

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

After analysing Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and Sue Monk Kidd's The Mermaid Chair, I would like to draw some conclusions. Both Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and Sue Monk Kidd's The Mermaid Chair deal with a wife who is tempted into having an affair. Yet, they have different characteristics, so they will face and solve the problem in their own way.

First, I would like to point out the similarities and differences of these novels. The similarities between The Scarlet Letter and The Mermaid Chair are about the freedom to choose and truth for them. Both novels tell about the infidelity in relationship. Each female character is tempted to be involved in the sin of adultery since she is not with her husband. The female protagonist goes to some place without her husband for some reasons. Moreover, the female character has the freedom to choose whether to be involved in the affair or not.

The second similarity is that each female character does not regret deeply because they think what they have done is not a mistake. In The Scarlet Letter, Hester loves Arthur more than she loves her husband. Arthur also loves Hester so much. In

The Mermaid Chair, Jessie sees her affair with Whit only as her second love.

The third similarity is that each female character has an affair with a man who has authority in a church. In The Scarlet Letter, the protagonist, Hester Prynne, has an affair with Arthur Dimmesdale. He is reverend in the puritan society. In The Mermaid Chair, Brother Thomas is a junior monk in St. Senara church.

Moreover, I find differences between the two novels which are about the reasons why the two characters are tempted into having the affair and about their commitment. In The Scarlet Letter, Hester Prynne commits this adultery because of love. She loves Arthur so much. She is committed to her decision. She does not want to tell her lover's identity to anybody because she does not want Arthur to get into trouble. She is even willing to bear the burden herself.

However, in The Mermaid Chair, Jessie Sullivan commits adultery because of her boredom. Nevertheless, she does not commit herself to her previous decision. She also tells her husband about her lover's identity because she knows that it is the right choice. At the end of the story, Jessie Sullivan decides to go back to her husband when she realizes her wrongdoing. They live together and start to fix their relationship, but again it is her choice.

In The Scarlet Letter, Hester Prynne is portrayed as a strong, strong-willed, and independent woman while in The Mermaid Chair, Jessie Sullivan is portrayed as a contrite, easy-to-get-bored, and responsible person. Having different characteristics, they have different ways to solve their own problems. Hester solves her problem by keeping her lover's name and bearing the punishment from the puritan society, while Jessie solves her problem by mentioning the man's name and going back to her

married life. Their own characteristics show their existence. Their attitude and actions are closely connected to and thus can be explained through Soren Kierkegaard theories about choice, decision, commitment and responsibility.

I get the impression that the most discernible lifelike character is portrayed in The Mermaid Chair's protagonist, Jessie Sullivan. Sue Monk Kidd as the author creates Jessie as a character who can represent wives in general who feel great boredom after a certain time in their married life. The characterization of this protagonist can be seen from the first page until the last. We can understand her portrayal through her conversation with other characters such as Hugh Sullivan, Brother Thomas and from her reaction to others actions. I know her characteristics from her own perspective.

From this novel, I also get an understanding about the relationship between a man and a woman. This affair could happen to anyone including to someone who has authority in the religious institution such as a clergyman in the church. It is a must for them to be a role model for the society but they fail. I feel sorry for someone who has authority in the religious institution being trapped in such an affair. These novels show that every man, including a clergyman, is possible to commit a sin including the sin of adultery.

I can also learn from these novels that long distance and boredom are some of causes for an affair. We must really pay attention to this matter. I think we have to always renew our relationship, by spending more time together to reach mutual understanding in husband and wife relationship.

Although the two novels were written in different periods of time, they deal with the same problem, adultery. Through the portrayal of the protagonists in coping with their problems, the two authors have succeeded in achieving their goals. Through Hester Prynne, Nathaniel Hawthorne has succeeded in exploring the ideas of individual responsibility in order to criticize the puritan society. Meanwhile, Sue Monk Kidd has skillfully used Jessie Sullivan to show one's searching oneself. And the way they present the characters makes these two novels worth reading and analyzing.