

# Chapter I

## INTRODUCTION

### I.1. Background of the Study

Britain is well known not only as an empire, but also as a country that produces many great writers. Penelope Ruth Mortimer was also known as a British writer, a journalist and novelist. She “was born in North Wales”, and studied at “London university” (Fear in Review 2000. Obituary “Mortimer, Penelope Ruth Fletcher, retrieved October 8,2001). Mortimer’s books are notable for “the compression and beauty of the language”, she was also noted for her “compact style” of writing especially short stories and novels (Fear in Review 2000, retrieved October 8, 2001). I am interested in choosing Penelope Mortimer because although she was not as popular as other British writers, she was a talented woman. However, although she was a minor writer, she was known as a short story writer, a writer of biography, a script writer, a movie critic and a novelist. Mortimer’s contribution during her life makes me interested to choose one of her literary works to be analyzed.

In Britain, Penelope Mortimer was first well-known as a short story writer. She was first respected through her ability in writing short stories which were almost “a fixture in New Yorker Magazine” (British Writer Penelope Mortimer, retrieved October 22,2001). As a matter of fact, her success in writing short stories gave her chance “to publish her novel, Long Distance in its entirety” (British Writer Penelope Mortimer, retrieved October 22,2001). It shows that short story was Mortimer’s first debut to be

known as a writer, People first regarded her as a qualitative writer from her ability to write short stories in the magazine. Her other works of short stories included “a collection of short stories Saturday Lunch with the Brownings” (Mortimer, Penelope retrieved September 28, 2001), in this collection she first published her short stories as a single book.

Mortimer’s other talent was as a writer of biography. In the year of 1986 she was “commissioned to write a biography of the Queen Mother” but when she published Queen Elizabeth: a Life of the Queen Mother, it created controversy among the British citizens. It scandalously detailed the Queen’s romantic life before her marriage to the future King George VI so it was considered too **vulgar** for “a woman who was revered by the British public” (Died, Penelope Mortimer, retrieved November 8, 2001). Then she made a softened version of the biography, Queen Mother: an Alternative Portrait of Her Life and Times in 1995 in order to replace the first work which was considered an inappropriate work (Mortimer, Penelope, retrieved September 28, 2001). In her work of biography, Mortimer also included her two volumes of autobiography: About Time and About Time too. The former won “the Whitbread Prize” for biography in 1979 and the second part included an honest description of her troubled marriage to John Mortimer (Writer, retrieved September 12, 2001).

Mortimer was also known for her ability in writing a script for the BBC occasional documentary-film commentary and she was a movie critic. Her career in the printed media developed from the short story writer to the film critic. It seemed that she was continuing to make progress in her life and she was aware of her talent and

explored it as far as she could. She was reliable to be a film critic of the famous British Newspaper, the Observer in which she used the name Penelope Gilliant (The Pumpkin Eater, retrieved October 22,2001).

Mortimer was married two times. At first, she married the journalist Charles Dimont and the second she married the playwright and an author John Mortimer (Mortimer, Penelope, retrieved September 28,2002). During her marriage to John, they collaborated on the book Daddy's Gone a Hunting. This was the only work she had done together with John. She also wrote other novels entitled The Pumpkin Eater, My Friend Says It's Bullet Proof, Long Distance and The Handyman . Mortimer was the author of dozen novels which were praised for their “precision and intelligence” and most of which reflected her own unconventional life and relationship and the “turbulence of failed marriages” (British Writer, retrieved September 18, 2001). She might not a popular novelist but many of her novels were “well-received”. It means that people are willing to read her novels because there must be something interesting in her novels (Mortimer, Penelope, retrieved September 28, 2002). I decide to choose her novel to be discussed because through her novels Mortimer gains her peak of success after going through many hard times for being a professional writer.

I decide to choose one of Penelope Mortimer's novels entitled The Pumpkin Eater to be analyzed. I choose this novel because it was Mortimer's masterpiece. “Her fifth, The Pumpkin Eater, published 15 years later was a huge success” (British Writer Penelope Mortimer, retrieved October 22, 2001). It shows that The Pumpkin Eater has been **successfully** accepted by the public. This acceptance leads her to her peak of

career as a novelist. It raised her name and career. This means that the novel is not merely an ordinary novel that is not worth analyzing. Many critics as written in the preface of the novel, praise The Pumpkin Eater. For example, Edna O'brien in the Daily Express said that it was beautiful and many women she could think of would want to read it.

The greatness of the novel is on the style **of** writing Mortimer uses. She wrote it with deep awareness **so** that it **is** capable to reveal Mortimer's feeling. That **is** why Julian Mitchell in Sunday Times said that The Pumpkin Eater was one of those novels which seemed to be written with real knowledge of "the brink of the abyss, taut almost beyond endurance" (Thompson I). It means that Mortimer is able to talk about pain and distress that the main female character in the novel experiences. Moreover, because of its greatness, a producer was interested in making a movie based on the novel (British Writer, Penelope Mortimer, retrieved October 22,2001).

The Pumpkin Eater is a story about a woman namely Jo Armitage who has eight children and a disloyal husband, Jake. Jo has been married for four times and Jake is her fourth husband. Nevertheless, her marriage life could not make her happy. She has to deal with betrayal which makes her suffer. After further reading of this novel, I find an interesting aspect to be analyzed that is the inability of Jo Armitage to escape from her sufferings although actually she can make it.

The main female character in the novel suffers in her fourth marriage because of her husband's betrayal. She does many efforts to escape from her sufferings yet she fails. She still cannot escape from her problems. Then, she tends to avoid her problems

rather than to face and to solve them. By analyzing the cause of Jo's sufferings, her efforts to escape and her failure, I can dig out more deeply the efforts she has done to escape from her sufferings and the factors that makes her fail.

### **I.2. Statement of the Problem**

I am curious to know what are the causes of Jo's sufferings, how she strives to escape from her sufferings and why she fails to escape.

### **I.3. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the study is to find out the causes of Jo's sufferings, to find out the process of **Jo's** attempt to escape from her sufferings and the factors that make she fail to escape.

### **I.4. Importance of the Study**

By writing the thesis, I hope that it will broaden the readers' knowledge about relationships especially when it deals with the hard times of relationships, for example betrayal. Jo Armitage's experience can be taken as an input for women in response to betrayal.

Through my analysis, I hope the readers can take it as an input about how to deal with problems in their life, whether they should cope with the problems or **run** from them. Furthermore, through my analysis I hope the readers can see that Jo's

inexperience about trusting someone leads her to her sufferings. That is why, I hope her experience can be taken as a good example of being careless in trusting someone.

Finally, I hope this thesis will be able to help the readers who want to know more about The Pumpkin Eater . By reading my thesis, hopefully the reader will have a point of view that Penelope Mortimer actually is a qualified writer who has many good works and the readers will be impressed and realized that The Pumpkin Eater is really a good novel to be read and analyzed. Thus, it will attract the readers to study more on Penelope's other works. Perhaps they will study not only the novels but also the short stories, biographies, or even her commentaries on the documentary-film which were also part of Mortimer's works.

### **1.5. Scope and Limitations**

The scope of my study is the main female character's efforts to escape from her sufferings and her failure to escape. I limit my study on Jo Armitage's experience especially on her fourth marriage. Thus, if I mention other characters in the novel, they only support my analysis on Jo Armitage.

### **1.6. Methodology**

I use library research to collect any related data, critics' 2opinions and theories to be applied in the novel. I use some critics' opinions from the internet which are closely related to The Pumpkin Eater to support my thesis. In order to get the best result, I use literary theories to analyze the topic of my thesis. I analyze it through

characterization and conflict of the story. Characterization is used to reveal main female character's personality which is related to both her efforts and her failure, while conflict are applied in order to see the other factors that lead the main female character failures to escape from her sufferings. Some personality theories such as "anxiety" (McMahon and McMahon, 1986, p.559), "depressive reaction"(Narramore, 1993, p. 81), "chronic alcoholism"(Stone and Stone, 1996, p.347), and "emotional support"(p. 370) are mentioned to support my analysis on **Jo's** efforts and failure to escape from her sufferings.

### **1.7. Organization of the Study**

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first is the introduction of the thesis including background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, importance of the study, scope and limitation and methodology. The second chapter discusses some theories which support the discussion. The third chapter analyzes the topic of the discussion. The last chapter is a brief conclusion from the preceding chapters.