

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

There are many important stages in people's life; one of them is marriage. Marriage itself is defined as "the legal relationship between a husband and wife" (Hornby 785). The definition seems to involve mostly the legal aspect of marriage, but in practice, marriage is a complex state which involves one's feelings and many other aspects of life. Because of this complexity, people sometimes find their marriage unsatisfactory. Kate Chopin's The Awakening and William Somerset Maugham's Mrs. Craddock are two examples of those literary works that deal with unsatisfactory marriage as an issue that contributes to the development of the characters. In their novels, both the protagonists feel that their marriage is unsatisfactory – even though it is caused by different reasons. One feels dissatisfied because she has to suppress her desires because of the marriage, while the other feels dissatisfied because her husband does not return her love – and those contribute to their change of characteristics.

Kate Chopin herself is one of the most important American women writers in the 19th century. She was once known as a local-color writer (Carey 6), but later, she is "recognized for her examination of sexuality, individual freedom, and

the consequences of one's actions—themes and concerns important to many later American writers” (“Kate Chopin 1851-1904”). Through The Awakening, her most notable work which once was banned because of its directness (Carey 7), she makes a great contribution to the development of feminist literature. The Awakening itself is a “scandalous book” (Carey 7), considering that the protagonist is “a woman who not only had sexual urges and desires, but felt that it was her right to have those drives satisfied” (Carey 7) – an inappropriate subject matter to be discussed at that time. The book was banned from bookstores and public libraries (Carey 7) but it had already given a new perspective in understanding women issues.

Meanwhile, William Somerset Maugham is remembered as one of the most successful English authors in the 19th century. He was announced as “one of the first authors to make significant money from film adaptations” (“W. Somerset Maugham”) and his theatre productions were generally successful (“W. Somerset Maugham”). Besides being an author, Maugham also had many professions – doctor, spy, even once served as an ambulance driver in World War I (“W. Somerset Maugham”) – and this experience adds to his ability to create such complex, real-humanlike characters in his works. He once admitted, “I had an acute power of observation and it seemed to me that I could see a great many things that other people missed. I could put down in clear terms what I saw” (Nordquist). Mrs. Craddock is not as popular as Maugham’s other works, but it is still worth reading as it deals with an unsatisfactory marriage and female passion – something closely related to the examination of our fellow human – which makes it a relevant reading material of all time.

As the novels themselves mostly talk about the contribution of the unsatisfactory marriage towards the protagonists' characteristics, it is felt best for me to choose the character as the literary element to be discussed in this thesis, considering as well that character is one of the most basic and important parts of literary elements. Character in literature is "an author's representation of a human being, specifically of those inner qualities that determine how an individual reacts to various conditions or attempts to shape his or her environment" (Roberts 54). Both Edna Pontellier, the protagonist in The Awakening, and Bertha Craddock, the protagonist in Mrs. Craddock are the authors' representation of women in the 19th century who react towards the unsatisfactory marriage and at the same time undergo a self-development. Later in the analysis, it is found that the condition in America and England in the 19th century proves to have some influences towards the results of the protagonists' reactions. As the protagonists are the representation of real human beings, both authors create such complex and developed characters and this adds to my decision to choose character as the interesting literary element to be discussed in this thesis.

Statement of the Problem

The problems that are going to be analysed in this thesis are:

1. How are the protagonists portrayed in the novels?
2. What are the purposes of the authors in creating such characters?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the statement of problems above, this thesis is constructed:

1. To show how the protagonists are portrayed in the novels
2. To show the purposes of the authors in creating such characters

Method of Research

In writing this thesis, I apply the library research method to find the needed information to support the analysis. The novels are used as the primary texts, while some other criticisms and information which are taken from both books and Internet websites are used as the references to analyse the novels and draw the conclusion.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Portrayal of the Protagonist in Kate Chopin's The Awakening, while Chapter Three is the Portrayal of the Protagonist in William Somerset Maugham's Mrs. Craddock. The last chapter is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consists of the synopses of both novels and biographies of the authors.