

**The Narrator's Moral Responsibility in Kate Chopin's  
*The Awakening* and 'The Storm'**

:

" " \_\_\_\_\_

**By**

**Sahera M. Saddam aL Dafa'i**

**Supervisor**

**Dr. Sabber S. Sultan**

**This thesis was Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Master's Degree in English Language  
and Literature**

**Faculty of Arts**

**Middle East University**

**Amman-Jordan**

**May, 2010**

# **DEDICATION**

**To My Husband**

**Mohammed A. Alsaloom**

## **Acknowledgement**

In the first place, thanks are due to Allah for helping me to proceed in my study and write this thesis. I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Sabbar S. Sultan for his encouragement, help, and support; not to mention his invaluable remarks and suggestions that have enriched my work.

I should also like to thank Professor Abdulhafeth Khreisat for helping me in my proposal. Many thanks also go to Dr. Abdul Sattar Awad Ibrahim who has guided me throughout the time I wrote this thesis.

## **Middle East University for Graduate Studies**

I, Sahera M. Saddam al-Dafa'i, authorize the Middle East University to supply copies of my thesis to libraries, establishments or individuals on request, according to the Middle East University for Graduate Studies regulations.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## Table of Contents

### Subject

No.	Page
Dedication.....	II
Acknowledgment.....	III
Table of Contents.....	V
Abstract.....	VII
Abstract in Arabic.....	VIII
<b>Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Statement of the problems.....	4
Objective and Questions of the Study.....	5
Hypothesis of the Study.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	6
Definitions of Basic Terms.....	7
Limitations of the Study.....	7
Methods and Procedures.....	8
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
Theoretical Studies.....	9
Review of Related Literature .....	14

### **Chapter Three**

Kate Chopin's Moral Responsibility.....27

In *The Awakening* and 'The Storm'.....27

Section Two: 'The Storm'.....48

### **Chapter Four**

Conclusion.....58

References.....64

## **Abstract**

It has been made clear that Chopin has dealt with particular moral issues that are closely related to human life and character. Her major views, which mostly concern those moral implications in which she believes and are, at the same time, revealed throughout her writings, fictional and otherwise, and are to amalgamate and prevail in her fiction. This study attempts to highlight those moral implications that stand behind the writer's choice of themes and the kind of character that moves within the domain of this choice. Chopin tackles themes related to feminism, sexual matters, and the pressures a woman may face during the course of her relationship with man as a husband or friend. For instance Chopin's short story entitled 'The Storm' tackles the theme of how stormy hearts provoke the passion of illicit love on the part of a married woman and an old friend of hers. 'The Story of an Hour' reflects the emotional pressures and moments of freedom as related to the life of a selection of Chopin's fiction in terms of the moral responsibility that has prompted her to adopt such themes as those already mentioned. Besides the analysis, this study displays a careful presentation of the ideas of those critics who have already given their points of view concerning this subject matter, whose opinions are, of course, indispensable and can by no means be overlooked.

Chapter Four is a conclusion in which all the findings of this study will be summed up.

▼ ▼

.

.

..

.

' '

.

' '

.

.



—

—

.

'

'

'

'

.

.

"

"

"

"

.

## **Chapter one**

### **Introduction and Literature Review**

Many novelists and story-tellers, classic and modern, have attempted short stories which are in line with various genres and modes of expression—tragic and comic. They deal with subject matter closely related to real life and tackle social issues representing various aspects of human life and character. Short stories provide writers with infinite fictional possibilities and allow them to employ narrators and to deal individually and separately with significant themes relevant to crime, punishment, marriage, feminism, alienation, and other human interests. They draw the readers' attention to controversial and debatable concerns about man and his daily affairs.

Throughout the course of literature, the female character has often been constructed as the stereotypical helpless, subservient, and troublesome figure. Often in literature, as well as in life, women appear entrapped in a marriage, living out a simple housewife persona. Even before the emergence of the 20th Century feminist movement, female writers often criticized the conventional way of patriarchal society through their works. Feminist authors, such as Kate Chopin, tried to portray their characters as strong, able individuals to endorse feminine self-assertion and make a statement for women while criticizing institutions hindering women's rights.

Kate Chopin (1851-1904) deals realistically with and responds in her works she writes to her memories of the environment where the narrator lives the hours of her life and which she uses in the making up of the settings of her short stories, as clear in her short story "The Storm." As its title may indicate,

this short story symbolizes the stormy minds and hearts of the characters. The narrator also deals with matters of illicit sex which she considers a joyous and pleasurable experience, and not a destructive factor of the individual's and body soul. In *The Awakening* (1899), Chopin treats the theme of a married woman who tries to have sexual gratification with a man that is not her husband. Considering the narrator's moral responsibility as portrayed in the story, this novel was dismissed from the public library in St. Louis, Chopin's place of birth.

Bernard Koloski has criticized Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* as dramatization of a woman's struggle to achieve selfhood i.e. a struggle doomed to failure , because the patriarchal conventions of her society restrict her freedom. Perhaps this can be due to the fact that the ideal of selfhood that she pursues is a masculinity-defined one that allows for none of the physical and undeniable claims which maternity makes upon women. Ultimately, in both views, Edna Pontellier (the novel's heroine) ends her life because she cannot have it both ways: given her time, place, and notion of self, she cannot be a mother and have a self at the same time. Though such critic provides valuable insights into many aspects of the novel which I do not wish to dismiss, I believe that the focus on gender/self limits the scope of Chopin's vision in *The Awakening* (Koloski, 165).

Kate Chopin, best known for her short stories, published in contemporary popular magazines, won her fame as a local color writer with a good ear for dialect and as a writer of women's issues (sexuality, equality, independence). At the height of her fame, she also wrote and published two novels *At Fault* (1890) and *The Awakening* (1899). Sex and despair are the subjects most read

in today's more civilized society. This was not the case during Kate Chopin's career as a writer. Chopin was a writer about life in Louisiana. Chopin's works, containing sexual themes and suicide, were shocking during the era in which they were written, but they have the opposite effect on today's more civilized society.

Throughout her literary career, Kate Chopin, much like her fictional heroines, explored a dangerous new ground. She created female characters that test the boundaries of acceptable behavior for women and explore the psychological and societal ramifications of their actions and desires. They are forced to make existential choices based on the few avenues available for them to create and maintain autonomous identities outside the roles of wife and mother in the late nineteenth-century American South. Chopin's protagonists attempt to physically or spiritually transcend these limitations but often meet with crushing results. Chopin does not guarantee her characters an admirable place within their society, but she portrays them with dignity and sympathy. She clearly espouses their need to find and assert identities both as individuals and as women. Throughout her career, Chopin wrote ninety-six short stories and sketches and one novel that explore the gender politics and the laws and norms that effectively shackle women (Allen, 1997).

Kate Chopin's uninhibited treatment of subjects that are considered taboos for the nineteenth century has rightfully earned her the title as "a woman decades ahead of her time". Despite the century's limitations set against a woman's success in all social and domestic aspects, Chopin dared to express her viewpoints and strove to break down the walls that had stood in women's

way in the traditional patriarchal society. Many of her short stories were rejected on social and moral ground dictated by her Victorian society. For example Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* tells a story of a woman who comes to understand her sexuality and its function in the larger scheme of things, 'a scheme which might best be understood as lacerating' (Walker, 1994).

If Kate Chopin could read some of the novels of the twentieth-century, she would be wondering what all of the fuss was about in the nineteenth-century. As long as she wrote local-color stories, her colleagues accepted and praised her work. Many of the twentieth-century critics, like; Per Seyersted wrote that Kate Chopin was a writer ahead of her time and was unjustly ostracized(Seyersted 1003). The injustice she encountered in her lifetime could only be judged when one views her works and situations from a contemporary stand point.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It must be noted that Chopin has dealt with particular moral issues that were closely related to human life and character. Her major views, mostly concerning those moral implications in which she believes and are, at the same time, revealed throughout her fictional writings. This study focuses upon the moral implications of the author's mouthpiece that reflects the writer's view in choosing her themes and the kind of character that moves within the domain of this choice. Chopin tackles themes related to feminism, sexual matters, and the pressures a woman often faces during the course of her relationship with man as husband or as friend. The major issue of this study is to analyze Chopin's novel *The Awakening* and her short story 'The

Storm' in terms of the moral responsibility that has prompted her to adopt such themes as those already mentioned.

### **The Objective of the Study**

This study aims to analyze Chopin's fiction particularly, *The Awakening* and 'The Storm', in terms of the narrator's thought about moral responsibility that prompts her to choose the themes and characters that make her works distinguished. Moreover, the study will shed light on the major motives lying behind her choice of such significant themes and characters in her stories. Indeed they are to be seen against a backdrop of moral responsibility which serves as a tough stone for testing her ideas, philosophies and views. Besides, this study will provide an understanding of the writer's treatment of the theme and character in the light of her sense of duty towards her profession as a writer and towards those to whom she writes and provides both delight and wisdom simultaneously.

### **Questions of the Study**

1. What are the main influences that have prompted the author to choose such moral responsibility in her works, especially those specified in this study?
2. What are the motivations and the significance of highlighting the authors' moral issues in her stories?
3. What are the positive and negative outcomes of Chopin's employment of author as far as her responsibility is concerned?

## **Hypotheses of the Study**

This study hypothesizes that Chopin takes into consideration the moral responsibility which may shape her sensibility as a narrator dealing with those general and particular moral issues concerning various and many aspects of human life and character. She shows a great concern in the most serious social phenomena and social behavior: as a result, she finds herself forced to adopt subject matters related to the question of woman. Interestingly enough, Chopin deliberately makes her characters undergo certain pressures imposed by the outside world which ignite the inner conflict. This keen psychological conflict they face continuously leads to moments of revelation and self-realization.

## **Significance of the Study**

Chopin's writing seems to be of high significance in so far as it shows some peculiar yet important features that need to be unfolded. The importance of this study lies in its attempt to shed light on one important aspect—the author's moral responsibility. Thus the study reveals the author duty which she assumes towards her profession, readers, and society as well. The study is a reflection of the extent to which the writer in question has managed to educate her readers to the moral issues tackled in her works and alluded to in her prose writings, essays, and articles. Throughout her projection of theme and character, she tries to deal with those general affairs that directly or indirectly affect the fate and the behavior of man. For instance, Chopin deals with the question of feminism and those relationships and associations a woman may make within society. She attempts to provide a

better understanding of human nature and, at the same time, unfold those aspects hitherto hidden from the domain of contemporary literary media.

### **Definitions of Basic Terms**

First of all, there will be an elaborate definition of the most prominent terms to be used as significant indicators in this study. They are:

1. **Patriarchy:** is a social system in which the father or eldest male is head of the household, having authority over women and children.
2. **Women's Rights:** refers to freedoms and entitlements of women and girls of all ages.
3. **Fiction:** is any literary narrative, whether in prose or verse, which is invented instead of being an account of events that actually happened.
4. **Equality between Women and Man:** is one of the fundamental principles of communities. It is to ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women and to combat any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This thesis is mainly concerned with the study of a significant American novelist—Kate Chopin—who has widely manipulated and at the same time benefited from the fictional potentialities of the short story. This study is an attempt to highlight the moral implications in Chopin's *The Awakening* and 'The Storm'. The narrator's moral responsibility, as reflected only in 'The Storm' and *The Awakening* will be of special concern in this study.



## **Methods and Procedures**

This study depends on examining Chopin's *The Awakening* and 'The Storm' with a view of revealing the moral aspects to be dealt with and analyzed in relation to theme and character. To achieve this, the study intends to analyze in detail many situations and events involving the characters.

The study follows the analytical approach whereby the researcher attempts to examine the texts of the short story and the novel in question and conclude with the morals inferred in them. This will be achieved throughout analyzing the novelist's point of view and philosophy as indicated in her essays and articles (Per. Seyersted) in this connection. In other words, the study benefited from the author's views in these two works.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of Related Literature**

This chapter consists of two parts; one presents theoretical studies about the idea of moral responsibility in short stories or novels. The other part presents how other critics and writers addressed moral responsibility in Chopin's writings.

#### **Theoretical Studies:**

Greenlee (2007) in her dissertation examines the representations of women by female writers. Although separated by time and space- Zindiada Gippius and Galina Scherbakova are Russian, Kate Chopin is North American, and Lya Luft is Brazilian- they are linked by the commonality of themes and regards. The female protagonists of the works under discussion desire perfect love; this elusive, even impossible, total fusion with the other, an absolute relationship in which individual egos are lost and two beings are merged into one. This absolute desire, which admits no compromise, is continually frustrated by experience, leading some protagonists to despair and withdrawal from life. Intrinsically linked with the theme of impossible desire are themes of identity, inner freedom- abreast of the nature of life and death.

Greenlee also points out that the novels are about women's search for their social, personal, and spiritual fulfillment. All writers adopting her views under discussion share a complex approach to human experiences weaving together social, psychological, and spiritual threads. Their insight into the human condition reveals a profound need for spiritual growth and transcendence. Spirituality, 'redemption', and 'transcendence' are not

necessarily used here as religious terms. She also points out that they can be understood, in the sense the existentialists understand them, as the desire to break out of 'inauthentic existence and find fulfillment in the authenticity of being; a desire for relationship based on an authentic dialogue of self with the other. Transcendence, in this sense, can be seen as a horizon at the edge of everyday life'.

Riney (2007) states that the second-wave of feminisms influence on American literature positively changed the canon by forcing the inclusion of women's expressions. As part of their efforts to counter networks of discrimination in common culture, second-wave feminists addressed literary representations to challenge institutional and informal reproduction of sexism.

...however, much like many feminists of color and third-wave feminists who questioned the negative effects of the second wave feminists' unqualified power to define female voices in literature. Feminists of the 1970s, provisioning women's literature, may have inadvertently but unnecessarily stifled some female authors' contributions. (Riney, 14)

Riney also stresses that the use of fiction as comparative lens by Kate Chopin, epitomizes Kate Chopin's rebirth in the success of the second wave's literary efforts;

from near oblivion, feminists resurrected Chopin's fiction and energetically revised interpretations of her works, and in the process, anointed her as an emblem of the women's movement in the 1970s. However, second wave's means of achieving literary equality inadvertently limited recognitions of others because of the movement's

goals restricted some critics' participation and authors' inclusion in feminists' delineated plans for women acknowledgement. (p 34.....p36).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Kate Chopin wrote her short story 'The Storm', women were considered innocent and faithful to their husbands. Although adultery is frowned upon, Chopin shows us that it doesn't necessarily have bad or drastic consequences. A woman at that time was not free to be her own person to express individuality. A woman's job was to please her husband, and in doing so, please herself. It was not to be socially acceptable at that time to find her self-fulfillment, be an individual, or be her own person unlike anyone else. Women were dutiful wives and mothers, nothing else.

Carol Gilligan (1982) says that women's development has received inadequate attention in most development theory, which has been biased toward male-defined hierarchies of separation and abstraction. Women's development, she says, is defined by "an orientation to care and responsibility: from an egocentric stage of not caring for others, to a post-conventional stage where moral judgment depends on a universal principle of non-violence and care encompasses self as well as other" (p. 27). The central moral dilemma confronted by women, who construct moral problems in terms of relationships, is the conflict between the self and other.

**The project** of abstracting moral development in females uses Gilligan's theory of women's development to analyze thirteen contemporary novels and short stories by and about women. After reviewing the critiques of the adult development theory by Gilligan and from which her work is derived, such

theory explores women writers and their non-fiction works as they relate to developmental issues. The women in fiction are analyzed according to the stage which characterizes their moral reasoning and behavior. Moreover, the ways in which women experience the transitions between stages and the conflict inherent in the development process are emphasized in this analysis.

As Gilligan's theory provides a useful framework for interpreting literature, the literature; provides insights into how women actually experience moral development. The thesis concludes with a summary of the relationships and dilemmas inferred from the fiction dealing with moral development. (p.63)

Melissa Nohelani Parrish (2009) addresses both the lure of individuality in Harold Frederic's 'The Damnation of Theron Ware' and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*. However, Bert Bender suggests in *The Descent of Love*, that 'there were significant tensions in the late nineteenth century in America between Darwin's beliefs about natural desire and sexual selection, and the sustained effort to create a stable, values-based culture amid a growing commodity-centric America' (p. 83). But where does the element of choice figure in this failed transformation? William Bartley, (1972) argues in the future of *The Awakening* that the "imagined futures are neither predetermined nor wholly independent from social constraints" (p. 43). In this thesis, I intend to discuss some of the emotional, psychological, and ideological factors that influence the desire to act boldly outside the morals within cultural spectrum and the American mantra of 'liberal obedience'. One may ask the question: is the creation of a tortured nonconformist- unfortunate, visionary, at best, a dangerous narcissist at worst- an invertible product in a stratified cultural

dynamic in America? And if so, is it a productive indicator of change or a grotesque, abject impurity? What roles did such uncomfortable protagonists play in the re-evaluation and reshaping of American culture- and what role does the apparent collapsing of categories play in redefining turn-of-the-century American mode of living and thinking?

Agnes Cardoni Toloczko (1995) examines Tillie Olsen's collection; four short stories in 'Tell Me a Riddle' and her novel fragment *Yonnodio: from the Thirties* in terms of the ethical development of the adolescent female characters. The study uses the ethics of responsibility and care as identified by Carol Gilligan to examine each young female character's struggle to grow, to make her place in the world, and to remain in relationship with others. The study contextualizes the exclusion of the ethics of care from the canon and argues for inclusion of multiple ethical modes.

Toloczko also talked about Gilligan's research findings. She connects Gilligan's theories to feminist literary theory and calls attention to the American literary canon's dearth. Moral perspectives are situated in terms of responsibility and caring. Then she examines the character, Jeannie, who develops from early adolescence to young adulthood through Olsen's short stories, 'Hey Sailor What Ship?' 'O Yes,' and 'Tell Me a Riddle,' vis-à-vis Gilligan's general stages of survival, goodness, and care. Her study discusses Emily in Olsen's 'I Stand Here Ironing' and Mazie in *Yonnodio: From the Thirties* as characters approaching the border between childhood and adolescence. For both characters, poverty and scarcity of human and martial resources conspire to make the passage into adolescence even more painful than it is for girls of normal economic means. Emily's and Mazie's ability to

resolve dilemmas is profoundly affected by their social and economic circumstances. Also the study discusses the influence of Olsen's work on the author and the importance of fiction like Olsen's for the development of multiple ethical frameworks in the culture. The availability of alternatives to the morals of rights and justice may prompt further interrogation of the self-silencing and emotional alienation among adolescent females so often reported in Gilligan's work and so often seen in literature and in everyday life. The study concludes with a call for the consideration of alternative voices and visions in the American canon, to respond to the disaffection regarding American education.

### **Review of Related Literature:**

In the nineteenth-century America witnessed a period of conflicting ideals-old and new- on all levels. As a result fundamental changes occurred. That, however, was due to the new theories of Darwin's concept of the origins of which Chopin may have very well been aware.of Central to these is Darwin's belief in the evolution of what he called the 'social instincts', 'the capacity of human beings for sympathy and love.' (Pizer 2001, 6-7). A new social identity was to characterize men and women after the urbanization following the Civil War(1861-1865) that culminated in the Conference about the movement of the woman's rights held in New York in 1862.

Chopin was born to prominent St. Louis family. Her father died in a train accident when Chopin was four years old, and her childhood was most profoundly influenced by her mother and great-grandmother, who descended from French-Creole pioneers. Chopin also spent much time with her family's Creole and mulatto slaves, becoming familiar with their unique dialects and

aware of their customs and ways of thinking and feeling. Chopin was raised by a black slave, Eliza, whom she loved. Later on Eliza would appear in Chopin's short stories 'Beyond the Byou, and Oldies Misses Mass'.

In 1870 she married Oscar Chopin, a wealthy Creole cotton factory owner, and moved with him to New Orleans. For the next decade, Chopin pursued the demanding social and domestic schedule of a Southern aristocrat; her recollections of which would later serve as material for her short stories.

While the Victorian age was known for the convention and tradition and for following the rules set by society and religion of women submissiveness to house chores, husband's needs and children's demands, Chopin's work came as an act of revolution to go against all the conventions previously set by the society and tradition.( It is her method of using different narrators to convey their moral responsibility in these works that is most prominent and note-worthy).

Many critics opposed her moral stand. Vinar Barbra (1984) 'for example' sees her as inviting other women to embrace vice by seeing 'through their' inner feelings and raising questions which will lead to nowhere. Edward Lee also sees that Chopin, in publishing *The Awakening* in 1899, startle her public with a frank portrayal of a woman's social, sexual, and judgment or censure. The disapproving public reception of it clouded the end of a career that brought to a wider public an area of the growing notion that was unfamiliar to many Americans (282-285).

For almost 50 years before Chopin published *The Awakening*, society had been engaged in a struggle over social ideologies and issues of equal rights.



As a result of this struggle, women as a whole had, to a certain extent, already experienced mobilization and emancipation from their socioeconomic fetters. In other words, Chopin and other feminist writers paved the way for the emergence of a radical spirit among female writers in their presentation of women and their aspirations.

Al-Tobasy (1999) states that Chopin was highly affected by what passed through her life to affect her literature (p. 13). Women, who used to do plantation where she moved to at later stage of her life, opened her eyes on the patriarchal society in which she lived. Where the Victorian age imposed a lot of obligations on women, one can see that Chopin crossed a threshold in her literature and thought, a matter that opened new portals and communication for both men and women. In contrast to what is expected of her role as wife and mother, Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* prefers dying among waves rather than returning to state of death-in-life.

In 'The Storm', one can come to the question of how a woman's soul is affected by her flesh and blood. Why is the sexual desire restricted to men while women should not admit they even have it, and should do it for the sake of man? This is the gist of Chopin's argument in her influential story. In case of ignorance, it should apply to both sexes; male and female should act as if they don't know what sexual pleasure is. In that age, it was more like woman serving the master's desires from cleaning, giving birth, looking after children to giving him pleasure in bed, while she should not even blush as it affects her chastity (Per Syersted. 74). It seems that the society forgives the man who speaks and acts outspokenly whereas the woman doesn't have such privileges.

In the sense, 'The Storm' sheds light on the idea that men and women are both human beings who have needs much the same as and so have the right to satisfy them humanitarily, given the protagonist's felt-energy when she expressed her need for fulfilling the desire. In a situation where two people surrender to their desires, a woman expresses herself differently from what she has behaved. Chopin seemed in that age to outsmart her age, expressing the sexual desire of a woman through the narrator as a want rather than a need for the man (Arima,66).

Here one can see that Chopin is not really encouraging women to commit adultery, but through the narrator she encourages treating the needs of a woman in a proper sense. Chopin allows her protagonist to express that by adultery or any other means. "The past was nothing to her; 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..."(p. 51). The morals of committing adultery, feeling self-realization and bearing the subsequent damages, are presented in the stories to understand one's self.

Morality, then, lies in the eyes of the beholder. The concept of right and wrong can vary from one person to another. Certainly, a married woman loving a man other than her husband could be viewed as a sinner (P, 31). Yet one may ask if her husband treated her improperly, or if she was seduced and it might be acceptable. This moral ambiguity shrouds Edna's character throughout Chopin's novel, *The Awakening*, emphasizing the theme of being true to one's self above all else, even society's views of morality (p, 39).

During her time, publishers rejected a novel and a short story collection on moral grounds. Undaunted, Chopin completed *The Awakening*, the story of

a conventional wife and mother, who after gaining spiritual freedom through an extramarital affair, commits suicide when she realizes that she cannot reconcile her new self to society's moral restrictions. The hostile critical and public reaction to the novel largely halted Chopin's career. She had difficulty finding publishers for later works and was ousted from local literary groups. Demoralized, she wrote little during her last years (Per Seyersted, 54).

*The Awakening* is considered Chopin's best work as well as a remarkable novel written during the morally uncompromising America of the 1890s. Michaela Abele (2003) is one of those who praised Chopin's work. She states *The Awakening* deals with the transcendentalist theme of women's self-discovery and its consequences on the example of its protagonist Edna Pontellier (Seyester, 41). Set in the late-nineteenth-century New Orleans, Louisiana, the novel provides the reader with a 'considerable range of women's behavior during an era in which women were frequently categorized as similar in instincts and interests' (p,49). This serves as a prime example for the analysis of the multiple roles that were open to the women of this time.

Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* displays its protagonist Jordan, a young American who at the beginning of the novel has been tugged by ideas of heroism and humane cause, and thus he comes to Spain for the sake of fighting for the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War. As he realizes the futility of the war and the nothingness it supplies for the individual, his belief in the cause of freeing Spain from the Fascists begins to wane. Jordan begins to think about the importance of the individual as having a sublime significance in human life. Due to his inability to proceed any further towards finding new ideals and morals that may satisfy his curiosity for a better life, he prefers

death or suicide over such a life. The connection here is obvious since the two characters have the same view that is to stand for their deep conventions.

William Shakespeare's *Romeo's and Juliet's* suicides come as a direct result of their love which would have reconciled the two conflicting families. It is that contrast between love- hatred on the part of the lovers and their families respectively which is the core of the play. The morals that concern one's issue most is the awakening of the two families after the death of their children to having new moral principles of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Corrol, 200).

The interpretation of Edna's Pontellier's suicide at the end of Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* needs a two-fold approach: first, Edna fails to carry on because she cannot find a bearable way to go on with her life- to "resolve the conflict between the urge toward self-realization and the constricting conventions of society" ( p. 362). It is the conflict between the moral responsibility she hold and the restricting morals of community which is central here; second, it is 'the ultimate realization that she has awakened to the only way she can save herself. 'To save herself she has to give up her life, and surrenders' (p. 357). This means that suicide is not a failure at all, because despite all that, she is still able to save her essential inner self. By committing suicide, Edna does exactly what she already has predicted earlier, 'I would give up the unessential, I would give up my life... but I wouldn't give myself' (p. 333). Even though she says these words in connection with her children, they give a major reason why Edna chooses death. They show that her physical life is something inessential to her.

She actually has to choose what to give up in the situation: by the end of the novel, she finds herself living in a society that dictates on her how and what to be, namely the so called mother-woman described as follows: (the mother-woman seemed to prevail that summer at Grand Isle). It was easy to know them, fluttering about with extended, protecting wings when any harm, real or imaginary, threatened their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels (Vinaiar, p.77).

More important is the reference to Eustacia Vye of Thomas Hardy's nineteenth-century novel *The Return of the Native*. This is a heroine, who like Edna, has drowned herself into the sea (having in mind that Edna's death may be accidental, not intentional). Like Edna, Eustacia stands against the morals of Egden Heath, the place where she is born and reared, and commits adultery with Wildeve. She married the titular hero Clym Yeobright with the hope that she may go with him to Paris to satisfy her desires for glamorous life but in vain. Accordingly, she decides to depart from her environment and then elope with her former lover. Like Edna, she gratifies her sexual desire with a man other than her husband. As they run away by sea, they both get drowned. The question here is: why did not the adulterous Eustacia make the same controversy as Edna? We need to keep in mind that Edna's action is countered by the notion of her suicide. This fact made critics look at her with more sympathetic eye. Eustacia hates the monotony of her rural environment and finds her relief in her dreams of romantic love, which leads her nowhere except to a disastrous end (Treu, 126).

The moral inferred from Eustacia's death is that it is the outcome of her inability to cope with her surroundings which is an unwanted one. As in the case with *The Awakening's* heroines, the reader is expected to infer first the main reasons that have led the heroine to resort to adultery. It is an event followed by a disaster and may involve society and circumstances that permit such happenings to occur. In the case of Edna, the sea may represent nature and the natural world in which she has been rejected as an adulterous woman conflicting with her surroundings for the sake of crystallizing her individuality (Stein. 35). Her rejection comes as a result of not complying with society's moral responsibility.

The sea in literary terms is supposed to be both destructive and constructive; often it helps mankind but some times it destroys people. In Chopin's *The Awakening*, the sea plays an important role in the awakening of Edna Pontellier. The sea is the physical representation of Edna's desire to find her own freedom and identity. It is no coincidence that the sea appears in both the beginning and the end of the novel because once she was transformed by the sea, she could not go back to her old life. Whether willingly or not Edna surrendered to her fate into the sea in the same way *The Awakening* sank in the midst of other writers' rejected works when it was first published. In the same way, Eustacia has to struggle against the waves of the sea. Whatever it may symbolize, the sea merged with Edna for the sake of maintaining her individuality as a woman of free mind and soul. Eustacia's struggle is symbolic of both her inner conflict against the social morals and against the society that has long held them. Other characters like Thomasin who are in harmony with their surroundings remain alive and accept their submissiveness

to their society's conventions and morals (True, 17). The reader is left to infer and conclude which party is right and the reasons behind it.

It is worth-mentioning that Edna and Eustacia have much in common and reflect many affinities. Both rebel against their social conventions and traditions. Both display adulterous intentions. And both display their individualities as liberated women who betray their husbands irrespective of the drastic consequences. Above all, they share the same death by water. When examining Chopin's Edna and comparing her with Hardy's Eustacia, we realize that Eustacia's appearance on the literary scene was not rejected at all by publishers and the matter passed as spontaneously and smoothly as possible. Hardy's novel was received with as much greetings, warmth, and success as one can imagine (Stein, 25).

One may ask the question: why was Chopin's work very much similar to Hardy's rejection? One simple answer to this question, as Byam (1983) mentions is that Edna's character and her revolt were drawn by a woman novelist who, being a woman, has got no right to talk about matters of sex and the rejection of conventions and traditions on the part of her heroines. Indeed she was not allowed to go deeper than this and recall a witness and even evidence from the American soil. It is important to notice Hawthorn's *The Scarlet Letter* and check the striking differences. Hawthorn's novel deals with adultery, committed by Hester, symbolizing innocence, purity, and piety, and would not face the same fate as Edna. Perhaps one reason behind this. is the fact that Hawthorn's intention lies in revealing the state of hypocrisy and double-dealing inherent in this society rather than merely showing protest and discontent of women.

Thus *The Awakening* is not devoid of the moral presence concerning the independence, self-hood, and the individuality of a woman who found her relief and means to achieve her aim in her sexual act as a way of expression made by the writer and not as a self-indulgent process. What Edna has done is not merely idiosyncratic or completely alien since her country abounds with her type.

Kate Chopin experienced different lifestyles throughout her time, which bestowed upon her a realm of societal understanding and analysis. Her childhood consisted of an upbringing by women with ancestry descending from both Irish and French families. Chopin also found herself within the Creole part of the nation after she joined her husband in Louisiana. As a result, many of her stories and sketches were about her life in Louisiana in addition to the incorporation of her less than typical portrayals of women as individuals with clear-cut wants and needs. Kate Chopin's seemingly unique writing style did in fact emerge from an admiration of Guy de Maupassant, who was a French short story writer (Koloski, 122).

Chopin admired Maupassant's realism and formal sophistication. Her respect for his frank treatment of forbidden subjects inspired her to translate a number of his stories, but their controversial nature made publication difficult. Many of the short stories by Maupassant that she translated into English contain topics or themes she was to return to with great effect in *The Awakening*: marital unhappiness, adultery, isolation, suicide, and sexuality. 'Here was life, not fiction.' She wrote in her diary. Here was a man who escaped from tradition and authority, who had entered into himself and looked out upon life through his own being and with his own eyes; and who, in a



direct way told us what he saw' (Per,43). Kate Chopin went beyond Maupassant's technique and style and gave her writing a flavor of its own. She had an ability to perceive life and put it down on paper creatively. She put much concentration and emphasis on women's lives and their continual struggles to create an identity of their own within the boundaries of patriarchy. Not many writers during the mid to late 19th century were bold enough to address subjects that Chopin willingly took on. "Kate was neither a feminist nor a suffragist, she said so. She was nonetheless a woman who took woman extremely seriously" ( p. 166). She never doubted women's ability to be strong. Despite this fact, there is no question regarding where Chopin's sympathies set. It lay with the individual in the context of his and her moral personal life and society (Toth, 99).

Having tackled controversial issues related to women, Chopin developed the moral responsibility of her characters. Chopin through her stories wrote her own autobiography and documented her surroundings; Chopin lived at a time when her surroundings included the abolitionist movements and the emergence of feminism. Her ideas and descriptions were not true word for word, yet there was an element of nonfiction lingering throughout each story. Chopin took strong interest in her surroundings and put many of her observations to words. Jane Le Marquand (p. 165) saw Chopin's writings as a new feminist voice, while other intellectuals recognize it as the voice of an individual who happens to be a woman writing about her own moral responsibility. Marquand writes, 'Chopin undermines patriarchy by endowing the other, the woman, with an individual identity and sense of self to which the letters she leaves behind give voice' (p.165). The official version of her life constructed by men around her is challenged and overthrown by the

woman of the story. Chopin may have been utilizing her creative writing skills to relay a nonfiction point of view regarding her belief in the strength of women. The idea of creative nonfiction might be seen as relevant in this case. In order for a story to be autobiographical, or even biographical, Marquand goes on to write, there has to be a nonfictional element, which more often than not exaggerates the truth to spark and hold interest for the readers (p. 170). There are valuable points of view outside the feminist monopoly of criticism on women's writers but these voices do not have force in this time of political correctness. Chopin may have felt just as surprised by the stamp on her work as feministic as she had been in her own time by the stamp of immorality. It is difficult in any time in history for critics to regard writers as individuals with personal views with no special message to a particular faction in society.

Chopin's voice concerning the unfolding of the situation of sex is not only shared by woman herself, but also by man who is then to be held responsible in the same manner as woman. Chopin found it necessary to raise her voice and object to those practices that just tolerate men's adultery and blame women's. This may be one of the questions to be rejected by society. In the same way, Samuel Richardson, the heroine, is to be blamed for her sin of adultery, while the man who has already seduced her is left free. Clarissa has to suffer alone her calamity which eventually leads to her suicide.

Chopin's moral responsibility springs from the fact that her treatment of the topic of man-woman relationship stresses the justices and equality in dealing with both. Her aim is to encourage those addressing this cause that women are to have their own individuality as human beings in the same way

as men: women should not be undervalued even when it comes to the question of sex. Chopin's adoption of the subject matter related to sex is really what she realizes in her environment that permits such adulterous practices before marriage until they become accepted social traditions and morals. It was the decree of society to have such ideals, conventions, and morals as these. To adopt subject matters related to sex is supposed to be realistic in so far as it is a natural practice made by men and women on legal and illegal grounds. And it is the same society that rejected her novel. However, despite her conviction about the normality of these matters, she has to put up with the flat rejection of her novel by society, and its representative circles.

## Chapter Three

### **Kate Chopin's Moral Responsibility in *The Awakening* and 'The Storm':**

#### Section One: *The Awakening*

*The Awakening* is a book that was ahead of its time. Few of Chopin's literary contemporaries came into contact with the book. It was described by critics as morbid and gilded dirt; it shocked the readers of 1899 and even managed to have itself censored in national press. Thus, *The Awakening* as a solitary soul became a solitary book and remained unread by several generations (Baym, 18).

However, being ahead of its time does not explain why it was such a failure. Such an explanation cannot be arrived at by referring solely to the text, without at least examining the context of its literary tradition. Since the book was judged on moral grounds, one can not help looking back at the literary and social values it opposed so that a fair assessment of the book and its writer can be reached.

The book speaks for a transitional phase in American women's writing. When Chopin wrote *The Awakening* in 1899, she could look back at least two generations of female literary precursors. Novelists such as Harriet, Beecher and Susan Warner were born in the early decades of the nineteenth century. They began publishing stories and novels in the 1850s and 1860s that reflected dominant expressive and symbolic models of an American woman's culture (Marquand, 89).

The phase was primarily defined by the veneration of motherhood, by intense mother-daughter bonds, and by intimate female friendships. Although

premarital relationship between the sexes was subject to severe restrictions, romantic friendships between women were admired and encouraged because of the common views of the nineteenth century that woman did not have the same erotic desires as men (Ryan,22). This belief of the presumable passionlessness of female had its advantages and disadvantages for woman. It reinforced the notion that women were purer and spiritually more refined, and thus morally superior to men. Moreover, the homosocial world of women's culture allowed much leeway for physical intimacy and touch, yet these incidents were not situations as erotic expressions.

The mid-nineteenth-century code of values growing out of women's culture was also sustained by sermons, child-rearing manuals, and sentimental fiction. Women writers advocated motherly influences as an effective solution to such social problems as alcoholism, crime, slavery and war (Hedrick 94). Pre-civil war women's fiction, variously described as literary domesticity or the sentimental novel, celebrates and idealizes matriarchal institutions and the mother-child relationship (p. 94).

"The nineteenth century American domestic culture was permeated by images of the kitchen, the heavenly mother's garden, with its fragrant female flowers and energetic male bees; the caged songbird, which represents the creative woman in her domestic sphere".

The sentimentalists did not identify with the figure of the artist; they conceptualized authorship as a profession rather than a calling (Ryan 1982). Women authors did not tend to think of themselves as artists or justify

themselves in the language of art. In other words, the fiction of this generation was severely restricted. They claimed affiliation with literary sorority, a society of sisters whose motives were moral rather than aesthetic. This is why their books were not taken seriously by male critics (Smith-Rosenberg,29).

The next generation of American women writers, however, found themselves in a different cultural situation. After the Civil War, the homosocial world of women's culture began to dissolve as women demanded entrance to higher education, the professions, and the political world. Women were attracted to the male world of art and prestige. They began to assert themselves as daughters of literary fathers as well as literary mothers (Smith-Rosenberg.31). Claiming both female and male aesthetic model, they felt free to present themselves as artists and to write confidently about the art of fiction in such essays as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps 'Art- for- Truth's- Sake'. (Phelps, 23). Among the differences they had between themselves and their predecessors was the question of selfishness, and the ability to put literary ambitions before domestic duties. Although they were strongly influenced in their work by their predecessors, they considered it incomplete (Baym, 30).

I think that female writers of this generation chose to give their work the utmost priority. The 1870s and 1880s were an epoch of single women, and many unmarried women writers of this generation lived alone. Many of them speculated in their writing on the conflicts between maternity and artistic creativity. Motherhood no longer seemed to be the motivating force of writing, but rather its opposite (Woolf, 53). Thus the artistic fulfillment required the sacrifice of maternal drives.

Torn between their supreme capacity to love and their unique individuality, the women's culture, declined after the civil war, mourned their demise by investing their traditional images with a mythic significance. However, they managed to get the new generation of women writers of the 1890s ready. The new women writers were the products of both Darwinian skepticism and aesthetic sophistication, and their relationship to women's culture were hostile, which they often saw as boring and restrictive (Copp, 50). The ways they looked upon female sexuality were revolutionary. They maintained that the feminine passionlessness wasn't innate but rather the result of prudery and repression (Kelly, 124).

The new women writers demanded freedom and innovation. Their works were far from being realistic; they were interludes of fantasy and parable, especially episodes in which a woman would dream of an entirely different world or would cross-dress, experimenting with the freedom available to boys and men. I think that these narratives were efforts to explore some unrecorded female consciousness.

Kate Chopin's literary evolution took her progressively through three generations of American culture and woman writings. Born in 1850, she grew with the great bestsellers of the American and English sentimentalists. She had shared, through her adolescence, an intimate friendship with Kitty Garasche, a classmate at the academy of the Sacred Heart. According to her biographer Emily Toth, their friendship ended in 1870 when Kate Chopin married and Kitty Garasche entered a convent (Toth, 385). Yet when Oscar Chopin died in 1883, his young widow went to visit her old friend and was shocked by her blind isolation from the world. Her experience of isolation,

which is represented in *The Awakening* in Edna's defiant solitude, has placed her among the minorities who broke radically with the norms of a dominant culture.

This isolation has placed her in a vantage point outside the moral standards of her society. Out there, she can evaluate, judge and choose deliberately for herself, whatever she sees proper. Chopin employs her experience of isolation and projects it onto Edna's character. Edna's physical solitude strengthens her development. Her separation from her husband and society affects the emergence of her true self and she becomes more able to focus on her natural reactions to the world. She becomes more attuned to the needs of her body and the life within her. These changes are noted by both Dr. Mandelet and Victor Lebrun. Both are pleased by the changes in Edna : Victor ,the hero's brother, finds her 'ravishing' and 'improved,' and Dr. Mandelet ,the family doctor, describes a metamorphosis from 'the listless woman he had known into being who, for the moment, seemed palpitant with the forces of life ... there was no repression in her glance or gesture' (*The Awakening*, 77).

The change she displays had contributed much to the shocking effect of *The Awakening* to the readers of the 1899 (Fox-Genovese, 34). This is due to Chopin's rejection of the conventions of women's writings and Edna Pontellier's rejection of the domestic empire of the mother. In the novel, the character, Edna, has neither mother nor daughter, and even refuses to go to her sister's wedding (p.34). Her attitude has contributed to worsen the poor reception of this novel and its author.



(Edna is a robust woman who doesn't deny her appetite. She eats hearty meals of pate pompano steak and boiled chicken; she bites off chunks of crusty bread and snacks on beer and Gruyere cheese she sips brandy, wine and champagne). This runs counter to the writings of her predecessors' heroines who either nurture or subsist upon meager vegetarian meals. Nature can't be wrong. To Chopin, there is no point of a culture, with all its refined laws and moral codes if it goes against the most natural of needs.

*The Awakening* is insistently erotic, explicitly involved with the body and self-awareness. Although Edna's actual seduction by Arobin takes place in the narrative between chapters 31 and 32, Chopin deliberately evokes sexuality through images and details. In keeping with the novel's emphasis on the self, several scenes suggest Edna's initial auto-eroticism. Edna's midnight swim, which awakens the

first felt throbbing of desire, takes place in an atmosphere of erotic fragrance, 'strange, rare odors a tangle of the sea-smell and of weeds and damp new-plowed earth, mingled with the heavy perfume of a field of white blossoms' (*The Awakening*, 74).

Similarly voluptuous scene is her flesh as she lies in a 'strange quaint bed with its sweet country odor of laurel' (*The Awakening*, 102).

Women are no longer the angels of the old days. In *The Awakening*, they have needs, desires, and a natural right to have emotions just like men. In the proceeding generations, women were forbidden to have such a body. Kate Chopin sensed the hypocrisy in denying expression to the body, as seen in her protagonist's deliberate violation of all moral norms of her time.

Edna reminds Dr Mandlet of 'some beautiful. Sleek animal waking up the sun', (p, 91) and we recall that among her fantasies in listening to music is the image of a lady stroking a cat. This image both conveys Edna's sensuality and it hints at the self-contained, almost masturbatory, quality of her sexuality. Her rendezvous with Robert takes place in a sunny garden where both stroke a drowsy cat's silky fur, and Arobin first seduces her by smoothing her hair with his 'soft, magnetic hand' (*The Awakening*, 120). The body is the most private and the most natural right to any living orgasm. Chopin saw that knowledge begins from self-knowledge. This might be the reason behind Chopin's resorting to sexuality as a major factor in Edna's awakening. She sees that society and culture are not the judges of what is right and wrong. The author seems to think that what is natural can't be wrong. Otherwise it couldn't have existed in the first place (Chevigny, 90).

By nature's code, Edna is not wicked, though her attempt to adultery and disregard of the conventions do break religious and social precepts. On the contrary, sensuality is not a negative, and it is not linked with materialism, or at least that is how the novel and its characters show. "There was a feeling of having descended in the social scale, with a corresponding sense of having risen in the spiritual". (*The Awakening*, 118). Thus, Edna is as portrayed more spiritual, because she is becoming an individual, and because she is pursuing her own pleasure and satisfying 'nature requirements' as the narrator describes. In contrast, society appears as a negative entity since it demands conformity and stifles individualism. Edna is caught between natural impulses and the "moral consequences, of arbitrary conditions which we create, and which we feel obliged to maintain at any cost" (Chopin, 123).

Despite these departures from tradition, there are other respects in which the novel seems very much of its time. As its title suggests, *The Awakening* is a novel about a process rather than a program, about a passage rather than a destination. Edna's inner world, the world of selfhood, develops in the novel out of the chaos and ignorance into the light of knowledge. However, it also develops out of slavery to uncontrollable desire and appetite. Chopin's narrator in *The Awakening* doesn't fault Edna's sensuality or individualism, dissatisfaction with Edna's stunted growth is manifested in her descriptions of Edna only as child-like development, 'she was like the little, tottering, stumbling, clutching child, who all of a sudden realizes its powers, and walks for the first time, alone, all boldly and with over-confidence' (*The Awakening*, 31).

Edna's evolution follows in pattern the three phases of American women's culture, yet remaining defiant and resistant to them. Finally, she goes beyond her fantasies of fusion with another person to self-definition.

Edna begins her life as a representative of women's domestic culture. However she doesn't find herself in it. The first chapters of *The Awakening* are certainly set to suggest the growing divorce between Edna's interests and desires and Leonce's obsessions with stock market, property and brokerage business.

In turning away from her marriage, Edna initially looks back to women's culture rather than forward to another man. Edna turns to Grand Isle which is a female colony. Not only was it owned and run by single woman, Madam Leburn, but also its principle inhabitants are actually women and children whose husbands and fathers visit them only on weekends. And like

many places that are significant for women, it is outside patriarchal culture. It is beyond the city where men make history, on a shore that marks the margin where nature intersects with culture. It might be noted here that Chopin's moral code owes a lot to Darwin's theory of evolution. Man is not unique with his culture. Culture is the product of nature. Any moral law must conform to nature. And since nature always has its way with things, Chopin employs sex as an expression of freedom, a freedom that is not subject to man-made laws viz., sensuous liberties.

Edna's awakening, however, begins not with a man, but with Adele Ratignoll, the empress of 'mother-women' in Grand Isle. A 'self-contained' woman, Edna has never had any intimate relationships with members of her own sex. Edna was trying to identify with members of her own sex. Such identification was necessary for Edna to begin developing her own independent character. And since the beginning, she was ill-adjusted to the moral laws of her peers.

Thus it is Adele who belatedly initiates Edna into a world of female love and ritual on the first step of her sensual voyage of self-discovery. Edna's first attraction to Adele is physical: 'the excessive physical charm of the Creole had first attracted her, for Edna had a sensuous susceptibility to beauty' (*The Awakening*, 37). At the beach in hot sun, she responds to Adele's caresses, the first she has ever known from another woman, as Adele clasps her hand 'firmly and warmly' and strokes it fondly. The touch provokes Edna to an unaccustomed candor; leaning her head on Adele's shoulder and confiding some of her secrets, she begins to feel 'intoxicated'. The bond between them goes beyond sympathy, as Chopin notes, to 'what we might well call love' (P,

37). To Chopin, solidarity is important, although it disappoints Edna, and it turns into oppressive obligation and a strenuous subjection of the individual's freedom.

In some respects, Edna, who is motherless, seeks a surrogate mother in Adele and looks for her nurturance. Adele provides maternal encouragement for Edna's painting and tells her that her 'talent is immense' (*The Awakening*, 156). Characteristically, Adele has rationalized her own art as maternal project: 'she was keeping up her music on account of the children... a means of brightening the home and making it attractive' (*The Awakening*, 66). Edna's responses to Adele's music have been similarly tame and sentimental. Her revealing fantasies as she listens to Adele play easy pieces suggest the restriction and decorum of the female world: 'a dainty young woman... taking mincing dancing steps, as she came down a long avenue between tall hedges' (*The Awakening*, 70). Women's art, as Adele presents, is social, pleasant, and undemanding. It does not conflict with her duties as a wife and mother, and can even be seen to enhance them. Edna understands this well; as she retorts when her husband recommends Adele as a model of an artist, 'she isn't a musician and I'm not a painter!' (*The Awakening*. 161)

Yet the relationship with conventional Adele educates the immature Edna to respond for the first time both to a different kind of sexuality and to the unconventional and difficult art of Mademoiselle Reisz. In response to Adele's interest, Edna begins to think about her own past and to analyze her own relationship that she becomes 'Edna' in narrative rather than 'Mrs. Pontellier'. 'Mrs. Pontellier sitting idle, exchanging occasional words glances

or smile which indicated a certain advanced stage of intimacy and camaraderie' (*The Awakening*,27).

We see the next stage of Edna's awakening in her relationship with Mademoiselle Reisz, who initiates her into the world of art. Significantly, this passage also takes place through a female rather than male mentor, and, as with Adele, there is something more intense than friendship tying the two women to each other.

Whereas Adele's fondness of Edna, however, is depicted as maternal and womanly, Mademoiselle Reisz's attraction to Edna suggests something more perverse. The pianist is obsessed with Edna's beauty, raves over her figure in bathing suit, greets her as 'ma belle' and 'ma rein', holds her hands, and describe herself as 'a foolish old woman whom you have captivated' (*The Awakening*, 83). If Adele is a surrogate for Edna's dead mother and the intimate friend she never had as a girl, Mademoiselle Reisz, whose music reduces Edna to passionate sobs, seems to be a surrogate lover. And whereas Adele is a 'faultless Madonna' (*The Awakening*,12) who speaks for the values and laws of Creole community, Mademoiselle Reisz is a renegade, self-assertive and outspoken. She has no patience with petty social rules and violates the most basic expectations of femininity. She is so unattractive, unpleasant and unwomanly as to seem partially demented' (*The Awakening*,139). Even Edna occasionally perceives Mademoiselle Reisz's awkwardness as a kind of deformity; she is sometimes offended by the old woman's candor and is not sure whether she likes her.

Despite her eccentricities, Mademoiselle Reisz seems 'to reach Edna's 'spirit and set free' (*The Awakening*, 112). Mademoiselle Reisz voice in the

novel seems to speak for the author's view of art and the artist. Mademoiselle Reisz tells Edna that the artist must possess 'the courageous soul that dares and defies'(p, 99) and must have strong wings to soar 'above the level plain of tradition and prejudice' (*The Awakening*,27). Since solidarity didn't serve Edna any good, she decided that might as well be defiantly left alone. Madame Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz not only represent alternative roles and influences for Edna in the world of the novel, but also suggest different plots and conclusions. Adele's story suggests that Edna will give up her rebellion, return to marriage, have another baby, and by degrees learn to appreciate, love, and even desire her husband.

Such was the plot of late-nineteenth-century sentimental novels about erring young women married to older men. Mademoiselle Reisz's story suggests that Edna will lose her beauty, her youth, her husband, and children i.e. everything, in short, but her art and her pride she would some kind of New Orleans friary.

However, Kate Chopin and Edna ,who is the heroine, seem to be oscillating between two worlds, caught between contradictory definitions of femininity and creativity, and seeking either to synthesize them or go beyond them to an emaciated womanhood and an emancipated fiction. Edna's yearning for an autonomous life is akin to Kate Chopin's own yearning to write works beyond female plots and feminine endings.

One of these days," she said, "I'm going to pull ... myself together for a while and think--try to determine what character of a woman I am; for, candidly, I don't know. By all the codes which I am acquainted with, I am a devilishly

wicked specimen of the sex. But some way I can't convince myself that I am. I must think about it (*The Awakening*,98).

Kate Chopin wishes to reject both endings, suggested by Reisz and Adele, and escapes from the literary tradition they represented. But her own literary solitude and her resistance to allying herself with a specific ideological or aesthetic position, made it impossible for her to work out something different and new. "Edna remains very much entangled in her own emotions and moods, rather than moving beyond them to real self-understanding and to an awareness of her relationship to her society". She alternates between two moods of 'intoxication' and 'languor', expansive states of activity, optimism, power and passive states of contemplation, despondency, and sexual thralldom. Edna feels intoxicated when she is assertive and in control. She first experiences such exultant feelings when she confides her story to Adele Ratignolle and again when she learns how to swim: 'intoxicated with her newly conquered power' (*The Awakening*, 76), she swims out too far. She is excited to gamble successfully or stakes at the race track, and finally she feels 'an intoxication of expectancy' (*The Awakening*, 52) about awakening Robert with a seductive kiss and playing the dominant role with her.

There were days when she was very happy without knowing ... why. She was happy to be alive and breathing, when her whole being seemed to be one with the sunlight, the color, the odors, and the luxuriant warmth of some perfect Southern day. She liked then to wander alone into strange and unfamiliar places. She discovered many a sunny, sleepy corner, fashioned to dream in. And she found it good to dream and to be alone and unmolested.



There were days when she was unhappy, she did not know why—when it did not seem worthwhile to be glad or sorry, to be alive or dead; when life appeared to her like a grotesque pandemonium and humanity like worms struggling blindly toward inevitable annihilation. She could not work on such a day, nor weave fancies to stir her pulses and warm her blood (*The Awakening*, 163).

But these emotional peaks are countered by equally intense moods of depression, reverie, or stupor. At worst, these are states of 'indescribable oppression,' (*The Awakening*, 16) 'vague anguish' (*The Awakening*, 17) or 'hopeless ennui' (*The Awakening*, 158). At best, they are moments of passive sensuality in which Edna feels drugged. Arobin's lips and hands, for example, act like a narcotic upon her, although she doesn't love him; moreover, she knows she doesn't love him: 'he stood close to her, and the effrontery in his eyes repelled the old, vanishing self in her, yet drew all her awakening sensuousness' (*The Awakening*, 85). However, the affair with Arobin represents Edna's failure to construct a moral code that doesn't contradict nature, and at the same time doesn't overlook culture. Edna is overconfident in her ability to cast off all ties, and her refusal to accept responsibility.

Edna welcomes both kinds of feeling because they are intense, and thus preserve her from the tedium of ordinary existence. They are in fact adolescent emotions, suitable to a heroine who is belatedly awakening. Edna, nevertheless, does not go beyond them to an adulthood that offers experience or responsibilities." In her relationships with men, she both longs for complete and romantic fusion with fantasy lover and is unprepared to share her life with another person".

Chopin's account of the Pontelliers' marriage, for example, shows Edna's tacit collusion in a sexual bargain that allows her to keep to herself. Although she thinks of her marriage to a paternalistic man twelve years her senior as 'purely an accident' (P, 49), the text makes it clear that Edna has married Leonce primarily to secure a fatherly protector who will not make too many domestic, emotional, or erotic demands on her.

They do not have an interest in each other's activities or thoughts, and have agreed to a complete separation of their social spheres; Leonce is fully absorbed by the business, social, and erotic activities of the male sphere, the city, Corondelets street, Kleins hotel at Grand Isle, where he gambles, and especially the new Orleans world of clubs and red light district. Adele Ratignolle warns Edna of the risks of Mr. Pontellier's club life and the diversion he finds there. 'It's a pity Mr. Pontellier doesn't stay home more in the evenings' she tells Edna, 'I think you would be more well if you don't mind my saying it- more united, if he did.' 'Oh! Dear no!' Edna responds, with a blank look in her eyes. 'What should I do if he stayed home? We wouldn't have anything to say to each other' Edna gets this blank look in her eyes – eyes that are originally described as quick and right- whenever she is confronted with something she does not want (*The Awakening*, 194).

When she joins the Ratignolles at home together, Edna does not envy them, although, as the author remarks, 'if ever the fusion of two human beings into one has been accomplished on this sphere it was surely in their union'. Instead, she is moved by pity for Adele's 'colorless existence which never uplifted its possessor beyond the region of blind contentment' (*The Awakening*, 148).

Nonetheless, Edna does not easily relinquish her fantasy of rhapsodic oneness with a perfect lover. She imagines that such a union will bring permanent ecstasy; it will lead, not simply to domestic harmony like that of the Ratignolles, but to life's delirium. In her story of the woman who paddles away with her lover in a pirogue and is never heard of again, Edna elaborates on her version as she describes the lovers, 'close together, rapt in oblivious forgetfulness, drifting into the unknown' (*The Awakening*, 76). Although her affair with Arobin shocks her in an awareness of her own erotic passions, it leaves her illusions about love intact. Desire, she understands, can exist independently of love. But love retains its magical aura; indeed, her erotic awakening with Arobin generates an even 'fiercer, more overpowering love' for Robert. And when Robert comes back, Edna has persuaded herself that the force of their love will overwhelm all obstacles: 'we shall be everything to each other. Nothing else in the world is of any consequence' (Chopin, 308). Her intention seems to be that they will go off together into the unknown, like the lovers in her story. But Robert cannot accept such a role, and when he leaves her, Edna finally realizes 'that the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him, would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone' (Chopin, 325).

The other side of Edna's terror of solitude, however, is the bondage of class as well as gender that keeps her in the prison of the self. In the beginning of the novel, in the bustling social world of Grand Isle, caught in her domestic roles of a wife and a mother, Edna pictures solitude as alien, masculine, and frightening, a naked man standing beside a 'desolate rock' (*The Awakening*, 70) by the sea in an attitude of 'hopeless resignation' (*The Awakening*, 70). She goes blank too whenever she might be expected to

notice the double standard of ladylike privilege and oppression of women in southern society. Floating along in her ‘mazes of inward contemplation’ (*The Awakening*, 36), Edna barely notices the silent dark nurse who takes care of her children, the little black girl who works the treadles of Madame Lebrun’s sewing machine, the laundress who keeps her in frilly white, or the maid who picks up her broken glass. She never makes connection between her lot and theirs.

The scene in which Edna witnesses Adele in childbirth is the first time in the novel when she identifies with another woman’s pain, and draws some halting conclusions about female and the human condition, rather than simply about her own ennui.

Edna’s births have taken place in a state of unconsciousness. When she goes to Adele’s childbed, ‘her own experiences seemed so far away, unreal, and only half-remembered. She recalled faintly an ecstasy of pain, the heavy odor of chloroform, a stupor which had deadened sensation’ (*The Awakening*,149). The stupor that deadens sensation is an apt metaphor for the real and imaginary narcotics by fantasy, money and patriarchy. These have protected Edna from pain for most of her life, but which also kept her from becoming an adult. This experience shakes Edna’s hopes of making the social codes coincide with the natural ones. For nature secures ‘mothers for the race’ (*The Awakening*,123). Here, Edna’s selfishness shows her egotistic taste for solitude. Edna is trapped with what she perceives as enslavement to her children. ‘The children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her; who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul’s slavery for the rest of her days’ (*The Awakening*,127).

But in thinking of nature's trap for women, Edna never moves from her own questioning to the larger social statement, that is feminism. Her ineffectuality is partly a product of her time; as a heroine in transition between the homosocial and the heterosexual worlds, Edna has lost some of the sense of connectedness to other women that might help her plan her future. Though she has sojourned in the female colony of Grand Isle, it is far from being a femininity utopia. The novel suggests, in fact, something of the historical loss for women transferring the sense of the self to relationships with men (Ryan, 93). And again both Chopin and Edna's fail to synthesize the natural with the cultural.

Edna's solitude is one of the reasons that her emancipation does not take her far. Despite her efforts to escape the rituals of femininity, Edna seems fated to reenact them, even though, as Chopin recounts these scenes, she satirizes and revises their conventions. Satirizing such settings attests to Edna's and Chopin's desire for emancipation. One cannot help agreeing with Helena Michie when she says:

'One cannot escape the discipline of the body by invoking the site of that discipline: it is at home, after all, that women embark on diets, read magazines which produce the desire for that dieting, shave their legs and tease their hair, do or do not have sex, and painfully negotiate the conflicting demands of femininity' (Michie, 25).

Indeed, most of Edna's moments of awakening take place far away from the city, Home, or Grand Isle or, far away from patriarchy, the mother empire,

and the convent. Her rejection indicates the society's failure to present Edna with a role model or support to help her live the life she wants.

Ironically, considering her determination to discard the trappings of her role as a society matron – her wedding ring, her 'reception day, her 'charming home' – the high point of Edna's awakening is the dinner party she gives for her twenty-ninth birthday. Edna's birthday begins like a drawing-room comedy. We are told the guest list, the seating plan, the menu, and the table setting; some of the guests are boring, and some do not like each other; and Madame Ratignolle does not show up at the last minute, and Mademoiselle Reisz makes disagreeable remarks in French.

Yet as it proceeds to its climax, the dinner party also has a symbolic intensity and resonance that makes it Edna's most authentic act of self-definition. Not only is the twenty-ninth birthday a feminine threshold, the passage from youth to middle age, but Edna is literally on the threshold of a new life in her little house. The dinner, as Arabin remarks, is an overthrow of her marriage, all the more an act of aggression because Leonce will pay the bills. Moreover, she has created an atmosphere of splendor and luxury that seems to exceed the requirements of the occasion. The table is set with gold satin, serves china, crystal, silver, gold; there is 'champagne to swim in' (Chopin, 242), and Edna magnificently dressed in satin and lace gown, with a cluster of diamonds (a gift from Leonce) in her hair. Presiding at the head of the table, she seems powerful and autonomous: 'there was something in her attitude which suggested the regal woman, the one who rules, who looks on, who stands alone' (Chopin,258). Edna's moment of mastery thus takes place in the context of familiar ceremony of women's culture. Indeed, dinner parties

are virtual set pieces of feminist aesthetics, suggesting that the hostess is a kind of artist in her own sphere, someone whose creativity is channeled into the production of social and domestic harmony. Edna exhausts herself in creating a sense of fellowship at her table, although in the midst of her guests she still experiences an 'acute longing' 'the unattainable' (Chopin, 252).

Nevertheless, there is a rift between the intensity of Edna's desire, a desire that by now has gone beyond erotic fulfillment to take in a much vaster range of metaphysical longings, and the means that she has to express herself. Edna may look like a queen, but still she is a housewife. The political and aesthetic weapons she has in her hands are forks and knives, glasses and dresses.

Can Edna, and Kate Chopin, then, escape from conforming with traditions only in death? Some critics have seen Edna's much debated suicide as a heroic embrace of independence and a symbolic resurrection into myth (Chevigny, 80). Readers of the 1890s were well-accustomed to drowning as the fictional punishment for female transgression against morality, and most contemporary critics of *The Awakening* thus automatically interpreted Edna's suicide as the wages of sin (Smith-Rosenberg, 31).

We might see Edna's death as a further step in her maturation, for her suicide is her first act since her awakening that is motivated by consideration for others. She does not want to trample the lives of her children by disgracing them with her actions and slighting them with neglect. Her suicide comes shortly after Madame Ratignoll's exhortation: 'think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them!' (P, 122). It seems that Edna reflects upon her responsibility as a mother, and her place in the society. Thus her suicide can be seen as an act of self-sacrifice. However, at the same time

Edna's assertion to Madame Ratignolle that she would 'never sacrifice herself for children'(P, 126) indicates that her solitude is only matched by the sea, that she once and for all refuses to give up herself even to the world.

Chopin's point is that without the support of society, a mystical experience of spiritual awakening risks annihilation of the self. Edna loses herself in the sea, her spirit is intact but her suicide demonstrates her inability to live in society as she wishes.

## **Section two: 'The Storm'**

In terms of Chopin's own literary development 'The Storm' constitutes a pivotal work. While it was in press, she wrote one of her finest and most daring short stories, 'The Storm', which surpasses even *The Awakening* in terms of expressive freedom. Chopin broke with literary traditions of her time, in terms of the form and symbolism (Fetters,3). However, it remains a tantalizing fragment hinting at the direction Chopin's work might have taken if *The Awakening* had been a critical success.

Externally, the form of the story appears as if it were an organized plot, mythical in nature, the kind that was prevalent during her times. Its symbolism resembles the tradition which Chopin has sprung from. However, she employs it in a different and transgressive way.

More shocking is the fact that this story verges on the immoral. Of course, this is not a major fact if one viewed 'The Storm' in the context of Chopin's work in general. Chopin was not a didactic feminist novelist. In reviews published in the 1880s, she indicated her impatience with novelists such as Zola and Hardy, who tried to instruct their readers (Bayn. 22). She distrusted



the rhetoric of such writers. The eleventh commandment, she noted, is 'Thou shall not Preach'. Instead she tried to record, in her own way and in her own voice, a woman's 'inward life' in all its 'vague, and tangled, chaotic' tumult.

Still, this is not exactly the case in Edna's process of Awakening. Chopin was still constrained by the convention and the traditions of her time. It was in her short stories that she has gone far beyond the slavery of the soul. 'The Storm' hints that Chopin was constructing a subjective experience, disillusioned, autonomous, and anti-ideological.

The story begins in a store, in a commercial place, or the world of patriarchy,

The leaves were so still that even Bibi thought it was going to rain. Bobinôt, who was accustomed to converse on terms of perfect equality with his little son, called the child's attention to certain sombre clouds that were rolling with sinister intention from the west, accompanied by a sullen, threatening roar. They were at Friedheimer's store and decided to remain there till the storm had passed. They sat within the door on two empty kegs. Bibi was four years old and looked very wise (The storm, 1).

We must recognize the significance of that since in such institutions the political authorities, which exercise repression, reside. The agents of that world are caged inside because of a storm. The agents would be Bobinot, Calixta's husband, and Bibi, their son.

The next scene is Calixta at home, doing her daily chores. The home in the light of Chopin's literary contexts symbolizes the female body. However,

Chopin twists this symbol to serve her own purposes. In 'The Storm', the home is not a disciplinary place, where the female body is framed and formalized to constitute the mother-woman, who are according to Chopin, not the self. The home is the place where the female subject is constructed and interpellated with self. Edna was faintly aware of that. In her argument with Adele, Edna fails to tell the difference. It is precisely this illusion that Edna was trying to break from. This is exactly what Chopin meant by 'soul's slavery'.

However, Chopin has succeeded, where Edna has failed. In employing the house as Calixta's erotic expression, Chopin doesn't only break from her tradition, but satirizes it cynically as well. If, Edna couldn't bring herself to believe that the moral authorities which were oppressing her neither spring from the female nature nor from the very nature of the human condition, Calixtia seems oblivious of all that. Chopin has finally realized that the rules that were inscribed upon the female body, symbolized by the home, were purely political.

Calixta is trapped at home because of a storm. She invites Alcee who happens to be nearby at such a terrible weather. She invites him in, and almost spontaneously, they are engaged in an intercourse. Again, Chopin breaks from her romantic heritage, by denying the illusion that love is a process which aims at the refinement of the soul. More likely, it aims at the subjection of the soul. Romance which does not escape ideology is a perverted political apparatus which aims at the maintenance of patriarchal domination (Fettrily. 14). Chopin skips all that moves directly towards action. The genius of that is

the fact that only in the realm of action, the inner workings of the subject are revealed, and in spontaneous actions, the true self eludes the subject.

However, the question is why should it always be eroticism which Chopin employs as an unstable expression of freedom? In the nineteenth-century world of industrial revolution, nature was no longer relevant to the human life. Human subject is defined in terms of culture even under the disguise of nature. However eroticism remains immune to the orderly systematic world of culture and ideology,

And in spite of all the efforts to discipline the body through mental constructs, the body speaks and breaks free because unlike mental constructs it is infinite in nature. There is no way for developing a grand philosophy to circumscribe the entire human life. Chopin was faintly aware of such a notion in *The Awakening* ; hence the use of the symbol of the sea. And now, we have a storm.

Metaphors of femininity always construct analogies of liquidity to depict the female body. As the female body is prone to wetness, blood, milk, tears, and amniotic fluid, so Edna's association with sea constitutes a symbol of woman's nature. However, this metaphor suffers from a lack of lucidity. As the common conception has it, women are always associated with mystical, passive objects, such as the sea, witchcraft, and astrology. In *The Awakening*, Chopin's understanding of her femininity was far from being complete, and suffered the ideological injections of her time. In 'The Storm', she breaks completely with her tradition, associating the female identity with natural phenomena as powerful as a storm.

On one hand the sea is dark, lonesome, and passive, and a subject to patriarchal exploits. On the other hand the weather remains unpredictable, uncontrollable by human efforts. It is fickle and powerful, and at times, almost disastrous.

The storm as a metaphor for self-expression is a powerful and rather aggressive one. The storm is set in motion or function as a supernatural power that dissociates, the home, female self from the market and the patriarchal world. The storm offers Calixta presents an opening to express her body fully and without any moral, or to be more exact, political constraints.

“Do you remember in Assumption, Calixta?” (p, 3). This is how the action unfolds. Chopin relies on Calixta’s own subjective experiences as the original source for self-expression. In other words, Chopin, unlike her predecessors in Adele differentiates between what is moral and what is political? As implied in the discussion of *The Awakening*, the three generations of women writers that preceded Chopin have failed in terms of stumbling on the feminine self, hence, Edna’s failure and exile. Madame Adele and Mademoiselle Reisz represent women’s attempts at self-definition while she was revealed within the realm of the political. The first does that by a complete subordination to it while the latter does so by running counter. The ethical consequences of such attempts remain illusionary and made up, since they allay themselves to the established order. Even Edna’s immersion in the sea contributes to this end.

Calixta seems as if she were removed from all that. Hence the metaphors of purity and whiteness associated with her body

Now—well, now—her lips seemed in a manner free to be tasted, as well as her round, white throat and her whiter breasts. They did not heed the crashing torrents, and the roar of the elements made her laugh as she lay in his arms. She was a revelation in that dim, mysterious chamber; as white as the couch she lay upon. Her firm, elastic flesh that was knowing for the first time its birthright, was like a creamy lily that the sun invites to contribute its breath and perfume to the undying life of the world ('The Storm', 4).

Such metaphors are well designed to carry the reader away from images of adultery. Chopin, the enemy of preachers, could have not written a story advocating adultery as a remedy process for broken marriages. Emphasizing the first point, Chopin has gone far beyond morality and the politics of the soul's slavery. She is not trying to blur the thin line between morality and immorality. And she is far from advocating utilitarianism, the corner stone of the American law, which has subjected women with the narcotics of fantasies.

Alcee thinks,

in Assumption he had kissed her and kissed and kissed her; until his senses would well nigh fail, and to save her he would resort to a desperate flight. If she was not an immaculate dove in those days, she was still inviolate; a passionate creature whose very defenselessness had made her defense, against which his honor forbade him to prevail (P, 5).

When Alcee ruminates about this point, he is not actually displaying a double standard morality. Just because the story is a fragment, one should not yield to import to the text what is not in it. His thought, if taken literally, emphasizes the mystical power of the politics of discipline exercised upon the body of women.

In a general reading, one might be justified to think that the story depicts the failure of Calitxa and Alcee to live up to the virtue standards of the society. However this is not the case, and the images of purity, prevent such an interpretation. 'The generous abundance of her passion, without guile or trickery, was like a white flame which penetrated and found response in depths of his own sensuous nature that had never yet been reached' ('The Storm', 5). This encourages other interpretations.

'So the storm passed and everyone was happy' (The Storm, 7), this is how Chopin concludes her story. Again, one must remember that Chopin is not a utilitarian. Why was everyone one happy? How did the storm reduce the anxiety of Calitxa and Alcee? The answer to these questions brings us back to the beginning of the story, precisely to the moment of the action. As Calitxa and Alcee break free from bodily discipline, as they escape from their identities as imagined, politicized subjects, they perform an act of self-affirmation. After expressing freely the anxiety which they suffer from as a result of being framed in how they are supposed to be, they are ready to face their life in a new light.

The rain was over; and the sun was turning the glistening green world into a palace of gems. Calitxa, on the gallery, watched Alcée ride away.

He turned and smiled at her with a beaming face and she lifted her pretty chin in the air and laughed aloud (The Storm, 6).

This might be the logical implications of the action, although Chopin hints at it vaguely. However, Alcee's letter to his wife is the most intriguing outcome of that experience,

What could he have written, that was as magical as to make his wife feel like a maiden again. What happened to Alcee obviously goes beyond the pleasure induced by the reduction of erotic tension. And the same goes for our pedantic Calixta. What happened to them goes beyond the realm of the flesh (Toth, 93).

There is indeed a metaphysical element in Chopin's writings. As a matter of fact, she employs eroticism to reduce things to the bare minimum. But one must be careful when dealing with such a tricky concept such as metaphysics. The metaphysical element in Chopin's narratives springs from her own sense of aesthetics rather than morality,

Whatever we may do or attempt, despite the embrace and the transports of love, the hunger of the lips, we are always alone. I have dragged you out into the night in the vain hope of a moment's escape from the horrible solitude which overpowers me. But what is the use! I speak and you answer me, and still each of us is alone; side by side but alone ('The Storm', 3).

In 1865, these words, from a story by Guy de Maupassant called 'Solitude', which he has translated for St. Louis Magazine, expressed an urbane and a melancholy wisdom that Kate Chopin found compelling. Chopin shared Maupassant's views about human nature. Human beings are existentially alone. They even define themselves negatively. This explains her constant choice for the omniscient narrator (Fettrely,11). In a sense, none of her characters would be able to tell any of her stories because he/she would only have a knowledge of her/him self alone. It rids the text of the existential 'I' which is the subject, and as already mentioned, the subject cannot be identical with the self, no matter how far it resemble it.

The Awakening, Maupassant's credo, is almost explicit throughout the text. Edna escaped defining herself negatively only briefly, until she filled completely into non-being (Fettrely, 12). However that doesn't happen in 'The Storm'. Calixta exists, and exists only through the vehicle of the action. Calixta's escape is a positive one. It seems that Chopin wants to convey to us that self-definition, which is negative in nature, since there is no concept wide enough to encompass the nature of man, should not precede self-affirmation, which is positive in nature and exists only in the world of action. The action in 'The Storm' happens directly 'without guile or trickery' (The Storm, 2).

Chopin's 'The Storm' tosses away the mythical structure of the stories and novels of her time. In such a tradition, usually the narrative would lead to the heroine's punishment for her misdemeanor, and thus restoring peace to the disturbed order of things. One finds a glaring example of that in stories such as the Scarlet Letter, which is usually viewed mistakenly to the contrary. It is as if Chopin were trying to ridicule such a tradition with the implicit cynicism



which appears in the last line “So the storm passed and everyone was happy” (The Storm, 7). If anything, it attests to Chopin’s ability to think beyond the culture of the common sense, which views the world as an orderly chain of causes and effects. This alone is enough to secure her a position ahead of her time.

'The Storm' shows only too well how a literary tradition may be enabling, even essential in struggling to escape from tradition. Kate Chopin courageously risked social and literary ostracism since her *Awakening*. However, again, as in *The Awakening*, Chopin fails to make nature and culture coincide. In 'The Storm', Chopin depicts a world free from the restrictions of a society in order to offer her characters few moments of freedom. If *The Awakening* reflects Chopin’s failure in placing herself in the world, 'The Storm' emphasizes this failure again. 'The Storm' can be viewed as a criticism of spiritless and mechanical society where values and judgments are not placed in their right context. Their significance stems from other priorities and views that have nothing to do with what is intrinsic in man and his basic needs.

## Chapter Four

### *Conclusion*

Late nineteenth century was a hard time for the USA. The social, political, ideological, and cultural setting of the country was undergoing radical changes. heretofore and natural selection summoned into question established views concerning human origin (theories in which Kate Chopin had more than a passing interest); urbanization and reconditioning of the country following the Civil War posed before people new and different challenges; and, perhaps most prominently, the women's rights movement had been accumulating force and tempo since 1848, when the first woman's rights seminar was held in Seneca Fall, New York.

The feature of the late period of nineteenth century was well-known of being hard for the USA. The country's settings whether politically, socially, ideologically or even culturally witnessed radical fluctuations.

What has been mentioned above refers to the fact that for almost 50 years before Chopin published both *The Awakening* and 'The Storm' the Americans were involved in a struggle against equal rights issues and communal ideologies. Respectively, such struggle, generally women, to a particular extent, already went through liberation freeing from socioeconomic restrains. For the USA it was the first time that women started to carry the home heretofore private issues.

Women during the era of the post-Civil War took part regularly in the marketplace. They also broke once for all with humiliating shapes of financial reliance over men. Such touchable transformation that addressed the women social and economic position contributed in bringing cultural progress felt in the role assigned to women ,who were at all levels of society, active in attempts to improve their lot. Furthermore, the late nineteenth-century equivalent of the liberated woman, the ' New Women', was circulated among the public mind.

About 1899, nearly half-century after the official beginning of the women's movement, only the cultural and social looked fertile for the introduction of the fictional characters of Kate Chopin that are Edna Calixta. In spite of the fact that readers and publishers were not motivated and even hostile involving Chopin's final presentation of women and her moral responsibility lack.

Moralistic clothes of the Victorian era, nevertheless willing to give up everything--even her own life--for the freedom of inventive individuality, Chopin's heroine, Edna Pontellier characterized the accomplished New Woman of the late period of nineteenth century.

She embodied the social principles which women of that period were struggling and striving for. She was individualistic—not social; She was the persona of art exalted as role model by a large number of women during the late nineteenth century.

This, linked with the fact that Chopin was already a recognized author, appeared an indicator that *The Awakening* was planned for success. One

month before Chopin's novel was in print, Lucy Monroe wrote a review on *The Awakening* for the March 1899 issue of Book News.

Monroe's analysis highly appreciates Chopin's effort as a notable novel" and claps it as "faint and a luminous class of art. Monroe further identifies the story as so wholehearted in its psychiatry of character, so subtle in its production of arousing effects that it sounds to disclose life as well as characterize it. Monroe's was a shimmering review without doubt and conclusively intensified the rising keenness with which Chopin, her colleagues, and her publisher passionately expected the release of *The Awakening*. On the other hand, their hopes did not show up for the fresh appearance female topics which few writers dared to deal with.

If we study *The Awakening*, we will see it as the urgent and clear response to the female's deepest recesses and senses. If we exercise the Freudian terminology, the 'id' is celebrated in the entire book and is in point of fact used as a way of protest and confront to so many social rules and norms.

For the duration of the weeks following its making public, critics brutally damned Chopin's novel. Even though Monroe's pre-publishing backing and the growing force of the women's movement, both Chopin and *The Awakening* were attacked with an assault of hostile reviews. The majority of critics regarded the novel as impolite unpleasant, unholy, and a misappropriation of Chopin's outstanding literary talent. A lot of reviewers regarded the novel's overstatement of sexual griminess as corrupt, and therefore they damned the novel's subject.

That Chopin was by now a flourishing and acknowledged writer further increased the awkward disappointment with which critics viewed *The Awakening*. Actually, due to Chopin's success with her earlier works, "Bayou Folk," and "At Fault", critics expected further of what Chopin was well known for as a regionalist writer viz, realism and local color. What they expected to read was a novel that is rich in terms of expressive language, multi-colored characters, and the sights and sounds of the life of Louisiana Creole. However, instead of limited color, critics were surprised at Edna Pontellier's behavior and viewed Chopin's novel as dreadful and lacking literary value. Almost critics were hammering to explain the reasons standing behind the fact that why an artist with Chopin's acknowledged literary endowment was probably to contribute to what one critic named the overworked ground of sex fiction.

As for 'The Storm', it is equally suggestive in its implication of several latent and concealed needs. 'The Storm ' in Chopin's conference is made highly suggestive both of the real and the metaphorical insinuations of a storm. Certainly the bodily desires are no less "temptuous" than the natural ones, or in any case that Chopin seeks to assert in her main claim. Viewed as a whole, both works represent a daring effort and fundamental views involving the problematic relation existing between man and woman in the framework of social and familial relations. Morals, as supposed here, come from this never-ending clash and disparity between two absolutely different views i.e. those individual demanded (Chopin's heroines) and those restrictions society imposed. It is between these two glacial oppositions that the core issue of both of the works is highlighted and completely crystallized.

Chopin starts to demonstrate such sexual restraint of the time by employing the title 'The Storm.' When thought of in literary terms, a storm sounds to be linked to conflict, awkwardness, and confusion. Chopin utilizes the image of the storm in order to embody the sexual tension building the whole story between both of them Alcee and Calixta. It has been argued further that Chopin's title passes on to nature, which is characteristically feminine; the storm can thus be viewed as representative of feminine sexuality and excitement, and the image of the storm will be returned to over and over all over the story.

Chopin employed lots of Calixta's dealings in 'The Storm' in order to represent the sexual control of the time and the increasing surge of physical desires. Perhaps one of the best examples of that takes place when Calixta is doing housework. Alcee arrives at the house. Calixta has been functioning with much strength, till Calixta has some clothes hanging out to dry as a clean on the porch and, after Alcee arrival, they are in hazard of blowing away from the strapping wind coming up with the storm. Such critical and representative situation is summed up in a statement that Alcee grabs Bobinot's pants, symbolically subverting the social and marital constraints that control Calixta. As visiting Alcee, Calixta talks fairly about housework, preparing the house for the coming storm. Bobinot, and other sides of her married life, assist exemplify the erotic anxiety that she feels whilst near Alcee.

Not only 'The Storm' is a story on humankind's natural sexual tendencies, but it also represents the sexual suspicions of Chopin's age, nineteenth century. Chopin herself looked to be very much in touch with her feminine sexuality. From beginning to end of her writing of such narrative, she was

more likely to be able to not only utter her own notions about sexuality, but she as well made public her feelings concerning the sexual ethnicity of her time. Because Chopin, according to her biographer Emily Toth, did not seek to publish 'The Storm,' such statement stayed private until the story was found decades later among papers and journals in her grandson's loft.

It is hoped that the aforementioned pages have shown the significance of these works both in their own time and the present one. In fact they address very touchy issues of woman and her desires that are timeless and universal. From this perspective Chopin's handling of such issues is evidence of her success, power and courage to render moral questions in the light of reasonable and convincing situations. Here, woman slips and commits moral blunders as viewed by religion and society; even though at heart she feels that she has done the right thing. It is the disparity between what she holds to be true and what others dictate that the action of her stories seeks to center.

## **References**

- Allen, Pricilla. (1997). 'Old Critics and New: The Treatment of Chopin's *The Awakening*.' *The authority of experience: essays in feminist criticism*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press,. 224-238.
- Al-Tobasy, R.A, M. (1999). *Kate Chopin: Between feminism and transcendentalism*, unpublished MA Thesis (Jordan university) 173 pages.
- Arima, H, (2001). *Beyond and alone! the theme of isolation in selected short fiction of Kate Chopin, Katherine Anne Porter, and Eudora*. Wetly New York: G.K Hall.
- Bernard ,Koloski (1996). *Kate Chopin: A study of the short fiction*. New York: Twayne Publishers, xvi, 165 p.
- Boren, L. S. and Sara d. D (1992). *Kate Chopin reconsidered: beyond the bayou baton rouge*. Louisiana State UP.
- Buhle, Mari Jo, 1981. *Women and American socialism, 1870-1920*. Urbana: U of Illinois P.
- Byam, N. (1938). "Introduction" to *nathaniel hawthorne the Scarlet Letter*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Cardoni, A. T (1995) *Women ethical coming-of-age: adolescent female characters in the press fiction of Tillie Olsen*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Lehigh Universty, 173 pages; AAt9519833.
  
- Carrol, C. (2008). *The Narcissus myth and failed female transitions in the Portrait of a Lady, The Awakening and The House of Mirth* unpublished



M.A. thesis California State University, Dominguez Hills, p.69. AAT 1456036.

- Chevigny, Bell G. (1976). *Woman and the Myth*. Feminist Press, Old Westbury, New York.
- 1. Chopin, Kate, 1996. 'The Storm.' *The literature of the American south*. Ed. William L. Andrews. New York: Norton.
- 2. Chopin, Kate (2000), *The Awakening, and other stories*. Oxford University Press.
- 3. Chopin, Kate (1996). 'The Storm ' *The literature of The American south*.
- 4. Chopin, Kate (2005), *The Storm*. second short story press.
- 5. Chopin, Kate & D, P Seyerst, (1994). *The Storm and other stories, with The Awakening edited*, Feminist Press.
- Copp, David (2008). Darwinian skepticism about moral realism. *Philosophical Issues* 18 (1):186-206.
- Culley, Margaret, (Ed) (1976). *The Awakening: An authoritative text context criticism*. New York: Norton.
- Edwards, L. (1994). 'Sexuality, maternity, and selfhood'. *A norton critical edition: Kate Chopin: The Awakening*. Ed Margo Cully. New York: W.W Norton:282-285.
- Elliott, Emory, (ed.) 1991. *The Columbia History of the American Novel*. New York: Columbia UP.
- Faust, Langdon Lynn, 1983. *American women writers*. New York: Inger.

- Fetterly, Judith (1997). *On the Politics of Literature*: State University. N.Y.
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth (1988). *The Awakening in the context of experience, culture and values of southern woman*. New York, USA.
- Gillian, Carol. (1982). *In a different voice*, Harvard University Press.
- Greenlee, A. (2007). *Dying to Belong: Women's search for perfect love in the works Zinaida Gippius, Kate Chopin, Gilian Scherbakova and Iya Luft*, unpublished MA Thesis.
- Hedrick, Joan D (1994) *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A life*, Oxford University Press, USA, Chicago.
- 1. Koloski, Bernard, (ed.) (1976). Preface. *Approaches to teaching Chopin's The Awakening*. New York: MLA, 1988.
- 2. Koloski, Bernard. (1999) *Kate Chopin "Introduction" Bayou Folk and Night in Acadie by Kate Chopin*, New York: Penguin.
- 3. Koloski, Bernard (1996). *Kate Chopin: A study of the short fiction*,. New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Le Marquand, Jane (1996). *Kate Chopin as feminist: subverting the French Androcentric influence*. Massey University Palmerston North, New Zealand.
- Loom, Harold, 1987. "Introduction." *modern critical views: Kate Chopin*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Pennsylvania: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Marruand, L. (1998). *Kate Chopin on divine love and suicide: Two rediscovered articles*. *American Literature* 63 (1): 115-121.
- Mary ,Kelly (1984). *Private woman, public stage: Literary domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*. Oxford University Press, New York.

- Mary, Ryan,P. (1982). *Empire of the mother: American writing about domesticity*. Haworth Press, New York.
- Nancy,Walker (1994). *Feminist or naturalist*. A norton critical edition: Kate Chopin: *The Awakening*. Ed. Margo Culley. New York: W.W. Norton. 252-257.
- Nina , Baym (1978). *Women's fiction: A guide to novels by and about women in America*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y.
- Parrish, M.N. (2009). *Awkward illumination: identity and ideology in fin de siecle America*. M.A Thesis, Georgetown University, 78 pages; AAT 1464770.
- Per, S. (2006). *The complete works of Kate Chopin*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart (2008). *Chapters from a Life, BiblioBazaar*, Harvard University, USA.
- Pizer, D, A. *Note on Kate Chopin's The Awakening as naturalistic PP*. Fiction 5-13(2001). *The Southern Literary Journal* - Volume 33, Number 2, Spring.
- Riney, E K. (2007). *Feminist re-visioning and women's writing: the second wave effects on Kathern Anne Porter's Literary Legacy*, unpublished, M A, Thesis, Georgetown University.
- Robinson, Lillian, (1983) Ed "*Treason our text: feminist challenges to the literary canon*." *Falling into theory: conflicting views on reading literature..*

- Rosenberg Smith, Carrol (1985). *Disorderly conduct: visions of gender in Victorian America*. Knopf : New York.
- Seyerst, d. (1994). *Chopin, Kate, The Storm and other stories, with The Awakening edited*, Feminist Press. New York.
- Seyersted, Per, (1979). *A Kate Chopin miscellany*. Natchitoches: Northwestern State UP.
- Toth, Emily (1999). *Unveiling Kate Chopin*, University Press of Mississippi.
- Toth, Emily, 1990. *Kate Chopin*. New York: Morrow.
- Toth, Emily (1990). *Kate Chopin, A Biography*. New York.
- Toth, Emily (1999). *Unveiling Kate Chopin Jackson*: UP of Mississippi.
- Treu, R. (2000): *Surviving Edna: a reading of the ending of the Awakening*. *College Literature*, V 27. P: 21-36.
- Vinar, Barbera (1984). *The central dilemma: woman's moral responsibility in contemporary fiction*. Ph.D., Fairleigh Dickinson University, 254 pages; AAT 8417857.
- Walker, Nancy( 1994). 'Feminist or naturalist'. *A norton critical edition: Kate Chopin: The Awakening*. Ed. Margo Culley. New York: W.W. Norton: 252-257.
- William M.C. *The World of the Parish, Willa catcher's articles and reviews*, Vol.11, pp: 1893-1902, University of Nebraska press.
- Wilson, Robert, (1992). "Feminine sexuality and passion: Kate Chopin's 'The Storm.'" *The University of British Columbia*, October 22, <http://www.interchg.obc.ca/rw/eng304-1.htm>.
- Woolf , Virginia.(1989), *A Room of one's own*, Mariner Books. London

- Yeager, Patrica. (1987). 'A Language which nobody understands: emancipator strategies in *The Awakening*', *novel: A forum fiction*' 20(3): 197-219.