

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Having analysed Kate Chopin's The Awakening and William Somerset Maugham's Mrs. Craddock in the previous chapters of this thesis, I conclude that there are some similarities and differences that can be inferred from the analysis of the novels.

The first similarity is that both protagonists have the typical characteristics of the 19th century women at the beginning of each story. In Kate Chopin's The Awakening, Edna, the protagonist, is portrayed as a reserved, obedient, and dutiful woman, while in William Somerset Maugham's Mrs. Craddock, Bertha, the protagonist, is portrayed as an obedient, dependent, self-possessed, and passionate woman. These are the typical characteristics which can generally describe the 19th century women.

The second similarity is that both protagonists experience an unsatisfactory marriage which helps the development of their characteristics. After the unsatisfactory marriage, Edna becomes an expressive, rebellious, and undutiful woman, while Bertha becomes a rebellious, independent, expressive, and indifferent woman. The new characteristics prove that the unsatisfactory marriage has developed the protagonists' characteristics.

The third similarity is that both protagonists have similar characteristics after they experience the unsatisfactory marriage. The readers may see that both protagonists become expressive and rebellious in their own ways in spite of their different characteristics at the beginning of the story.

Apart from the similarities, there are some differences that can be inferred from the analysis of the novels. First, the cause of the protagonists' unsatisfactory marriage is slightly different. Edna is disappointed because her husband treats her like his possession and because she is tired of the responsibilities which are put on her shoulders as a wife and a mother. On the other hand, Bertha is disappointed with her married life because her husband cannot return her ardent love.

Second, the result of the protagonists' rebellion towards the unsatisfactory marriage is different. Edna does not want to go back to her husband and to conform to the forced responsibility that is put on her shoulders. By deciding to commit suicide, she succeeds in getting the freedom she wants. However, Bertha goes back to her husband and conforms to the unsatisfactory marriage and the social conventions that bind her. Even though there are changes in her characteristics, nothing is changed in general as long as she still conforms to the pressure that oppresses her.

The explanation of the second difference then leads to the third difference – the place and the background where the authors live. Even though the books were published in the relatively same period of time, the place and the background where the authors live are different. Chopin lived in a period when American literature started to change and new ideas on many things were developed, whereas Maugham lived in a period when British literature and society were on

their peak of confidence. The society considered the conventions well-established and it was difficult for people who were settled with those social rules to change or accept new thoughts.

The third difference above then gives some influences on the fourth difference – the difference in the purpose of the authors. Chopin wanted to encourage the readers, especially women, to fight for freedom even though there was a pressure from society, whereas Maugham wanted to portray women in the 19th century who, contradictory to Chopin's purpose, did not have any choice but to submit to the established social conventions at that time.

During the analysing process of the novels, I find that Maugham's portrayal of his protagonist is more life-like than Chopin's. It has been discussed in the background of this thesis that Maugham is really good at making and describing human-like characters, which explains why his characters are so real. Moreover, Maugham himself is assumed to portray the 19th century life through his characters in Mrs. Craddock. On the other hand, Chopin describes a character that the readers will not usually find at the specific period of time, or in other words, a character that is quite unreal to exist in the specified time. However, from a different point of view, Chopin's protagonist boldly reflects not only a hope but also a real encouragement – an encouragement for freedom, an encouragement for gender equality, and an encouragement for the better way of life.

To sum up, I myself tend to agree with Chopin's concept of freedom as a human being, even though at the same time I consider both novels worth analysing as they give not only a clear description of human characteristics but

also some new perspectives to consider. The novels also give real descriptions of married life – how it is conducted, how society has significant influences on it, and how the different characteristics of the people involved in it affect the married life itself. The novels teach the readers about how married life can be, and at the same time, give an important perspective that human beings have the rights to have their needs and freedom fulfilled.