

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

After analysing the conflicts in Kathryn Harrison's The Binding Chair, I come to the conclusion that the conflicts in this novel are very important. The conflicts are worth analysing because they are realistic, meaning that such conflicts may also be found in real life. Some of us may have hatred for any ethnic group because we have a psychological or physical trauma. Throughout the story May develops hatred towards the Chinese men, later in the story she refused to serve Chinese clients when she was a prostitute, even though that did not give her a benefit, because she did not have a chance to get away from prostitution. Western people will not marry a prostitute, Chinese men do. It is because of her bad experiences in her past marriage.

As the protagonist, May experiences a lot of conflicts with the other characters in the novel. Her sad married life makes her have hatred for all Chinese men. Her husband marries her only for a pride as a successful man. He does not love her at all. May feels that she does not deserve to be treated like that because she has tried hard to be a noble woman since she was child, suffering for her bright future but it does not come up to her expecting

The first conflict between May and her grandmother happens because since she was a little girl May has been forced by her grandmother to be a highly regarded woman. Whether she likes it or not, May has to have her feet bound for the sake of her own future. May also has a conflict with her mother and her grandmother. The conflict happens because neither her mother nor her grandmother supports her wish. May feels very disappointed because her mother does not understand her feeling nor does her grandmother. In real life, it is normal for a girl to have a conflict with her mother or with her grandmother because although they belong to the same family, they have different characteristics, feelings and wishes. The conflict between May and Alice is because May does not like Alice for what she has done. May does not want anyone to know about her past life, she wants to bury it deep. May has very bad memories about her former husband, a Chinese man who badly and cruelly treated her. Her past bad experience makes her clearly refuse to serve Chinese clients when she is still a prostitute. None of her new family knows about it; moreover, Alice's behavior reminds her. To have a husband like her husband, most women probably will act like she does. Especially nowadays, women do not want to be badly treated by their husbands. They want to have equal rights. When they are treated badly, they may ask for a divorce. Treating a woman as badly as May's husband should not happen in this modern time.

In Chinese culture, foot binding and polygamy were a custom practiced for approximately thousands of years in China. Foot binding was begun in the 10th century and it was ended in the early 20th century. This practice is only for noble families. Polygamy is the practice of marriage to more than one partner. It was

begun from the Han Dynasty. Chinese men can have one wife or more. It is common for rich Chinese men to have more than one wife. One of the reasons is to continue the father's family name.

Her husband treats May like an object of sexual exploration. He is bored with normal sex that he does with three other wives. He only does the anal sex to May. Anal sex is one form of human sexual behavior. Anal sex is sometimes seen as preserving female virginity, another reason is that the rectum is giving more pleasure for the penis, being tighter than the vagina. This type of sexual behavior is known widely around the world. In this novel May's husband does it and May cannot refuse because her husband is a rich man, but she hates him for practising this to her.

May's inner conflicts cause her social conflicts. May wants to run from her past, but it is not easy for May to do. It makes her uncomfortable and causes conflict with other people around her in this novel. May has hatred for all of Chinese men group because she has a psychological and physical trauma with her first Chinese husband.

So far as the other resolutions of the conflicts are concerned, they are also plausible; for example when May fails to get her mother's and grandmother's support, she leaves them and she also leaves her husband, who has treated her badly. May's love for Alice makes her wish to do her best for her. Her anger towards Alice's indecent attitude is a manifestation of her love for her. Likewise, Alice's insistence that May should have her feet properly fixed is also a manifestation of her love for May. In real life, one will want to do one's best for

the people one love although they may have a different interpretation of what one intends to do for them.

May is a dynamic character; she undergoes certain changes in her life. It can be seen from May's social conflicts with the other characters in the novel. The most essential changes of her characteristics are the fact that the obedient little girl has become a woman of a stronger character who can express her own desires.

The moral lesson that I get from this novel is that life is not as easy as I think. I must struggle to get something that I want to have and face everything I find in my life. Eventhough it is hard to get, I still must do it, because I believe that I am going to get what I want if I try the best; if I do not succeed in getting it, I do not give up easily. Life is a struggle and I must be tough to get through it.

As a final comment, I would like to say that one should not always think about the past. The present situation and condition and the future are more important in life. The fact that May cannot forget her past leads her to a miserable life. Her consumption of opium is not an acceptable way out. Moreover, committing suicide is a much worse solution.