

Escaping in Kate Chopin's 'The Awakening', 'A Respectable Woman', and 'The Kiss'

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Abstract

This research paper deals with how the protagonists of the 'The Awakening', 'A Respectable Woman' and 'The Kiss' try to escape from the reality in the name of freedom and right. The heroines desire to experience both wealth and liberation at once which seem barely possible. This drags them to commit adultery, to intrigue to taste the sexual liberty and baffle the loved one to enjoy the opulence. They are running away from one scenario to other only to fulfil their hidden desires. Either way, they seem to fail to perform their each responsibility as patriarchy becomes the obstacle to prove them wrong. Their awakening comes only by sacrificing their intimate relationships. Their awareness about the sense of self and sexuality weigh colossally which should be paid by the heroines by surrendering to the patriarchy. The theories of feminism and psychoanalysis are richly used in this paper to justify the reason behind the escaping of the protagonists.

Keywords: Feminism, Freedom, Identity, Sexuality, Patriarchy

Introduction

The collection of the short stories 'The Awakening and the Selected Stories' roams around the evolution of females. This research paper comprises the three short stories, *The Awakening*, *A Respectable Woman*, and *The Kiss*, from this collection. Chopin is regarded as one of the pioneers of feminist writing. "Feminism" did not even exist in its

usual sense when she wrote (Cruea, 2005, p.187). Written during the onset of feminist movement, these stories spell the condescension to patriarchy.

The very first novella ‘The Awakening’ traces Edna’s Journey of Independence in which she has broken the societal restriction and creates her “Individual Self”. To taste the cuisine of liberty, Edna climbs, falls, escapes and at the end surrenders to death. The heroine, Edna Pontellier, of the novella ‘The Awakening’ comes to know about her self-worth when she meets Robert Lebrun in the Grand Isle, Louisiana. She drags herself close to him despite the fact that she is a Creole married woman with two kids. Robert, her summer guide in the Isle, flirts with Edna openly. The twenty-eight year old protagonist realizes for the first time about her sexual freedom from the intimacy of Robert. Thanks to her friend Adele Ratignolle who becomes a medium to introduce Edna with Robert in her summer vacation. Robert plays the role of a guide to let Edna know about her concealed desire for swimming, her long-lost artistic passion and most importantly about her own recognition. Robert initiates first to kindle the fire of affection into the heart of Edna. He easily rejects to join Mr. Pontellier and his business meeting only to accompany Edna in the beach. She does not have emotional connection and reciprocation her with her husband whereas Leonce all the time keeps himself busy in his business which distances him from his wife and the children. Massive indulgence of Leonce in his business gives way to Edna feel lonely since the early days of marriage. This way, she falls in love with Robert, leaves her home to be independent, commits adulterous relationship with Arobin and finally drowns into the sea when Robert betrays her.

The second story ‘A Respectable Woman’ narrates the silent revolution of Mrs Baroda where she comes into her consciousness about her sexual repression once she greets her husband’s friend Mr. Gouvernail. Although she shows that she hates him and does not want him in her home again, she is discretely attracted to him. She feels the urge of

emotional and sexual passion only after the short visit of Mr. Gouvernail in their summer plantation. Only to protect her image as a respectable wife and a social member in the society, she withholds her impassionate love for Gouvernail.

In the third story 'The Kiss', Nathalie is smart and wise enough to choose money instead of her love. Although she is rich by marrying an opulent guy but her demand of sexuality can only be fulfilled by her young and handsome boyfriend. She is still succeeded to fool her husband by sustaining her infidelity with Harvy. She chooses money to enjoy economic richness while yet she cannot leave Harvy.

Statement of the Problem: Why the female protagonists try to escape the reality? How they overcome their problems?

Objective: This research paper will try to find out the real reason behind the escaping of the reality by the major protagonists (Edna, Mrs. Baroda and Nathalie) in the light of feminist theory and patriarchal stereotypes.

Discussion

The Awakening

In French Creole society of New Orleans, centre of upper class people, women cannot go against their husband and their marriage or something like Irigarary says, "woman has not taken a place" (1974, p. 227). They do not have liberality to experience their selfhood, freedom of speech and openness of sexuality in between spouses. Edna has all the facilities of richness and luxurious life but these are not giving her any space of inner freedom and peace. Contrary to Leonce, Robert cannot afford even for a cigar but he is very as simple as common middle class people who can talk for hours with Edna about tree, seas, wind and the surroundings. He is well mixed up with the Edna's kids too. This novella can be studied as "growing out of an existential confrontation between the heroine and some external, repressive force" (Wolff, 449). The detachment with her husband pushes her closer to Robert. Edna falls asleep and she does not even answer properly when Leonce, after returning home at eleven of the night, "talked to her while he undressed, telling her anecdotes and bits of news and gossip that he had gathered

during the day” (Chopin, p. 9). Leonce finds it discouraging because Edna is only the “sole object of his existence” (Chopin, pp. 9) and protecting shield of his image as a well maintained perfect husband and father in his Creole rich society. In this regard Hoefel (2022, p.55) views:

Women became represented as either the perfect Oedipal ‘virgin holy mother’, which is the dream of the Oedipal son, the repentant ‘maternal martyr’, whose sexual pleasure is absolved by the duty of motherhood or the sinning, ‘serpent charmer Eve’, whose surrender to desire gave women the place of ‘phallus charmer’ and absolved men’s incestuous drive.

Only to perturb her sleep, Leonce awakes her to inform that Raoul has fever and rebukes her for her inattention toward child instructing strictly to handle her responsibility as mother. For him, women’s place is always at home nurturing kids and worshipping husbands. When she “began to cry a little, and wiped her eyes on the sleeve of her peignoir” (Chopin, p.10) illuminates her broken soul, suppressed emotions and immured life in patriarchy.

Robert and Edna were deeply indulged in their chatting meanwhile Adel disturbs them. Robert, as a guide, is teaching everything to Edna that allows her to be free. He instructs her about swimming. While swimming in the sea Edna feels like a free fish. Edna exclaims, “I don’t remember whether I was frightened or pleased. I must have been entertained” (Chopin, p.21). However, at moment all of sudden she feels suffocated signalling her impending death. Edna is always self-contained having rare friends. Even her marriage with Monsieur Pontellier is an accident. He pleased her with his absolute devotion that flattered her and she started fantasizing about their similarities which turned out to be a disaster. Hanah Funk (2020, p.3) expresses her opinion regarding this:

Edna Pontellier, best fits the feminist idea of “oppressed woman” finding feminist validation in that at first she occupies roles of wife and mother that have left her

feeling stifled, in an unhappy marriage with Leonce and in love with another man but then breaks free from them.

Hence, Edna is fond of her husband without any passion and affection. Not only this, she, sometimes, treats her children impulsively while at other times, she forgets them. Edna has avoidant attachment with her husband and the kids. She was avoided by her father during her childhood and this becomes the template to behave with others in the similar way in her adulthood.

After returning to New Orleans, she cannot forget Robert. [Mademoiselle Reisz](#) teaches her about music and piano where Edna feels safe sharing her secrets about her infidelity. Kathleen Margaret Lant explains (1984, p.120), “Mademoiselle Reisz is a woman completely alone, devoted only to herself.” Despite the admonish she gets from Reisz for her illegitimate affair, Edna continues to visit her because Mademoiselle uses to deliver Robert’s letters to Edna. In Irigaray’s own words, “the self-caressing she needs if she is not to incur the disappearance of her own pleasure in sexual relations” (1977, p.24). Reisz’s devotion to her art and music inspires Edna to create her own identity and independency. Edna feels solace listening to Reisz playing piano. Edna is young and the development of her new sense of self-determination is somewhere fuelled by Reisz.

Edna’s temptation to read Robert’s letter portrays the kindling emotional and repressed sexual appetite she never experienced from her husband. Reisz advises her to be courageous to live her dream of being artist. Despite focusing on males, Chopin revolves the sole story around Edna and her perspectives. The story is set in the beginning of 20th century which outsets the rise of female theories that deal with the texts purely written by females in their own issues. However, In the 1980s feminist criticism became more eclectic (drawing upon the findings of other criticisms) and switched its focus from exposing male versions of the world to exploring the nature of the female word and outlook, and constructing a new canon of women’s writing by rewriting the history of

literature in such a way that neglected women writers were given new prominence (Barry, 122). Edna is the hallmark of epitomic feminist rebel and the spokesperson of Chopin. She was married to a French Catholic in Louisiana and later on they shifted to New Orleans due to the loss in business. After the death of her husband, Chopin was the head of the family and a sole bread-winner. Therefore, this novella is almost paralleled to Chopin's personal life and she is somewhere trying to convey to her implied readers, through Edna, about the freedom she desired. She may be wanted to free herself from the huge responsibilities of seven children, at young age, and that burden of living as a widow within the twelve years of their marriage. Edna is only twenty eight with two kids when novella begins. Chopin has given that liberty to Edna to wreck the bars of suppression and obstacles to act and enjoy what she feels. Chopin translucently details how Edna is intensely in love with Robert as she blushes like red rose while reading his letter where he has written entirely about Edna. Robert has requested Reisz to play the Edna's favourite music while she is reading the letter. His words again captivate her, drawing away from her reality that melts her heart and she breaks down.

Edna discards all kind of wife and motherly obligations. She utterly stops talking to Leonce; rather she starts defying the orders of her husband. She is escaping her responsibilities because she feels suffocation under Leonce's marital incarceration. Pontellier's family physician, Doctor Mandelet feels Edna's depression and suggests Leonce not to react to her. In the suggestion of the doctor, Leonce goes to New York whereas Edna feels insecure if Leonce abandons her. Welter (1966, p.154-155) notes:

A "fallen woman" was a "fallen angel," unworthy of the celestial company of her sex....The marriage night was the single great event of a woman's life, when she bestowed her greatest treasure upon her husband, and from that time on was completely dependent upon him, an empty vessel, without legal or emotional existence of her own.

Anxiously, Edna “bustled around, looking after his clothing, thinking about heavy underwear She cried when he went away, calling him her dear, good friend” (76-77). Chopin appeals to the “heart of a common housewife that is a married woman who sits alone in her house crying to herself” (Wyatt, 1995, p.491). Edna can no longer want to be the ‘angle of the house.’ She longs to enjoy the liberty whereas she apprehends, at the same time, whether her husband may dump her. She has anxious attachment with Leonce. However, in the absence of Leonce, she recognizes her new self which she had not known before.

She moves to a small house, which her servants call ‘pigeon house’ where the upper classes keep domesticated pigeons for show or sport, leaving behind her kids with her parents. “Edna’s dream of being away from her husband is not a dream of real ownership but a dream of satisfying the repressed desire in her unconsciousness” (Wu, 2010, 284). Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (1994, p.259) states that “Chopin doubtless intended Edna’s rejection of motherhood as a totally self-determining vocation to express her own impatience with women’s internalization of the social restrictions under which they lived.” This is her first move towards abnegating her past incarcerating life. This is her “active protest against intrusion rather than a passive, submissive position” (Mahoney, 1996, p. 613). Edna is defiant to stereotypes and her rebellion toward patriarchy is somewhat bewildering. She frees herself from Leonce just to fall into the arms of Arobin just after declaring her devotion to Robert with Reisz. Arobin’s infatuation and flirting sink Edna into the appetite of seduction. She is getting hysteric and for Irigaray, hysteria is nothing but a woman’s rebellion against the prescribed silence, basic requirements of femininity (Hoefel, 2022, p.37). Her sexual subjugation since long period is aroused now. Furthermore, Grosz opines that, “The hysteric thus attempts to ‘cope’ with the demands and expectations of a male-dominated culture which relies on women’s renunciation of their relations to other women, and of their unmediated relations to their own bodies and pleasures” (1989, p.134). When Alcee kisses Edna’s hand “she felt somewhat like a

woman who in a moment of passion is betrayed into an act of infidelity, and realizes the significance of the act without being wholly awakened from its glamour” (Chopin, p.82).

Another worth mentioning point is that Chopin and Edna are both defiant. Whereas Chopin defies the literary tradition, Edna, her heroine, defies social conventions that she holds to be confining. These conventions stand in her way of becoming herself. They divest her of her identity, and keep her subordinated to her husband who holds her to be his own property (Al- Shalabi, 2015, p.279). Although she is revolting for her independency, she is rather devastating herself into the new world of adultery making herself more unchaste. Arobin kisses her lips that act as a “flaming torch that kindled her desire” (88). While freeing herself from the immured conventional boundaries, she is not rather disciplined too in creating her new world. From joining Arobin in horse race to dipping herself into the guilt after the sympathy sex with Arobin seems “her goals in life are also more aligned with those of a man in the 1960s, revealing another aspect of her feminist identity” (Funk, 2020, p.18). Edna cannot endure separation, therefore, she cries when Arobin leaves her after the sexual intercourse at night. She escapes one and falls into the arms of another in her whirling fantasies which remains no filmier rather becomes acerbic soon.

The awakening of fighting for the freedom and existence of self comes to Edna at the cost of her death. Irigaray says “an acute, painful, paralysing conflicts, in which the question of the role of the superego is unavoidable” (1974, p.88). The climax at the end of the story, where she kills herself, makes her realise another aspect that her awakening of self worth is against the law of patriarchy. Her awareness of “being caged by patriarchal restraints, going through the various stages of self-reinvention, and finally escapes from a society that sought to confine her”(Clark, 335).The title in a way is much ironical because the awakening does not free the protagonist rather it tells the truth that even to think about experiencing the life after awakening is a curse. According to Phyllis Chesler,

in her book *Women and Madness* (1972), "It is clear that for a woman to be healthy she must 'adjust' to and accept the behavioural norms for her sex though these kinds of behaviour are generally regarded as less socially desirable. The ethic of mental health is masculine in our culture" (2005, p.68-69). Edna recalled faintly an ecstasy of pain, the heavy odour of chloroform, a stupor which had deadened sensation, and an awakening to find a little new life to which she had given being, added to the great unnumbered multitude of souls that come and go (Chopin, p.115). Edna's awareness of her individual existence and sexual freedom is achieved in the cost of escaping her husband and children. Plotting the climax at the end Chopin tries to show that how long women run in their race of grabbing the trophy of sovereignty, they lose the championship in the final round.

Edna cannot make Robert understand about their love. She easily lets him to withdraw her as the spare rib of dog's meal. She escapes arguments with Robert and does not try to convince him. She spent several years with Leonce and their marriage was just in name. She was pathetically demure in the past and at the present she leaves Leonce's house without demanding her rights for the financial asset. Hoefel (2022, p.62) posits:

The psychoanalytic feminist theories converge on the premise that woman's 'place' in the phallic Symbolic is directly defined by man's interests in a passive maternal body. As a consequence, her psychological development happens in conformity with the 'phallus', that is, 'the law of the father'. As continuously demonstrated throughout this thesis, within a patriarchal societal structure – with its concrete sexual discourses and symbolic representations - there is very little space and few resources for women to be, what Lacan calls, 'subject of speech'.

Edna lacks power of speech and tries to escape confrontation with Leonce and other family members. Only fleeing does not solve the difficulties. One has to rather tackle it by communication. She fears to face off with dogmatic patriarchy. She leaves Leonce's house and hurls her two kids recklessly to her parents. The romance suddenly ends up as

soon as Edna asks Robert to accept her. Robert's face grows a little white. Robert loved Edna's body not the soul. Edna asks him to wait for her until she returns from hospital. While she was leaving Robert "kissed her with a tender degree of passion which had not before entered into his caress, and strained her to him" (Chopin, p.113). Joyce Dyer (1993, p.16) expresses that, "For most of the novel ... Edna searches for definition and fulfilment through her impossible dreams of Robert Lebrun." The physical proximity with someone's wife Robert enjoys but when the time of commitment to take responsibility he walks behind. Both of these males think only about their own reputation and they are incapable for the commitment of love. In chapter 32, Leonce, rather than feeling bothered that she would leave him behind, worries only that people around them will see Edna's absence as a scandal and inspiration for gossip (Chopin, pp.93).

Edna has anxious relationship with the father. Edna's father is a retired colonel who tries to instil orthodox patriarchal regulation in his family members. Edna always wanted to be a free bird but her wings were cut off by her father first and later on by her husband. There is even violent dispute between Edna and Mr. Colonel regarding her rejection of attending her sister's wedding. He advises Leonce to be authoritative and coerced to manage his wife. Although it is a bildungsroman story, Edna's personal development does not seem to be an achievement rather an itinerary leading to death. Edna as an "inescapability of fate as a woman who is a "male-defined creature who has identified only with the male" (Vukoicic, 2017). Doctor Mandelet is another patriarchal force that fills Leonce's ears about Edna's evolved awareness towards independence. The doctor notices the changes "which had transformed her from the listless woman he had known into a being who, for the moment, seemed palpitant with the forces of life" (75). Edna is on the right path but her new evolution is indigestible to the males around her. Mandelet somewhere tries to save her too from Arobin and Adele who is quite whimsical for the doctor. Edna shares to Mandelet that she does not want to settle in abroad with Leonce but whatever she shares is full of "incoherency of her thoughts" (116).

Fleeing oneself from one male's arm to another's shows not only the awakening of Edna who she is but also her attempts to trespass the social confinements. Caged bird is free from the bars but the bird is not leery enough to control her emotions. Therefore, sleeping with Arobin and leaving him abruptly when Edna sees Robert indicates her immaturity. The society was not advanced much during late 19th century as Edna expects for herself. Hoefel (2022, p.70) argues that, "within the Western phallogocentric discourse, the nineteenth-century woman represented a 'place', a 'vessel', in three main senses. She was a mere physical envelope (a passive vagina) for man's penis, a metaphysical container for his narcissism, and a container for the overflow of his sublimated drives." Edna is anxious, emotionally broken and physically lonely. Her despair while being in the well designed prison of Leonce, provokes her to dismantle it and to run away. However, her apprehension regarding the society and unsure lover is accompanying her all the time. Therefore, her impetuous decision to have an ephemeral relationship with Arobin portrays her taxing life. Her lonesomeness coerces her to do so. Like Mrs Baroda and Nathile she is out of the control of her emotions and this affair is headlong falling for physical closeness rather than a pure contemplative decision.

Edna can persuade Robert to make their relationship official if she doesn't have to go to hospital for Adele's delivery. Even Adele advises her, "Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them!" (Chopin, p.115). Adele's suggestion rings a bell into Edna's ear. This truly haunts her heart once she finds the farewell letter of Robert. The tragedy at the end shows how society strangles those females who try to trespass its vicious boundary. Robert, who sows the seed of evolution in Edna, escapes away when she has fully bloomed into the flower. There was no human being whom she wanted near her except Robert; and she even realized that the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone (Chopin, p.120).

Robert is a red flag for Edna now who shows the mirror to Edna to exist without being

determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her (Beauvoir, 1949, P.29). The guilt of blindly trusting another patriarch and the shame of leaving her husband and kids poison her mind. Irigaray describes the female guilt as “active, of course, but unutterable, ineffable, to be expressed only by the body” (Chopin, p.88). She cannot return to them for the sake of her pride and the only escaping away to save from the blasphemy is to die. Wyatt believes that, “In the end, despite her developments into self-hood, the only escape from biological destiny as a woman in society, possessed, sexual, and ruled, is death” (1995, p.1). Her last words “Good-by—because I love you” (Chopin, p.121) echoes her failure as wife, mother and even lover. “She looked into the distance, and the old terror flamed up for an instant, then sank again” (Chopin, p.121) for that man who could not understand her. As Irigaray explains, “If she is to be able to contain, to develop, she must have her own envelope. Not only her clothing and ornaments of seduction” (1984, p.35). In Edna’s case, her own envelope is embodied by the ocean waters.

A Respectable Woman

Mrs. Baroda in Chopin’s *The Respectable Woman* experiences awakening of those repressed sexuality once she meets her husband’s friend Gouvernail. Although she has a healthy relationship with Gatson, she is emotionally detached from him. Grosz forwards Lacanian notion that, “the drive thus strives for an (impossible) object to satisfy its bivalent aims by filling the lack or gap. It is because of its essential lack of an essence, its capacity to substitute one object for another to gain satisfaction, that the drive is the field in which desire is manifested” (1990, p. 76). Gouvernail’s subtle approach of gazing her, his sensuous personality attracts Mrs. Baroda. Therefore, when Gouvernail recites poetry, under the setting sun, she falls in love with him. Her heart is pounding abnormally telling her to touch his face or lips in such starry night. Suddenly, a loud voice of society drags her back only to protect her image of respectable woman. Shaped by the religious symbolic order as the ‘other’, whose desires are to be banished, the feminine left the post

of worshipped and was assigned the reduced role of silence (Kristeva, 1986, p.138). She escapes from her truest emotion even being awakened what she wants. This reveals the women's oppression caused by "the patriarchal ideology, traditional moral and gendered division of labour" (Liu, 2018, p.556). The stronger the impulse grew to bring herself near him, the further, in fact, did she draw away from him (Chopin, p.143). She might be content with Gaston both physically and financially, however, she might be longing for emotional bond which she finds in few minutes of sitting with Gouvernail.

Mrs. Baroda escapes from Gouvernail as she fears of losing her prestige of reputed position in the society. Her awakening does not make her dogged to fight for her feelings rather it more suppresses them. Kristeva argues in *The Kristeva Reader* (1986, p.144):

In a symbolic economy of production and reproduction centred on the paternal Word (the phallus, if you like), one can make a woman believe that she is (the phallus) even if she doesn't have it (the serpent, the penis): doesn't she have the child? In this way, social harmony is preserved: the structure functions, produces and reproduces.

Without it, the very foundation of this society is endangered.

In other words, women take on the role of 'serpent whisperer', as male condemned lustful actions are blamed on them, helping secure the very structure that represses and condemns their sexual drive (Hoefel, 2022, p.51). From feminist point of view, Mrs. Baroda is coward but from the eyes aged old rooted patriarchy, she is right. In Victorian England and America, moreover, the repression of sexuality could mean security...autonomy and social respectability (Rosenberg, 1973, p.149). Her wings are strained thus she cannot fly high by trespassing her society's boundary. Labh (2023, p.107) claims that, "The first conspicuous instance of Mrs. Baroda's seeking her agency is her decision to quit her home, leaving her husband and guest on their own. She grumbles to Gaston that his friend is boring, and declares she is going to the city to live with her aunt until Gouvernail is gone from their home." She felt a distinct necessity to quit her home in the morning. It is because the ideals of the 19th century "Cult of True

Womanhood” – purity and faithfulness to husband – seem to be working work well upon her mind at this point in the story (Labh, 2023, p.107).

Mrs. Baroda is also escaping from her husband but her escaping with him at the end is far different than the former one. In the beginning, she has no option except to live with Gatson but the story’s end reveals that she is welcoming Gouvernail again in her house in the next summer break. She was fired with Gatson for allowing him to visit his house during their vacation and she also admonished him to not inviting him again. However, after that short impulsive closeness with Gouvernail, Mrs. Baroda wants him to visit her home again. This transformation suggests that Mrs Baroda knows “besides being a respectable woman she was a very sensible one; and she knew there are some battles in life which a human being must fight alone” (Chopin, p.144). Her impromptu decision surprises her husband. This manifests that she is daring to escape her orthodox boundaries and filling her own room with the temptations of having extra-marital affair with Gouvernail. It also suggests that “the struggle is for the woman to free herself from being an object or possession defined in her functions, or owned by others” (Wolff, 1973, p. 449). She even corroborates to Gatson that she has “overcoming everything” (Chopin, p.144) and she will behave very nicely with Gouvernail in his next visit. Chopin makes her lady protagonist rebellious in silence. Although, all these stories are written during the apex of feminist movement, women still fear to give a solo breakthrough against men. The fear is natural and rational because patriarchal roots are deeply grounded.

The Kiss

Similarly, Nathalie like Mrs. Baroda acts wisely to marry the rich man Mr. Brantain although she loves Harvy. She knows she cannot grab two things at once so she chooses Brantain and leaves her beloved. Nathalie longs to accompany rich social class people and marrying Brantain can make her dream true. Despite knowing that he is unattractive, Nathaile is behind him only to grab his money. The impetuous kiss that her lover Harvy gives her does not even break her relationship with Brantain. Sartre opines that, “each

person is an absolute choice of self from the standpoint of a world of knowledge and of techniques which this choice both assumes and illumines” (1943, p.555). Nathalie is witty enough to snare anyone in her deceitful talking. She easily lies to Brantain claiming that Harvy is like her cousins and making their kiss the usual one as between brother and sister. Brantain, a guile guy, heartily accepts whatever she explains to him. Escaping from her lover only to be the richest one by marrying Brantain exhibits her hardship to portray herself as a financially strong lady in the society.

Nathalie thinks money can make her strong and powerful. She easily makes a fictitious story to fool Brantain. They get married and in their reception, Harvy wants to kiss her where Nathalie does not feel bother from it. Despite being socially and economically higher class, her lips and emotions seek Harvy to fall into the lust of sexuality. It is because, Brantain is not sexually attractive and this emptiness arouses the sex appetite in Nathalie. However, Harvy at the end denies kissing Nathalie although he asks the permission with Brantain. He gets the lesson that he is a parrot trapped into the betrayal cage of Nathalie. She forgets that she is married now but Harvy’s awakening stops him to kiss a married woman. Chopin’s heroines are always strong but they cannot be complete rebel to achieve everything they want. In order to accomplish one prime goal, others must be escaped.

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Nathalie equally tries to play with both males but she forgets that she cannot choose both money and lover at once and she also cannot exploit and accept the same man at once.

However she has that audacity to play with both Harvy and Brantain despite knowing that “laws and religious practices demanded women’s subordination to men and governmental and extralegal control on women’s sexual and familial lives buttressed patriarchal ideals and practices by enforcing their dependence on white men” (Ryan, 2019, par. 1). Seeing Harvy at their reception, Brantain is not happy but Nathalie again ensnares him into her fallacious narration being sober and innocent. While fooling him “her voice had grown very low and agitated” (Chopin, p.146). Brantain’s dejected face illuminates then.

Nathalie’s decision of leaving her emotions to embrace richness does not give her wholesome happiness. It signifies “the bodily/physical and the involuntary...material existence in general, its perpetuation, and the maintenance of the status quo” (Strickling, 1988, p.36). Nathalie’s anxiousness to kiss Harvy at the end shows her temptation and impatience towards physical closeness. Women during this period were trying to build themselves the strong one. However, while presenting themselves the strongest

personality, some significant aspects are slipping from their hands. They escape male chauvinism while getting their rights and liberation. Conversely, some even become financially rich too in whatever the way they can but they cannot get the two things at once: the man they love and the wealth they aspire.

Methodology

This research is done solely depending on textual reading. The sources of the text range from printed paper book to e-book and other online based PDFs and journals. The method used in this study is an in-depth analysis of the character of Edna, Mrs. Baroda and Nathalie. This analysis immensely contributes to demonstrate the characteristics of feminism and psychoanalysis that characterize these three stories. By using the theoretical perspectives of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Simond de Beauvoir, Jacques Lacan and many other relevant theories, this research paper is trying to justify how the protagonists of the *The Awakening*, *A Respectable Woman* and *The Kiss* struggle to discover their own individuality while also being in the restrictions of the patriarchy. Several Feminist theories are applied to justify this issue. How they battle with their psychology to fit themselves forcefully against the misogynistic males of the traditional society is broadly discussed in this research paper.

Conclusion

Edna leaves Wealth while following her passion of love for Robert while Nathalie deceives Harvy to marry a rich man. However, Mrs. Baroda is trying to balance both in silence. She is a silent fighter. She is struggling to protect her reputed image as a successful wife in the society while plotting secretly to enjoy extra-marital affair with Gouvernail. In the beginning, Mrs. Baroda also tries to suppress her feelings when she is almost about to kiss Gouvernail but at the end she turns to be a conspirer to sew the snare of her illegitimate love affair with this man. These three women do have the burden of male chauvinism which prevents them to act wholeheartedly. They need to machinate to

accomplish their objective. How much they say that they are full of freedom as man but they know from inside that they are full of burdens which weigh them down. Therefore, Edna commits suicide, Mrs. Baroda conspires hiding the sincere feelings with her husband because letting her husband know everything means ruining her respect, and Nathalie chooses Brantain instead of Harvy to gain the power in the society. Hence, all three heroines escape the truth instead of being audacious to face the reality and live the life in their own terms.

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