autonomous of her marriage after falling in love with another man, sending her children away to their grandmother, moving out from her husband's home, and having an affair exclusively on physical attraction. Further, she commits suicide after the novel as her final triumph. Edna's endeavors to disrupt the Creole norms are explained further in the following points:

A. Falling in love with Robert Lebrun

Leonce Pontellier looks like a perfect husband. He gives Edna plenty of money, sends her care packages, and indulges her hobbies. Furthermore, he makes a good living and is a popular figure in society. But in fact he acts as if Edna were his possession. Mr. Pontellier certainly treats Edna well, but in the same way as someone treats his dog well. He pampers it and gives it treats, but at the

end of the day, he expects it to behave and turn tricks. Because of that condition, Edna feels that as data described as follow below:

Data 4

Her husband seemed to her now like a person whom she had married without love as an excuse (Chopin, 1981:46)

Moreover, Edna's sexual awakening begins when she falls in love with Robert Leburn, a son of a resort proprietor. They walk and unwind on the shore, which makes Edna feel more vibrant. She has only known a dull existence before. Through her encounters with Robert, she realizes she is dissatisfied with her spouse.

Edna's feeling to Robert obviously break the Creole's norm. The Creole expects the wives to be passive and innocent lovers. Falling in love with another man is forbidden because it betrays the husband and the marriage. However, Edna loves Robert very much and Robert also has the same feeling though Adele Ratignolle warns Robert as data mentioned as follow below:

Data 5

She is not one of us; she is not like us. She is might make unfortunate blunder of taking you seriously (Chopin, 1981:50-51)

Ratignolle tells Robert that Edna is not a Creole. She is a Kentucky Presbyterian by birth which has different culture with the Creole. Ratignolle assumes Edna has misunderstanding about Robert's attitude to her.

Edna is very sad when Robert leaves her for Mexico. However, she realizes that she is seeing life in a new way now after Robert leaves her as data mentioned as follow below:

Data 6

That she was seeing with different eyes and making the acquaintance of new conditions in herself that colored and changed her environment, she did not yet suspect. (Chopin, 1981:138).

She continues to think about Robert; on some days, she is joyful, and on others, she is melancholy. Edna is determined to do what she desires, regardless of what her husband or society may believe.

B. Sending her children away to their grandmother and relocating out from her spouse's home

In Creole society, a decent mother is a devoted mother who places her family before herself. Creole women need to make the home pleasant for their spouse and offspring. Home is the place for males to recharge their energy after working all day to get money to purchase cuisines for their spouses and children. When Madame Ratignolle learns Edna is living alone and abandoning her spouse, she tells her as data described as follow below:

Data 7

A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swim before, (Chopin,1981:70-71)

The explanation above shows that Edna ultimately succeeded in swimming farther than other women. It means she feels more dominant than other women. She is not an ordinary woman because she already demonstrates it by swimming farther where no women have swum. Moreover, Edna has already comprehended that she is declaring conflict with society. As data mentioned as follow below:

Data 8

Edna looked straight before her with a self-absorbed expression upon her face. She felt no interest in anything about her. The street, the children, the fruit vender, the flowers growing there under her eyes, were all part and parcel of an alien world which had

suddenly become antagonistic. (Chopin, 1981:138)

The establishment is now Edna's enemy. This condition could be more pleasurable and does not bode well for the future. Edna has neglected her housekeeping and decides to move out of their large home on Esplanade Street and into a smaller "pigeon-hole" home down the block. She wants to be independent and does not want her spouse to have any claim on her.

C. Having an affair with Alcee Arobin

Creole women must be faithful to their husbands and secure their marriages regardless of what their husbands do. After Robert departs for Mexico, Edna spends most of her time with members of high society at horse races and the Jockey Club. She seeks Mademoiselle Reisz's solace and counsel. She gradually gains independence and no longer lives for Mr. Pontellier or her children alone; instead, she lives for herself.

Edna meets Alcee Arobin, a man whose reputation as a playboy is well-earned, and he introduces her to numerous physical delights. Kind words and gentle touches are used to console her by Arobin. Good night, she tells him. Except for continuing to embrace her, he does not respond. As data described as follow as:

Data 9

He did not say good night until she had become supple to his gentle, seductive entreaties (Chopin, 1981:242).

Edna is attracted to Arobin because she desires sensual satisfaction. Not only does Arobin impress her with his knowledge of women, but also with his horses at the lake. In contrast to her relationship with Robert, Edna's liaison with Arobin lacks feeling.

D. Attempting suicide

Edna's final endeavor is a suicide attempt. Edna envisions an ultimate triumph in which she proves her independence to

society, and the only way to do so is through her death. Edna makes one last effort to demonstrate independence to her husband and the Creole. It is essential to observe that she is not governed by men or society but rather by her emotions. As Edna says that described in data as follow below:

Data 10

I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me (Chopin, 1981:122)

She desires independence, to become a woman in her manner, and not to sacrifice her entire life and character for her children. The final section of Suicide is written in exquisite prose. She wrote as data described as follow below:

Data 11

The water of the Gulf stretched out before her, gleaming with the million lights of the sun. The voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander of abysses of solitude. All along the white beach, up and down, there was no living thing in sight. A bird with a broken wing was beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water.

Edna visits the water and momentarily immerses her feet in it. The water evokes many conflicting emotions, from her infancy to the summer she spent with Robert on Grand Isle. The Ocean is a potent and beguiling force that draws Edna away from her world and into its independent nature

Discussion

Edna's effort to deal with the perspective of Creola's society towards women in The Awakening novel.

The discrimination experienced by Edna against the Creola community only leads to disappointment; this happens because everyone needs to express their ideas or dreams. When a person is discriminated against by others, they will fight to get their freedom. This is in line with research by Singer (1996) states a liberation movement demands an expansion of our moral horizons, so that practices that were previously regarded as natural and inevitable are now seen as intolerable. From singer's opinion, this is supported by Bell (1991) who states that the struggle for freedom is, at bottom, a manifestation of our humanity that survives and grows stronger through resistance to oppression, even if that oppression is never overcome. Meanwhile, Edna Pontellier also fights against patriarchy in Creole society. She fights the discrimination she faces for deviating from Creole norms. She challenges the prejudice that women are weak, must obey their husbands' orders, remain silent and do not have equal opportunities in the distribution of work.

The decision of Edna Pontellier, a character in Kate Chopin's "The Awakening", to leave her partner reflects complex individual aspirations and desires. It is a reflection of Edna's drive to pursue her personal freedom and autonomy, beyond the conventional expectations of the role of a wife and mother. It is important to respect and honour individual decisions when it comes to relationships and marriage. Social change and advances in gender equality have expanded the choices and opportunities for women to take control of their own lives. This does not mean that creating a happy home for your partner and children does not have value or importance. Family life and attention to the relationships and feelings of family members remain meaningful and important in many cultures. However, expectations of the roles

of women and men in the household are increasingly diverse and depend on the values, aspirations and agreements of individuals and families themselves. However, it is important to respect individual choices and not judge or criticise them based on standards or expectations that may be limited or irrelevant in the wider context (Priest, 1977).

When reading literary works such as this, it is important to consider the wider context and plot, and to interpret the motivations of the characters with caution. Every action and decision a character makes are part of the complexity of the narrative and the emotional journey they experience in the fiction. This statement is supported by O'Carroll, et al (1998) who mention that suicide is any action that may result in a catastrophe for oneself or the act of deliberately killing oneself. Edna Pontellier's suicide attempt was a deliberate act. She took this step as a result of complicated internal conflicts and the hopelessness she felt in the face of societal expectations that restricted her freedom. Suicide is a serious and complex problem. It is linked to a variety of factors, including mental illness, emotional distress and feelings of hopelessness. It is important to remember that if someone is experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings, it is important to seek professional help immediately. Many mental health organisations and agencies are ready to provide support and resources to help people struggling with suicidal thoughts. In the context of fiction, the suicidal actions of a character, such as Edna in the story, are a representation of the emotional complexities and personal struggles they face. It plays a role in portraying themes such as social connectedness, independence and resistance to binding norms. However, it is important not to idealise or promote suicide as a viable solution or option in real life.

The character of Edna Pontellier in this novel represents the struggle of many women in seeking their identity and autonomy in a society that restricts gender roles and expectations. Through her explorations and quests, Edna tries to achieve independence and self-reliance that aligns with her own desires and values. It is important to note that these themes and characters are representations in fiction and not guidelines for real life. However, he shed light on the struggle of individuals to determine their own path in life and pursue freedom and independence within a social context that is limited by certain norms and expectations (Mosedale, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The result of the analysis suggests about Edna effort to distabished her Creole identity. Creole patriarchy her social problem.

- Edna faces difficulties in her efforts to establish her Creole identity. Creole patriarchy, a system that discriminates against women, is a source of discrimination. This makes women in Creole society vulnerable and subservient. As a victim of discrimination, Edna gradually reveals her response to patriarchy. She defies Creole norms by falling in love with Robert Lebrun, sending her children to live with their grandmother and leaving her husband's home, and having an affair based solely on physical attraction with Alcee Arobin before committing suicide after the novel. She also continues to fight for her rights, as depicted in the novel. She also reveals her existence to society through her paintings. Edna faces difficulties in her efforts to establish her Creole identity. Because of her status as a

wife and mother, Edna cannot articulate her identity because of her social problems.

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