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PREFACE

There is always undoubtedly a reason for analysing a literary work of art, and the underlying factor for my special interest in analysing Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* is that it is one of those ill-fated novels which undeservedly received hostile criticism just because the ideas in the novel were found revolutionary and obscene when compared to the values of the American society of the period it was written, i.e., the late 19th century. As a result of these so-called bad qualities attributed to the novel, it had been forgotten for over fifty years. The main objective of this work is to put the novel in the place it rightfully deserves.

Margaret Culley contributed greatly to the true evaluation of this novel by compiling all the reviews written on Kate Chopin's masterpiece. It is possible to notice by perusing these critical remarks that not even one critic turned his attention onto the language of the book. Culley makes a generalization about the attitude of the critics of the sixties that they were mostly concerned with Chopin's being a realist or a romantic. Critics of the seventies she wrote, tended to evaluate the novel from psychological and ideological viewpoints. In the twenties, however, the book should be analysed from the viewpoint

of a new trend in criticism, and that is structuralism. The purpose of my application of this method to *The Awakening* is not to get different meanings but to see the conditions of meaning in the structure of the novel, and to analyse the novel through its intrinsic qualities.

INTRODUCTION

A critic evaluates and comments on a novel from the viewpoint of his own critical approach. Until the 20th century critics concentrated mostly on literary history and biography. In other words, they tended to identify the ideas of an author by reading his works, and this was what criticism meant to these critics. In the first decade of the 20th century Ferdinand de Saussure—a Swiss linguist—introduced a new approach to language. While earlier linguists similar to the earlier critics were interested in the history and characteristics of language, Saussure was concerned with the structures of languages. Being influenced by Saussure some critics applied his ideas to literature. Thus, a new viewpoint in literary analysis was introduced to criticism. The rise of structuralism was not readily welcomed by critics but greeted with hostility at first. The reason for this hostility is quite apparent: the arrival of structuralism entailed a new way of understanding literature—a way entirely different from the traditional trend. These critics come face to face with a kind of analysis that is satisfied neither by a pure description of the work nor by its interpretation in relation to its author but by the literary discourse, since structuralists strongly believe literature is

first of all language and secondly the text itself. The combination of phonemes and morphemes provides the reader with units of meaning, i.e., the sentences, and the link between the sentences combined develop the form of a text. In this form, the reader can usually find himself or he can picture himself as a part of this picture. That's why structuralists have a tendency to analyse novels. As novels are regarded as representations of the world itself, structural analysis aims at studying how language works as a complex mediator between the author and the reader, and how the reader creates meaning.

INTELLIGIBILITY OF THE NOVEL.

In some books about structuralism intelligibility of the novel is explained under different headings. To illustrate, Culler regards it as "Lisibilité" and "illisibilité", whereas Barthes deems it "readerly/writerly". In this paper, the latter is going to be adopted. When the readerly and the writerly approaches are treated as tools for evaluating texts, the readerly one is defined as a product which the reader consumes without any interpretation; the writerly, on the other hand, demands interpretation. The readerly provides the reader with nothing but a stable meaning with the help of clichéd signifiers. Writerly, however, enables the reader to get the meanings of signifiers from various perspectives. Besides, there is wholeness and perfect unity in a readerly text. To understand the difference between readerly and writerly texts, the descriptions of two characters, i.e., Adele Ratignolle and Edna Pontellier will be helpful. The following passage proves Mrs. Ratignolle's description to be a readerly one:

"Many of them were delicious in the roles; one of them was the embodiment of every womanly grace and charm. If her husband did not adore her, he was a brute."

deserving of death by slow torture. Her name was Adele Ratignolle. There were no words to describe her save the old ones that have served so often to picture the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams. There was nothing subtle or hidden about her charms; her beauty was all there, flaming and apparent; the spun-gold hair that comb nor confining pin could restraining the blue eyes that were like nothing but sapphires; two lips that pouted, that were so red one could only think of cherries or some other delicious crimson fruit in looking at them. She was growing a little stout, but it did not seem to detract an iota from the grace of every step, pose, gesture. One would not have wanted her white neck a mite less full or her beautiful arms more slender. Never were hands more exquisite than hers, and it was a joy to look at them when she threaded her needle or adjusted her gold thimble to her taper middle finger as she sewed away on the little night-drawers or fashioned a bodice or a bib.¹

The message conveyed in this description is quite easy and simple to get since nothing is left under shadow but laid clearly. So, the reader takes it for granted that Mrs. Ratignolle is an ideal woman of great beauty. After giving a physical description of Mrs. Ratignolle the writer goes on telling her relations with her children:

"...she was busily engaged in sewing upon a diminutive pair of night-drawers. She had brought the pattern of the drawers for Mrs. Pontellier to cut out - a marvel of construction, fashioned to enclose a baby's body so effectually that only two small eyes might look out from the garment, like an Eskimo's. They were designed for winter wear, when

treacherous drafts came down chimney
and insidious currents of deadly cold
found their way through key-holes."²

Although it is summer, she occupies herself with sewing protective winter garments for her children to wear in winter. By this act of hers, she proves herself to be an affectionate and thoughtful mother. When this quality of hers is added to her unique beauty, the reader feels that the wholeness is complete.

In contrast to Mrs. Ratignolle, Edna Pontellier resembles a writerly text. After the exaggerated description of Mrs. Ratignolle the writer's attitude towards Edna Pontellier is quite striking:

"Mrs. Pontellier's eyes were quick and bright; they were a yellowish brown, about the color of her hair. She had a way of turning them swiftly upon an object and holding them there as if lost in some inward maze of contemplation or thought. Her eyebrows were a shade darker than her hair. They were thick and almost horizontal, emphasizing the depth of her eyes. She was rather handsome than beautiful. Her face was captivating by reason of a certain frankness of expression and a contradictory subtle play of features. Her manner was ~~enfouillée~~.³

Unlike Mrs. Ratignolle, there is no beauty, no unity and no harmony in Mrs. Pontellier. She is rather a fragmented figure that is "lost" in her own deep thoughts. Mrs. Pontellier is also imperfect as far as her duties as a wife and as a mother are concerned. Mr. Pontellier accuses his wife of neglecting their children:

"He reproached his wife with her inattention, her habitual neglect of the children. If it was not a mother's place to look after children, whose on earth was it?"⁴

Mrs. Pontellier's attitude towards winter garments for her children also illustrates her indifference. Unlike Mrs. Ratignolle, she does not want to spend her beautiful summer days preparing winter garments for her children.

"Mrs. Fontellier's mind was quite at rest concerning the present material needs of her children, and she could not see the use of anticipating and making winter night garments the subject of her summer meditations."⁵

Kate Chopin explicitly discloses the contrast between unity and fragmentation through her characters who are opposite to each other, and this resembles readerly/writerly in opposition.

METAPHOR and METONYMY

Linguistic theorists have attached importance to metaphor in recent years. Some of these theorists, such as Paul de Man regards metaphors as deviations from the original language. Raman Selden in his book called *The Theory of Criticism* states De Man's viewpoint as follows:

"He takes the view that "figures of speech (tropes) pervade language, exerting a force which destabilizes logic and grammar. A trope or figure allows a writer to say one thing but mean something else, by substituting one meaning for another (metaphor) . . . The disruptive effects of figural discourse create momentary difficulties and breaks in communication."⁶

Some of the structuralists, on the other hand, have been decidedly against this theory. They protest this idea claiming that metaphor enriches the meaning by enabling the reader to bring unconnected things together since they take metaphors as a link between the signifiers and the human experience and not take them just as figurative indicators. Here is a magnificent example of a metaphor taken from *The Awakening*:

"Meanwhile Robert, addressing Mrs. Pontellier, continued to tell of his one time hopeless passion for Madame Ratignolle; of sleepless nights, of consuming flames till the very sea sizzled when he took his daily plunge."⁷

The metaphor of "sizzled" sea should not be taken just as a figurative indication of Robert's lust for Mrs. Ratignolle but as a metaphorical operator which makes Robert's lust an instance of the human aspirations. This instance acts as a link between Edna's suicide as well. Since a fire can be put out by water, Edna drowns herself to get rid of the fire in hermetaphorically her passion for Robert. As it can be understood from the example, the naturalism of texts is made possible by passing one meaning to another. Culler provides a rhetorical analysis of metaphor in the following procedure for passing one meaning to another giving the "oak" examples:

"member ----> class ----> member
oak ----> tall things ----> any tall person
or object
strong things ----> any strong
person or
object

whole ----> part ----> whole
oak ----> branches ----> anything with branches
roots ----> anything with roots"⁸

Moreover, Culler writes that "the move from member to class to member is the most common procedure for interpreting metaphors."⁹ When this analysis is applied to the metaphor "the ocean of waving grass"¹⁰, the following procedure will be followed:

1

ocean ---->vast things---->any vast thing
(grass)
waves ---->any wavy thing

Through the word "ocean" the reader passes onto another level of understanding, i.e., he realizes how large the area covered by grass is. Also, making the connection between "ocean" and "waves" he visualizes grass doing the movement of waves in an ocean.

Metonymy, on the other hand, enables the reader to pass from one meaning in a chain to another. Chopin adopts a metonymic title for her book. The phoneme "awakening" substitutes for both Edna's awakening to her individuality and to sexuality. The following epiphany sets a good example for Edna's becoming aware of her own individual self:

"In short, Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her."¹¹

She suddenly realizes that she has lived for her husband and children but not for herself until then. This scene illustrates her awakening to her identity. Later on in the novel, she refuses to be a servant for her children by these words of hers:

"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."¹²

She starts living for her own pleasure; she takes up painting to earn her living and to live freely. Thus, the title implies her being conscious of her individual self, on one hand. Her falling in love with Robert can also be explained from this perspective as she does not love her husband, and as she has the right to share her life with the man she loves. The title also substitutes for Edna's sexual awakening:

"A subtle current of desire passed through her body, weakening her hold upon the brushes and making her eyes burn."¹³

Although it is hard to believe that a woman who has been married for several years and has given birth to children is not sexually "awake", the "willing suspension of disbelief" causes the reader to believe that Edna has never felt the hotness spreading in her ~~halls~~ before Robert. From the moment that she is "awake" this animal instinct leads her to an immoral relationship with Arobin ~~as well~~. Arobin's way of speaking pleases her since he talks "swelling to the animalism that stirred impatiently within her."¹⁴ She likes his kiss as well:

"...she clasped his head, holding his lips to hers."

It was the first kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded. It was a flaming torch that kindled desire."¹⁵

Samuel Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* states

Therefore, her "awakening" is to sexuality along with to individuality. The above examples for metaphor and metonymy prove Dr. Man's theory to be inaccurate, since they neither spoil the language of the book nor cause "breaks in communication". On the contrary, they add to the value of the book as a work of art.

COHERENCE

Texts must have a certain structure which depends on factors that are described in terms of cohesion, or the ties and connection which exist within texts. Analysis of these cohesive links within a text gives the reader some insight into how writers express what they want to convey in a form, and it also enables the reader to question whether a work of art is well-written or not. However, cohesion, by itself, would not be enough to enable the reader to make sense of what he reads. That is to say, a text comprising a lot of connections between the sentences may be difficult to interpret as well. There must be another factor which helps the reader to construct the meaning. This is coherence. Coherence is present not in the text but in the reader. It is the reader who makes sense of what he reads and who achieves this by filling in the gaps in the text. To do this, some hints or foreshadowing elements should lead him to arrive at the right interpretation, otherwise the text would be considered incoherent just as in the case of *The Awakening*. To illustrate, the reader is not prepared for the passionate love between Robert and Edna through the first ten chapters. Instead, the reader expects a love relation between Robert and

Mme Ratignolle since he admits his "hopeless passion for M.Ratignolle."¹⁶ He prepares a cup of bouillion for her when he thinks she looks tired and likens himself to an "adoring dog"¹⁷ under her feet. Besides, Edna is rather cold towards Robert in the beginning. She pushes Robert's head away when he rests his head on her arms.

"She could not but believe it to be thoughtlessness on his part, yet that was no reason she should submit to it. She did not remonstrate, except again to repulse him quietly but firmly."¹⁸

It is quite clear that she does not like his touch. Moreover, Robert does not believe that Edna will fall in love with him: "You made one mistake Adele", he said with a light smile; "there is no earthly possibility of Mrs. Pontellier ever taking me seriously."¹⁹ The first hint comes at chapter nine: "No multitude of words could have been more significant than those moments of silence, or more pregnant with the first-felt throbings of desire."²⁰ In addition to the unexpected love affair, Robert's escape is also incoherent. His sudden disappearance and return blemish the coherence and devalue Edna's love. As she begins to be aware of her feelings for Robert, he leaves for Mexico. Although Edna suffers a lot as a result of her lust for Robert, she does not avoid Arabin's caresses. She even gives him a passionate kiss. After Robert's return, she admits her love to Robert but this time Robert leaves her forever. George M. Spangler finds the ending inconsistent, too. He

acknowledges that

"...Edna takes a boat to the resort...she arranges with the caretaker for a room and for dinner in the evening, and then, deciding to go swimming, borrows some towels. There is no hint that suicide is her intention."²¹

He adds that throughout the novel Edna is presented as a tower of strength but in the last chapter the reader is asked to believe in an Edna who admits her defeat. A woman who rejects the social customs and traditions, who leaves her husband and children for the sake of her freedom and who has just awakened into a new world cannot feel too defeated by the loss of a lover to choose death. The long and the short of it, the gap and the discrepancy between the events in the novel are not easy to be filled in by the reader, so to consider the novel coherent is hardly possible.

NARRATIVE CONTRACTS

Structuralists regard the idea that narrative cannot reflect the real world with favour, and that readers should not try to visualize a world after reading a text as this can be misleading. Realistic details in a work can at times be unreferential, so if the reader takes these details as if they were real, there will be gaps and contradiction in the world he visualizes. This is because the author may adoringly describe something in a paragraph and disclose his hatred for that same thing in the text. To illustrate, early in the novel Edna recalls an incident from her childhood and interprets it as follows:

"...and I was running away from prayers, from the Presbyterian service, read in a spirit of gloom by my father that chills me yet to think of."²²

While she says that she was running away from the gloomy Presbyterianism of her father, she goes on to say that her walk on that morning was "idly, aimlessly, unthinking and unguided."²³ The first interpretation of Edna seems to have a referential function but the second one introduces a contradiction. This contrast draws attention from the reference to the writing itself.

Unlike realists who claim the basic aim of a narrative is to provide the reader with "slices of life" so as to enable them to naturalize the texts, structuralists favour neither imitation nor representation. To Barthes, the objective of narrative is something different:

"The function of narrative is not to "represent", it is to constitute a spectacle still very enigmatic for us but in any case not of a mimetic order."²⁴

Structuralists also believe that the realistic details give things vividity but they are not the real piece of information. To Barthes, for example, these slices of life do not mean anything:

" "What takes place" in a narrative is "from the referential (reality) point of view, literally nothing; "what happens" is language alone, the adventure of language, the unceasing celebration of its coming."²⁵

In contrast to realists, structuralists do not agree with the viewpoint that realistic details contribute to naturalization of texts. They acknowledge that the pleasure the reader gets from a narrative is not as a result of the text's imitative quality but of the meaning itself.

SHOWING and TELLING

Indirect forms of narration, i.e., showing has been popular after Flaubert. Critics have started believing that the novel in which the actions are shown by dialogical discourse is superior to the novels that are simply told by their authors. This is because in the case of telling the reader sees the events through authors' eyes, and this has a lesser effect on the reader than the discourse has. Besides, however impersonal the author may try to be, his reader will inevitably feel that the novel is not objective when it is told, so it is better for the reader to read the dialogues and arrive at his own conclusions. The following discourse is taken from The Awakening:

" "It is growing late; what time do you have to be home?" "Time doesn't concern me. Your question seems a little rude. Play the Impromptu." "But you have told me nothing of yourself. What are you doing?" "Painting!" laughed Edna. " I am becoming an artist. Think of it!" "Ah! an artist! You have pretensions, Madame." "Why pretensions? Do you think I could not become an artist?"

"I do not know you well enough to say. I do not know your talent or your temperament. To be an artist includes much; one must possess many gifts—absolute gifts—which have not been acquired by one's own effort. And, moreover, to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul."

"What do you mean by the courageous soul?" "Courageous, ma foi! The brave soul. The soul that dares and defies." "Show me the letter and play for me the Impromptu. You see that I have persistence." 26

This dialogue may serve as a good example for how the illocutionary and the perlocutionary acts will be helpful when the reader interprets the dialogue. To illustrate, from the point of illocutionary acts Edna's words "Show me the letter and play for me the Impromptu" have the quality of an order. As far as the perlocutionary act is concerned, she is forcing Mademoiselle Reisz to show Robert's letter to her. Edna also makes Mademoiselle Reisz play the piano although she is not eager since it grows dark. Mademoiselle says "It is growing late; what time do you have to be home?" This utterance has the form associated with a question. If the question "What time do you have to be home?" is asked to someone, he will certainly say the time. However, if you ask this question to one of your guests, you will probably be understood to have made a request. You are requesting, indirectly, that the person leave your house. Another example of an indirect speech act is these words of Mademoiselle Reisz: "You have pretensions, Madame." By this locutionary act she means she does not believe that Edna is going to be an artist since she thinks Edna lacks the "courageous soul." "And, moreover, to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul." Mademoiselle Reisz implies that Edna is not courageous enough and indirectly states that she cannot be successful in painting. Since the whole novel is not in dialogical form there

~~are some~~ passages told by the author as well:

"Edna cried a little that night after Arabin left her. It was only one phase of the multitudinous emotions which had assailed her. There was with her an overwhelming feeling of irresponsibility. There was the shock of the unexpected and the unaccustomed. There was her husband's reproach looking at her from the external things around her which he had provided for her external existence. There was Robert's reproach making itself felt by a quicker, fiercer, more overpowering love, which had awokened within her toward him. Above all, there was understanding. She felt as if a mist had been lifted from her eyes, enabling her to look upon and comprehend the significance of life, that monster made up of beauty and brutality. But among the conflicting sensations which assailed her, there was neither shame nor remorse. There was a dull pang of regret because it was not the kiss of love which had inflamed her, because it was not love which had held this cup of life to her lips."²⁷

In spite of the purity of language and clarity in describing Edna's feelings this passage does not affect the reader as strongly as Edna's own words revealing her feelings. After the vivid and attractive dialogues, the narrative parts seem to be rather dull and monotonous. In addition, after reading these parts, the reader may not be sure about whether the description is objective or not, or whether he can rely on the author or not.

THE NARRATOR

Structuralists believe that readers should not hear the voice of the author in the texts since an intrusive author brings the "person" to the reader's attention while the absence of the author's voice brings the "language." However, there should be a speaker in a text who acts as a go-between between the text and the reader. This person is the narrator. He helps the reader to visualize the scenes, understand the characters and form a contact with the text. To illustrate, the narrator in The Awakening describes a hall in the way which indicates what the reader might have observed had he been present:

"Every light in the hall was ablaze; every lamp turned as high as it could be without smoking the chimney or threatening explosion. The lamps were fixed at intervals against the wall, encircling the whole room. Some one had gathered orange and lemon branches and with these fashioned graceful festoons between. The dark green of the branches stood out and glistened against the white muslin curtains which draped the windows, and which puffed, floated, and flapped at the capricious will of a stiff breeze that swept up from the Gulf."²³

Omniscient narrators are likened to God as they are omnipresent and all knowing. They can tell the characters' feelings and thoughts so as to enable the reader to have a deep understanding of the characters. In *The Awakening*, for example, the narrator frequently discloses Edna's feelings:

"Edna began to feel like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing into her soul. The physical need for sleep began to overtake her; the exuberance which had sustained and exalted her spirit left her helpless and yielding to the conditions which crowded her in."²⁹

"For the first time she recognized anew the symptoms of infatuation which she felt incipiently as a child, as a girl in her earliest teens, and later as a woman.... The past was nothing to her; it offered no lesson which she was willing to heed. The future was a mystery which she never attempted to penetrate. The present alone was significant; it was hers, to torture her as it was doing then with the biting conviction that she had lost that which she had held, that she had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded."³⁰

There are some tricks that the narrators often utilize to make the reader feel familiar with the events in the text. One of these tricks is relative clauses: "Edna began to feel like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing into her soul."³¹

The demonstrative "one" followed by a relative clause implies that

the reader knows them already and recognize the person the narrator speaks about.

To structuralists, it is not easy to differentiate the first person narrative from the third person narrative since the first person narrative cannot be recognized solely by the presence of "you, we us" and "our". This is to say that a text which seems to be written in the third person narrative can in fact be in the first person. To Benveniste, the solution of this problem is quite easy. If the reader, he says, can replace "he" by "I", and if no other alterations are necessary, the reader is dealing with personal narration.³² However, to consider The Awakening written in the first person narrative is hardly possible: "she carried them with her when a little later she dressed and left the house,"³³ can be rewritten as "I carried them with me when a little later I dressed and left the house" is possible; whereas "She looked handsome and distinguished in her street gown" cannot be altered as "I looked handsome and distinguished in my street gown." This is only a minor example taken from the book; however, it may be applied to the whole text. Thus, if the reader tries to rewrite the novel only changing the subjects, he will frequently come across these incongruities, so The Awakening should definitely stay in the third person narrative.

CODES

There is not a structuralist method which can enable the reader to discover the structure of texts. However, isolating the codes can be helpful in doing this. Roland Barthes identifies five codes in order to examine the organization of lexies that are the smallest units of reading.³⁴ These lexies may only be a word or they may also be a series of sentences. Studying the level of lexies is important as it reflects the level of the reader's contact with the text. With the help of these codes the reader can easily identify elements, and group them under particular functions. Boveniste distinguishes two types of units: distributional and integrative.³⁵ Distributional elements can be defined by their relationship to other elements of the same kind which appear earlier or later in the text. Integrative, on the other hand, can be meaningful at a higher level of integration. To illustrate, in the first chapter of the novel the lexie "Zampa"³⁶ operates as a distributional unit since being a romantic opera about the death of a lover in the sea "Zampa" is related to Edna's drowning herself. "Pigeon house"³⁷ serves as a good example for integrative. The reader making a connection between pigeons and freedom can arrive at the conclusion that Edna will be free if she moves to this pigeon-house.

to Barthes, these five codes produce a kind of "network". He thinks the reader should not try to structure each code or the five codes among themselves but to create a "structuration". He adds "if the text is subject to some form, this form is not unitary, architectonic, finite; it is the fragment, the shards, the broken or obliterated network—all the movements and inflections of a vast "dissolve", which permits both overlapping and loss of messages."³⁸ Writing is formed by the convergence of the five "the Voice of Empirics (the proairetisms), the Voice of the (the semes), the Voice of Science (the cultural codes), the of Truth (the hermeneutisms), the Voice of Symbol."³⁹ Proairetic, semic and symbolic codes are going to be explained under the subheadings of plot, symbol and character. So just the cultural code and the hermeneutic code will be given a subheading.

THE CULTURAL CODE

This code is called referential code as it is constituted by the cultural background to which the text refers. D.H.Lawrence in his "Note" to his Rhyming Poemscites:

"Even the best poetry, when it is at all personal, needs the penumbra of its own time and place and circumstances to make it full and whole..."⁴⁰

In order to grasp The Awakening the reader should have a background knowledge about the Creoles and their way of life. Creoles are the descendants of French born in Louisiana. They live on the north side of the Canal Street, which divides New Orleans into two cities. The south side is the home of American population. Since the Creole are conservative they don't mix with the American. They refuse to become Americanized and try to preserve their own language, i.e., French, and culture. Creole women are well known for their beauty and grace. They are artistic by nature; they paint, play and sing. They are also known to be the best wives in the world since they are loving, loyal and true. They usually have large families. They welcome their babies and rear them with great care especially their

~~daughters~~. These little girls are brought up as if they were ~~princesses~~. Their beauty must be preserved, their glossy hair, white teeth, hands and feet be cared for. They must be taught how to play, sing and dance as well. Their religion, too, must not be neglected. At the age of seventeen these girls are introduced to the society, and a short time later they find a suitor and get engaged to be married. They make good house keepers as they are economical and industrious. They never speak of their poverty or of the shortcomings of their husbands. They are skilled and clever but not intellectual. Women's rights, for them, are the right to love and be loved and to bring up children. Edna is a Kentuckian and different from the Creole in every respect. After Edna has disclosed her feelings to Madame Ratignolle, she wants Robert to leave Edna alone. She puts forward that:

"She is not one of us; she is not like us. She might make the unfortunate blunder of taking you seriously." 41

Creole women are wonderful wives they will never be unfaithful to their husbands. Noticing that Edna differs from Creoles in her way of thinking, Madame Ratignolle thinks Edna might fall in love with Robert. A Kentuckian and a Creole are also different in terms of prudery:

"A book had gone the rounds of the pension. When it came her turn to read it, she did so with profound astonishment. She felt moved to read the book in secret and solitude, though

none of the others had done so to hide it from view at the sound of approaching footsteps. It was openly criticised and freely discussed at table. Mrs. Pontellier gave over being astonished, and concluded that wonders would never cease." 42

Edna is not one of them she does not feel comfortable in the society of Creoles. How can a woman who does not feel at home in society of Creoles be close to her Creole husband? Like all white husbands Mr. Pontellier wants to be the pivot of his wife's life. He complains about her inattention:

"He thought it very discouraging that his wife, who was the sole object of his existence, evinced so little interest in things which concerned him and valued so little his conversation." 43

She also differs from the other Creole wives as far as her social duties are concerned. All Creole women entertain beautifully and attach great importance to social duties. They welcome their guests on a certain day of the week, pay them visits in return and exchange cards on special occasions. Edna starts neglecting these duties of her as well. So, she becomes exposed to her husband's criticism when she goes out on her reception day:

" " Why, my dear, I should think you'd understand by this time that people don't do such things; we've got to observe less conveniences [social conventions] if we ever expect to get on and keep up with the procession. If you felt that you had

to leave home this afternoon, you should have left some suitable explanation for your absence." 44

— criticises her for not running the house well and not knowing how to treat the cook after a bad dinner. 45

"...but cooks are only human. They need looking after, like any other class of person that you employ. Suppose I didn't look after the clerks in my office, just let them run things in their own way; they'd soon make a nice mess of me and my business." 45

These things may not play an important role in the life of a New Englander but they do in the life of a Creole. So Mr Pontellier and Edna cannot understand each other, and the gap between them is getting wider day by day. Edna is not one of those Creole wives who are satisfied with what they have. On the contrary, she wants more than a husband and children. She wants to have liberty and to do something for her individual self. It is not surprising that a Creole cannot understand Edna as she wants a thing the Creole never knows. In order to understand the unhappy heroine of the book, the reader should therefore have a background knowledge about the Creole husband who believe that to be a happy wife, wealth, a beautiful house, a family and children are enough. The Awakening reflects the characteristics of the age it was written as well. The late nineties is certainly an age that has witnessed great changes in the life, education and labour of women. Although working outside

house does not appeal much to the Southern woman; some of
us have preferred working in order to contribute to the family
budget. As for Edna, she wants to earn her own living, and to do
this she takes up painting. In this respect she reflects the
changes taking place in the lives of women in the nineteenth
century.

THE HERMENEUTIC CODE

code involves a logic of question and answer, enigma and suspense and peripety. Authors introduce some suspense and peripety in their works so as to kindle a desire in their readers to look for clues about the answer of the truth. This desire acts as a structuring force and the reader to look for clues about the answer of the truth. Thus, the reader not only reads to see what happens next or see a question answered or an enigma solved. To illustrate, reader cannot be sure about whether Alvee is in love between and Edna or a careless reader does not even suspect of such a thing until Mariequita asks this question to Robert: "Is she your sweetheart?"⁴⁶ After this question the reader goes on to find an answer to this question but not before the reader admits her love for Robert. Besides, in the following chapters Edna repeats the question "How long will you be going?"⁴⁷ Robert avoids answering this question saying "I don't know."⁴⁸ This is the other way of appealing to the reader's curiosity. Once the reader identifies an enigma or a problem the hermeneutic process begins. First of all, the title "The

"awakening" is enigmatic. As soon as the reader sees this title, he starts asking himself what kind of awakening and whose awakening this is. It is not until the middle of the novel that the reader understands it is Edna's awakening into her individuality. Noticing a problem makes the reader organize the text in relation to the problem and read the rest of the book in the light of this enigma. For example, the following utterances are enigmatic:

"The tears came so fast to Mrs Pontellier's eyes that the damp sleeve of her peignoir no longer served to dry them... Such experiences as the foregoing were not uncommon in her married life."⁴⁹

"An indescribable oppression, which seemed to generate in some unfamiliar part of her consciousness, filled her whole being with a vague anguish."⁵⁰

"She grew fond of her husband, realizing with some unaccountable satisfaction that no trace of passion or excessive and fictitious warmth colored her affection thereby threatening its dissolution."⁵¹

"Tears", "oppression", "anguish", "no trace of passion" are the indications of a problem existing in Edna's marriage. From now on the reader will read the sequences so as to find a satisfactory solution. By raising questions in their reader's mind and delaying the answers, authors create suspense. *The Awakening*, for instance, is full of uncertainty. Just when Edna starts loving Robert he leaves for Mexico. The suspense which the reader might

at such a moment is structurally a desire to know whether separation is to be classified as an end to love or a beginning of love. Kate Chopin does not explain the reasons for Robert's decision about going to Mexico, either. Besides, he does not say how long he will stay in Mexico. After coming across these uncertainties the reader goes on reading in order to find solutions to the questions in his mind. However, these solutions are delayed. Robert does not directly write to Edna; instead, knowing that Mademoiselle will tell Edna, he writes to Mrs. Reisz, where he does not convey anything about his feelings concerning Edna. Without solving this problem Chopin introduces Arabin into Edna's life. She starts going out with Arabin. Suspense continues. Does this new relation mean the end of Edna's love for Robert or will it strengthen her love for Robert? When Robert returns nothing happens. They see each other in Mademoiselle's house, and Robert takes Edna to her house. Robert does not call on her the following three days. Only through the conversation between Robert and Edna does the reader learn that Robert discloses why he has deliberately kept away from Edna:

"'Now you know,'" he said, "'now you know what I have been fighting against since last summer at Grand Isle; what drove me away and drove me back again.'" "Why have you been fighting against it?" she asked. Her face glowed with soft lights. "Why? Because you were not free; you were Leonce Pontellier's wife. I couldn't help loving you if you were ten times his wife...." "Something put into my head that you cared for me; and I lost my senses. I forgot everything but a wild dream of your some way becoming my wife.'" 32

Although Robert discloses the secret of his staying away from Edna, he introduces another uncertainty ~~whether~~^{as to} whether they will get married or not. They admit their love to each other and everything seems to be all right until the arrival of the maid with a message from Madame Ratignolle who wants Edna to go to her. Edna tells Robert:

" "Oh! I have suffered, suffered! Now you are here we shall love each other, my Robert. We shall be everything to each other. Nothing else in the world is of any consequence. I must go to my friends; but you will wait for me? No matter how late; you will wait for me, Robert?" "53

Peripeteia operates after Edna's departure, writing "I love you. Good-bye--because I love you,"⁵⁴ on a piece of paper. Robert does not wait for Edna. Their union changes into separation and happiness into grief. The best solution for Edna is death.

PLOT and PLOT STRUCTURE

Plot can be best explained as the sequences of actions in a logical order. Structuralists pay a special attention to plot since the reader's drawing a plot structure in his mind is directly related to his literary competence. For example, the reader can match a novel and a film that have the same plot. A study of plot cannot be a study of how the sentences are combined. Thus, two texts which have different linguistic structures can have the same plot. Culler states that:

"Plots could be analysed in terms of "successful actions", "unsuccessful actions" and "actions which neither succeed nor fail but maintain the story"; or again, in terms of "actions which destroy equilibrium", "actions which restore equilibrium", "actions which seek to destroy equilibrium", and "actions which seek to restore equilibrium"⁵⁵

He adds that it is almost impossible to find plots to which they do not apply.

In Breines's view, Culler says, most novels have got plots in which an alienated character reintegrates into society or it works just

the other way round 56 as in the case of *The Awakening*. The story *The Awakening* moves from a positive contract to a negative one. Edna who is rich and respected in the society, in a way isolates herself from the society by giving up her reception days. The story reaches a resolution with Edna's suicide. Culler gives Todorov as another example. He cites Todorov isolates three categories, namely name, adjective and verb. Needless to say "name" stands for characters, and they are the subjects of oppositions from the point of view of plot structure. He divides adjectives into three variants of opposition, such as beautiful/ugly, properties like good/bad and conditions, such as male/female and rich/poor. Verbs are divided into three as well: "to modify the situation", "to commit a misdeed of some kind" and "to punish". Culler adds:

"In addition, any preposition will be in one of five modes: the indicative (actions which really took place), the "obligatory" (a codified), collective will which constitutes the law of a society); the optative (what characters would like to have happen), the conditional (if you do x I shall do y) and the predictive (in certain circumstances x will occur)." 57

In his article called "Structural Analysis of Narrative(1969)" Todorov states the plots of several of the tales taken from *Decameron* by Boccaccio. The plot of the first example tale is:

"A monk introduces a young girl into his cell and makes love to her. The abbot detects this misbehaviour and plans to punish him severely. But the monk learns of the abbot's discovery and lays a trap for him by leaving his cell. The abbot goes in and succumbs to the charms of the girl, while the monk tries his turn at watching. At the end when the abbot intends to punish him, the monk points out that he has just committed the same sin. Result: the monk is not punished." (I, 4)"

The plot of the second example tale is:

"Isabetta, a young nun, is with her lover in her cell. Upon discovering this, the other nuns become jealous and go to wake up the abbess and have Isabetta punished. But the abbess was in bed with an abbot; because she has to come out quickly, she puts the under-shorts of the abbot on her head instead of her coif. Isabetta is led into the church; as the abbess begins to lecture her, Isabetta notices the garment on her head. She brings this evidence to everyone's attention and thus escapes punishment (IX, 2)."'

The plot of the third example tale is:

"Peronnella receives her lover while her husband, a poor mason, is absent. But one day he comes home early. Peronnella hides the lover in a cask; when the husband comes in, she tells him that somebody wanted to buy the cask and that this somebody is now in the process of examining it. The husband believes her and is delighted with the sale. The lover pays and leaves with the cask." (VII, 2)"

The plot of the fourth example tale is:

"A married woman meets her lover every night in the family's country house, where she is usually alone. But one night the husband returns from town; the lover has not come yet; he arrives a little later and knocks at the door. The wife asserts that this is a ghost who comes to annoy her every night and must be exorcised." The husband pronounces the formula which the wife has improvised; the lover figures out the situation and leaves, pleased with the ingenuity of his mistress. (VII₃)"

Todorov arrives at the conclusion that all these four tales have something in common, and he illustrates this conclusion of his by the following schematic formulation.

"X violates a law \rightarrow Y must punish X \rightarrow
X tries to avoid being punished \rightarrow
(Y violates a law \rightarrow Y does not punish X)
(Y believes that X is not violating the law)

The sign \rightarrow will indicate a relation of entailment between two actions." 58

Todorov explains this schematic representation as follows:

1. As there is a relation between language and narrative, the minimal schema of the plot can be shown naturally by a clause.
2. X and Y are parts of speech corresponding to proper nouns and they serve as subjects or objects of the clause. Verbs are violate, punish and avoid. The verbs have a semantic

characteristic in common: they denote an action which modifies the proceeding situation. The third part of narrative speech, the adjective will be seen in an analysis of other stories. To illustrate, Ermino is stingy, whereas Guillaume is generous. Guillaume changes Ermino into a generous man. The qualities of the two characters are examples of adjectives.

• "X must punish Y" indicates an action which has not yet taken place but which is present in virtual state.

• In "Y believes that X is not violating the law" the verb "believe" differs from the others. It is not a different action but a different perception of the same action.

• There is a causal relation.

These clauses form a sequence which is perceived by the reader as a finished story. This completion is caused by a modified repetition of the initial clause. To illustrate, punishment is repeated in the example schema.⁵⁹

In the light of Todorov's example, the plot of The Awakening is like this: Edna who was in love with dream heroes as a child marries Leonce Pontellier as a sort of reaction from a visionary passion for a tragedian. She acquires the habit of liking her husband in time. Edna meets Robert Lebrun at a romantic summer resort. Running away from his responsibilities as he was a coward Robert disappoints her. After Robert's departure she starts going out with Alcee Arobin who is well known for being a vagabond. Meanwhile, she does not give up loving Robert and waits for his coming back from Mexico. When he returns Edna discloses her love to Robert, and Robert admits his love, too. However, Robert leaves

her for the second time leaving a message. As she cannot endure this separation she swims out to her death.

From this plot a schematic representation similar to Todorov's can be formed:

X loves Y \rightarrow Y leaves X \rightarrow X loves Z
Y leaves X forever \rightarrow X commits suicide
Y believes that they cannot be together.

This schema is a clause indicating a causal relation. X stands for Edna, Y for Robert and Z for Arobin. Verbs are love, leave and commit suicide. Adjectives are present in the personalities of the characters; Edna who is intimidated first proves herself to be courageous enough to commit suicide, and Robert who seems to be bold as he flirts with married women turns out to be a coward. Death provides the completion of the story. Since the goal of this analysis is not to teach anything about the stories in question, the reader should aim at having an understanding of literature or of plot. To reach the plot summaries a great many things are excluded. To illustrate, in the plot summary of The Awakening Edna's attitude towards her children or her friendship with Madame Ratignolle is not mentioned. The reason for this exclusion is that they have no consequences. Proairetic code operates here. To illustrate, The Awakening opens up with "a green and yellow parrot". When the reader reads the story for the first time he does not know what role to assign to this parrot, but when in the next few sentences no further mention is made of this parrot, he decides that it is not itself an element of the plot. Thus, proairetic sequences are gained by reading and also from human experience.

THEME and SYMBOL

These is the name given to the forms of unity which the reader gets from the text. So, it is not the result of a specific set of elements. That's why structuralists neither attach importance to theme by itself nor treat it as a separate unit of investigation. Story enables the reader to make an order of sequences. This structure brings into the text a kind of intelligibility. To understand the theme of a text is to be able to follow the story in a successful way, which does not mean to predict the end of the story but to have a sense of rightness. As discussed in the earlier parts of this work the ending of *The Awakening* is incongruous. Chopin's biographer Daniel Rankin finds the novel "horrid in theme", says Kenneth Eble in his article called "A Forgotten Novel".⁶⁰ However, there is only one incident relating to death in the novel. One night discovering that she can swim Edna swims out alone. Chopin describes Edna's feelings after Edna's encounter with death:

"A quick vision of death snote her soul, and for a second of time appalled and enfeebled her senses."⁶¹

on, Edna lets Robert know that " . . . it [the encounter with him] isn't unpleasant." 62 However, this incident is not enough to support the theme of the novel as death. It can only be an item since escape is through death. Jules Chametzky opens his article called "Edna and the 'Woman Question'" with the following paragraph, and thus sums up the novel thematically:

"From the opening images of a parrot in its cage and the marriage ring on the woman's finger, to the final images that flash before the drowning heroine—clanging spurs of a cavalry officer and "the hum of bees," and the musky odor of pinks"—the struggle is for the woman to free herself from being an object or possession defined in her functions, or owned, by others. Despite her middle-class advantages—money and the freedom to pursue a talent—Edna Pontellier, the heroine, is finally unable to overcome by herself the strength of the social and religious conventions and the biological mystique that entrap her." 63

There is a close relation between thematic and symbolic reading. Symbolic code operates when there are not any causal connections in a text. Although causal connection is better to make the novel understandable it sometimes stays insufficient to emphasize the importance of an object. Enabling the reader to establish a relation between two different things, such as the weather and the characters' mood, a symbolic code achieves what causal relation cannot, since there is no causal connection between the weather and mood. To illustrate, to establish a relation between birds and Edna's psychological condition is possible

In The Awakening, when Edna listens to the piece which she calls "solitude," she imagines a naked man "standing beside a desolate rock on the seashore." This man's "attitude was one of hopeless resignation as he looked toward a distant bird winging its flight away from him."⁶⁴ Birds are generally associated with freedom. She wants to fly, symbolically to escape from her present situation. Moreover, Chopin mentions a bird in the conclusion of the book: "A bird with a broken wing was beating the air above me, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down from the water."⁶⁵ This bird with one of its wings broken symbolizes Edna's defeated self, and its falling to the water can be associated with Edna's drowning.

Symbolic code operates through opposition in *The Awakening*. The opposition between Edna and Madame Ratignolle is described in the readerly/writerly part of this work. Madame Ratignolle represents mothers. Besides, with her happy marriage she symbolizes the harmony of marital union. Unlike Madame Ratignolle, Edna is selfish and she is in a state^{of} discord. The second opposition is between New Orleans and Grand Isle. New Orleans symbolizes the social conventions and compulsions which dominate the individual. The sea, on the other hand, symbolizes romanticism and letting one's self go. The last but not the least opposition is between Edna and the couple and the lady in black who are frequently seen in the novel. Donald A. Ringe discloses this contrast effectively in his following words:

"But the two lovers are indeed so lost in each other as to be almost

completely oblivious to what is going on around them." There is surely no self-assertion here. Nor does there seem to be any in the lady in black who, in praying to her God, is surrendering herself to the Deity. Both the couple and the lady in black represent a strong contrast to Edna, who never really achieves the loss of self in love for another, and who is never portrayed as submitting herself to worship God in communion with others.⁶⁶

Structuralists are interested in the interpretation of an opposition rather than the opposition itself. They set up a relation between the interpretation and meaning. Meanings are mapped through moving from the oppositions to a basic meaning. Culler states Barthes's opinion about this basic meaning:

"the source of this power—that towards which symbolic interpretation moves—is the human body;" the symbolic field is occupied by a single object, from which it derives its unity (and from which we derive the ability to name...). This object is the human body."⁶⁷

Though symbolic interpretation does not always move towards the human body, it is true so far as *The Awakening* is concerned since the novel can be considered as erotic. To illustrate, first of all, after being kissed by Arabin Edna thinks "It was the first torch that kindled desire."⁶⁸ Secondly, the following passage has a sensuous quality:

"His hand had strayed to her beautiful shoulders, and he could feel the

response of her flesh to his touch. He seated himself beside her and kissed her lightly upon the shoulder.
"I thought you were going away", she said, in an uneven voice... "He did not answer, except to continue to caress her. He did not say good night until she had become supple to his gentle, seductive entreaties."⁶⁹

Mostly, in the last chapter of the book she takes off all her clothes:

"...for the first time in her life she stood naked in the open air, at the mercy of the sun, the breeze that beat upon her, and the waves that invited her. How strange and awful it seemed to stand naked under the sky! how delicious! ...The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace."⁷⁰

These kisses and her nakedness are the indications of her libido. Moreover, Edna is always hungry in the novel: she wakes up hungry at Madame Antoine's place ⁷¹, she is hungry again just after she dined with Mrs. Highcamp ⁷² even when she goes to death she is hungry: "What time will you have dinner?" asked Edna. "I'm very hungry; but don't get anything extra."⁷³ Her being hungry all the time symbolizes her unsatiated sexual needs. The reader in a way naturalizes the text by relating symbols to the human body, and this in turn provides the reader with the idea of what the text is about.

CHARACTER

Although character is one of the major aspects of the novel, structuralism pays little attention to character since structuralism is against individuality. That is to say, structuralists claim the conventional models of characters, who can be easily distinguished from others by their names and personalities to be myths. In other words, structuralism does not approve the notion of character in the 19th century. However, modern novel has introduced a new notion of character. The characters of the 20th century are "faceless" protagonists as they are anonymous.

Structuralists prefer defining the character as a "participant" to defining it as a "being", and they attempt to explain the organization in which characters contribute to the plot. Culler discloses seven types of characters which Propp isolates in the "folktales": the villain, the helper, the donor (provider or magical agent), the sought-for person and her father, the dispatcher (who sends the hero forth on his adventures), the hero and the false hero.⁷⁴ Based on Propp's models Greimas forms his own models:

"destinateur → objet → destinataire
adjuant → sujet <→ opposant"⁷⁵

This model focuses on the object which is desired by the subject. The object is between the destinataire [sender] and destinataire [receiver]. The subject has his adjointant [helper] and opponent [opponent]. The diagram is as follows with Propp's roles:

"Dispatcher → Sought-for-person → Hero
Donor and helper → Hero → Villain
and False Hero "76

Greimas's model has got some shortcomings. For example, Propp has not got a receiver. Greimas argues that the hero in the folktale is both subject and receiver. However, there is again a contradiction here since the dispatcher is the sender, and he does not give anything to the hero as this is the role of the helper. Thus, Greimas's model does not take the reader far in practice. If the reader, for example, applies Greimas's hypothesis to *The Awakening*, he will have some difficulties: Subject = Edna, Object = love and freedom, Sender = her awakening, Receiver = Edna, Helper = Arabin, Mademoiselle Reisz and Robert, Opponent = her children, Robert, and Madame Ratignolle. Here the difficulty in deciding whether Robert is a helper or an opponent sets a problem. An alternative to Greimas's model is that of Northrop Frye's categories which seem to be better than Greimas's. Unlike Greimas, Frye believes that each character may not necessarily fit one of these categories, and that they only guide the creation of character. Barthes, on the other hand, believes that during reading the reader picks up various details, combines them and interprets them so as to form characters. This is the operation of semic code. In *The Awakening*, almost every detail conveys something.

about Edna and her personality. Besides, other characters appear only in their relation to Edna. Thus, the pivot of the novel is Edna. Lewis Leary has a comment on Chopin's way of utilizing characters:

"To keep focus sharply on Edna Mrs. Chopin needed somewhat to blur the supporting characters, revealing just enough about them to enable a reader to recognize their function."²²

Since structuralism does not favour this notion of characters analysing the novel from a structuralist viewpoint as far as character is concerned will not be a successful criticism.



CONCLUSION

In brief, apart from the character analysis structuralism can be considered a successful approach in studying novels. It aims at enabling the reader to understand how he makes sense of the world by having the novel as a structure. Like all other approaches, structuralism has some limits as well. Since it attempts to focus on the text alone, and since it rejects evaluating the novel under the influence of the external forces, it sometimes does not work adequately. However, as a matter of fact, structuralists do not claim structural criticism to be the best approach but accept it as a way of analysis that provides the reader with a different perspective, i.e., how language orders the world and how language is inadequate to do this. Thus, structuralism is applied to *The Awakening* neither to detract different meanings from those that have been detracted so far from the book nor to prove that the book can be best analysed from structural viewpoint but only to study the novel from a different perspective.

NOTES

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33. Chopin, p. 54.
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54. ibid_n p_n 111_n
55. Culler_n p_n 207_n
56. ibid_n p_n 213_n
57. idem_n
58. Todorov_n p_n 439_n
59. idem_n
60. Chopin_n p_n 166_n
61. ibid_n p_n 229_n
62. ibid_n p_n 30_n
63. ibid_n p_n 200_n
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66. ibid_n p_n 204_n
67. Culler_n p_n 227_n
68. Chopin_n p_n 83_n
69. ibid_n p_n 92_n
70. ibid_n p_n 113_n
71. ibid_n p_n 33_n
72. ibid_n p_n 74_n
73. ibid_n p_n 332_n
74. Culler_n p_n 233_n

75. idem

76. idem

77. Chopin p. 198

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