Voices from the Wild Zone: Feminist Awakenings in Selected Works of George Sand and Kate Chopin

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Voices From the Wild Zone: Feminist Awakenings in Selected Works of George Sand and Kate Chopin

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In the Department of French

by
Kristen D. Findley
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I would like to take this opportunity to thank some people who helped me make it this far. First of all my parents for giving me the courage and the freedom to pursue my goals, my roommates, Greta, Susan, and Cissy for their continuous encouragement and patience, and Pat for his computer consultation. I also thank Camilla Krone for help with research. I thank my committee of readers including Ozzie Mayers and S. Mara Faulkner, whose advice and insight was instrumental. Finally, I thank Vera Theisen, my advisor and friend, whose constant encouragement and belief in me kept me motivated until the very end.
Project Title: Voices from the Wild Zone: Feminist Awakenings in the Works of George Sand and Kate Chopin

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Her speech was warm and energetic. There was no repression in her glance or gesture. She reminded him of some beautiful animal waking up in the sun.

*The Awakening,* Kate Chopin

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days and all sorts of days that would be her own.

"The Story of an Hour," Kate Chopin

Elle avait aussi rallongé son corsage, et, au lieu d'avoir l'air d'une pièce de bois habillée, elle avait la taille fine et ployante, comme le corps d'une belle mouche à miel.

*La Petite Fadette,* George Sand

Cette soudaine et inévitable lumière *inonda* tous les replis du cœur d'Indiana; le bandeau, qui depuis longtemps se détachait, *tomba* tout à fait de ses yeux.

*Indiana,* George Sand
These descriptions envision women full of life. They describe "energetic" women, and women who have somehow changed. This change is more than an alteration of attitude; it is a total transformation of these women and who they are. It's the process of an awakening, a truly female experience of discovery. George Sand and Kate Chopin have written descriptive examples of four women and their personal awakenings; discoveries we will examine and eventually come to understand as strong, enduring voices of the woman's experience.

**INTRODUCTION**

Elaine Showalter, a popular feminist critic, writes: "...every step that feminist criticism takes toward defining women's writing is a step toward self-understanding as well" ("Wilderness" 263-4). This self-understanding is the understanding of women and their positions in life. In another article, Showalter explains "gynocriticism." The goal of this critical approach is to "construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature," and to develop female models instead of the standard male examples ("Poetics" 131). Other critics write about the same idea. No matter if it's the textual criticism of Nelly Furman, or the demand for action made by Simone de Beauvoir, feminist critics all have a common thread. They are listening for the female voice, and they are trying to define it and classify it as worthy and valid. They are working with, at
times, or against at others, the dominant male voice of our Western culture. Showalter again writes: "But we need to ask much more searchingly what we want to know and how we can find answers to the questions that come from our experience" ("Wilderness" 247). The call is to women, to write about their lives, their experiences. The challenge is to make these views accepted when the male experience and framework is so strong.

However, before the theories of these critics and before the terms "male framework" or "woman's experience" even existed in this context, there were women writing exactly what these theorists are asking for. It seems clear that the soul-searching poems of Emily Dickinson, the independent women of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and the revolutionary call from Virginia Woolf are the seeds of now flourishing feminist theory. These women are all established as talented women writers, and their works have left an impression in the world of feminist criticism. In fact, one easily discovers theories, articles, and books based on Woolf's "A Room of One's Own," in title and theory. These women wrote before feminist theory was first formed and defined as it is now. These women and their ideas predate the feminist ideas of the aforementioned critics. Scholars of the world now define feminism and feminist theory, but these women authors wrote about women and their experiences before the title of feminism existed.
Of course, the standards have changed, and these early women authors are not as revolutionary any more, but as one critic writes, "To impose modern feminist standards, or modern standards of any kind, on our foremothers virtually guarantees discovery of their inadequacy as compared to our enlightenment" (Spacks 272). Our modern opinions flow much more freely than those of the past. Society has changed and begun to accept more ideas from women. What I see is that these women, writing within the framework of the 19th century, wrote exactly of that female experience. Because these writings come from the hearts of their authors, they have endured and still stand as evidence of a woman's voice. In fact, it was probably more difficult to write what their souls were telling them because of the literary and social standards of that time. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar write: "...'the difficult task' faced by British and American women writers in the 19th century was to achieve 'true female authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards'" (Iannone 49). This challenge faced all women writers, so it is even more impressive when from behind the mesh of "patriarchal literary standards" evolves a truly female voice telling of her experiences, her thoughts, and her life in this world.

In addition to Dickinson, Freeman, and Woolf, I believe there are two more women who have created these kinds of characters, characters of the 19th century that speak of
what 20th century feminist theorists are asking. Kate Chopin and George Sand are not often compared, but each of them has made valuable contributions to literature. Kate Chopin was an American woman, and George Sand was French. Sand's personal lifestyle usually precedes her reputation as a writer, and Chopin received very little recognition until recently. The connections between these women are not numerous or obvious. I don't feel there must be direct comparisons, however. They are two of those women who predate feminist theory and yet seem to be very strong voices in that area. Chopin and Sand's works are fascinating because they are among the first women's voices, and because their women characters illustrate the strength many women feel but which is quite often ignored in our male-dominated culture. They are soul-searching, independent, and revolutionary like the other authors, and their characters are empowering examples of feminism before feminist labels were fashionable.

In the world of literary criticism, labels and definitions are placed on readings and analyses. This is not wrong; it is simply how we organize ideas and keep them all straight. Writing from both the past and present is analyzed and classified as feminist, modern, post-modern, or under any other title. There is an endless number of ways to analyze literature, and, therefore, an endless number of ways to classify it. Feminist criticism began by resisting
theory and resisting being placed in any category; that is, in fact, what made it so appealing to many ("Wilderness" 244). However, it is difficult to completely avoid labels for the mere sake of organization. Because the feminist movement encompasses so much of a woman's life, not only what she writes, it's hard to believe that a woman author today writes without the awareness of these labels and definitions. These labels have become such a large part of our existence that they are hard to ignore. A kind of self-consciousness is sure to be present when women are writing because they know it will be categorized by others. These critics mentioned above, who ask for the woman's experience and woman's writing, are all looking for examples of it in literature. Sometimes this close examination can be intimidating to authors, especially when the theory reaches past the literary and into real life. When I read the works of earlier authors, like Chopin and Sand, I see a liberation and freedom from these influences.

The novels and short stories of these women are fascinating not only because of what they have in common - the female experience -but also because of their differences. The theme of an awakening, a woman's discovery of the world and her place in it, is present in Sand and Chopin's works; and it is this theme that adds strength and empowerment to the woman's voice. They were writing in a time before the feminist label, before the efforts to define
woman's writing, yet they truly speak of the female experience. Sand and Chopin write as women about women; their stories come from the very essence of that female experience without being restricted or feeling self-conscious. They knew nothing of feminist criticism or its theories, so did not consider the inevitable analysis of their works. Of course, they did face other restrictions such as society's standards and limits, but the spirit of their women characters constantly glimmers as a true expression of what they think and feel as women.

What is so impressive about these stories is the enduring strength found in them. They were written in the late 19th century, yet their women subjects are strong and powerful enough to be effective in the late 20th century. The restraints placed upon these women by society's standards are somewhat compensated by the liberating spirit that exists in each of them. Furthermore, some of their strength is found exactly in the power of these women to face and overcome their challenges. The awakenings that take place in these works are liberating for women because they validate individual and personal experiences of womanhood. They speak to their readers from the woman's position, and they illustrate its richness. Before women's writing was seen as a category itself, Sand and Chopin wrote from and about the heart of a woman.

I have chosen two novels by George Sand: La Petite
Fadette and *Indiana*. These two novels take place in different surroundings, but their meanings and voices are equally strong. It is partly this difference that affirms each individual experience; Sand's characters can live quite different lifestyles, yet their awakenings are just as real and true. The stories of Kate Chopin further this notion by voicing the American woman's position. Edna Pontellier from *The Awakening* and Louise Mallard from "The Story of an Hour" also experience awakenings completely different in nature from Fadette, Indiana, and each other, but no less real or powerful. These different works give us only a glimpse of all the possibilities for women. The term *awakening* will receive further attention, but now it's important to note that this is a revelation in which all of these women take part. It is their common thread that connects them through the differences of class, lifestyle, awakening experience, and ending.

Within the discovery of an awakening, we find strength and empowerment. Also visible are the trials and pleasures of being a woman. The success of their awakenings is the empowerment and affirmation I find so liberating. Through the haze of societal restrictions, labels, definitions, and doubts, Sand and Chopin have created women characters and stories with which other women can identify and from which they can derive strength and acknowledgement. They truly speak the woman's voice that is sometimes so hard to hear.
The term "awakening", in this context, must be broadly defined. One awakening experience can, and probably will, be totally different from another. It is a very personal experience, even though influenced by outside forces. Although awakenings occur to each of the characters in Sand and Chopin's works, they occur in different situations, with different restraints, and they each end differently. These women do experience intense and mysterious awakenings that are, at times, very difficult. An awakening changes a woman's perspective entirely by transforming her perception of the world and her place in it. Elaine Showalter writes about the awakening of Edna Pontellier: "[it's] about a process rather than a program, about a passage rather than a destination" ("The Awakening" 179). The process of discovery is vital to the end result, but, as we will see, the endings of these awakenings reflect upon the process itself and the overall effect.

What will be of concern here is the awakening and development of some of the characters created by George Sand and Kate Chopin. These two women, and their characters, explore unnavigated territory of the 19th century, without the definitions of feminism and without its influences. They are women authors writing about what they knew best; it is within them that we discover the seeds of a feminist
voice. Their women are strong, they challenge, they fight, and along the way they discover. We watch each character awaken to become an "independent and aware person functioning to her full capacity towards growth and fulfillment" (Anastaspoulou 19). These women are looking for more than an ordinary existence, and this is liberating. They are looking to escape their traditional roles and develop fully as people, as women.
WOMEN'S CULTURE AND
THE WILD ZONE

We are shaped by outside influences such as where we grow up, what traditions and morals are instilled in us, and the different standards our society places on us. It would be unreasonable to assume that authors write in a vacuum without outside influences. Concerning gender, I feel some of these outside forces are stronger than others. We have already heard from the critics who feel that women have their own writings because different standards for women create different relationships to the world around us. Women are constantly trying to define their place in the male world. It is the writings that have resulted from this struggle that interest me. For it seems very logical to understand the powerful influence the woman's world had, and still has, on women's literature.

Jane Tompkins, a literary critic, states:
In this view, novels and short stories should be studied not because they manage to escape the limitations of their particular time and place, but because they offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problem that shape a particular historical moment. (xi)

Even though Tompkins' work focuses on the popular novels of
a specific period and the concentration here will focus on both the popular and unpopular, her point has validity. Literary works come out of a time period, a world, that definitely existed.

Kate Chopin and George Sand wrote in the 19th century when women were considered less than equal to men; they were to assume a respected position in society and maintain it. They were not allowed much exploration into their own potential. As stated under the definition of an awakening, these women and their characters were exploring a whole new world, one beyond the standard culture. Today we would say that they were speaking of the female experience, but to Sand and Chopin, at that time, they were writing about what they saw, felt, and encountered. These are the roots of modern feminism, and these writings are strong enough that developed theories can be applied to them.

Many theories have developed, one being the idea of a woman's culture. One of the first women to speak of a feminine culture was Margaret Fuller. Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) "initiated the cultural feminist tradition" (Donovan 32). Fuller had definite ideas about women and their lives. She asked women to "follow the rule within, and not be dictated from without" (33). Fuller, along with many of her contemporaries, asked that women "unfold their faculties and discover their own truths as individuals" (34). These statements by Fuller are a
rallying call for all women to search for their own awakening. The center or root of their discoveries should derive itself from the place, the culture that is completely feminine - the woman's world. For it is in this world where women can have the strongest experiences.

It is this women's culture that has interested many, not only literary critics, but anthropologists as well. In fact, it has been anthropologists, sociologists, and social historians who have begun to define women's social culture. Gerda Lerner in 1979 stressed that "we must, for a time, focus on a woman-centered inquiry, considering the possibility of the existence of a female culture within the general culture shared by men and women" ("Wilderness" 260).

This idea had also been expressed by two anthropologists, Shirley and Edwin Ardener. The Ardeners' theory suggests that, in our Western culture, the male world is the dominant group while the female world is the muted group. The definition of muted is "[suggestive] of problems both of language and of power" ("Wilderness" 262).

Ardener's theory goes on to state that since the dominant group controls beliefs, language, and acceptance of these, the muted group must "mediate their beliefs through the allowable forms of dominant structure" ("Wilderness" 262). Applying this to the woman's position in society, we discover that her voice must be heard through the filter of the male society instead of on its own. It is only a small
part of the woman's voice that can be heard in its clear and original state; this voice comes from what the Ardeners call the *Wild Zone*. Their visual diagram of this relationship looks like this:

![Diagram of Men and Women](image)

The area that falls outside the dominant circle (the male) is entitled the *wild zone* (*Wilderness* 262). This zone is outside the male realm, completely encircled by the female. Writings to come out of this zone would be foreign to men; they would come directly out of a woman's experience without being filtered.

Showalter asserts that this theory is very important in French feminism because "the wild zone becomes the place for the revolutionary women's language, the language of everything that is repressed" (*Wilderness* 263). Hélène Cixous, a leading French feminist writes, "Woman must put herself into the text -as into the world and into history- by her own movement" (*Medusa* 245). This movement would come from the wild zone. Cixous' theory calls for action,
for movement within the woman's world. She further asserts that marked writing is the male's voice which has not allowed women to find their own. She states, "writing is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures" ("Medusa" 249). Clearly, Cixous wants to see action and development in the world of women's writing. She feels that writing and literature give women the perfect opportunity to express themselves. I believe Sand and Chopin took full advantage of exactly what Cixous is speaking of. Of course, they did not realize it, but, again, that is the strength in their writings. Today, a 20th century critic asks that women write once again in this manner, from the heart of a woman.

Christine Rochefort agrees with Cixous and also encourages women to reach beyond their restraints. She urges, "Maybe you don't want to write about, but to write, period. And, of course, you don't want to obey this social order. So, you tend to react against it. It is not easy to be genuine..." (186). No, it is not easy to be genuine. It is not easy to speak from the wild zone, avoid filtering by the male world, and still be heard.

These theories and their authors are all pointing in the same direction: a woman's work that speaks of the woman's experience, her thoughts and feelings, her
relationship with society, a woman author whose voice is heard as just that— a woman. Although changes in societal opinion and standards change somewhat the effect of a woman's work, the writings of George Sand and Kate Chopin spoke loudly in the 19th century. These two women wrote of strong women experiencing an awakening. Although their characters seem somewhat tame to modern standards, they were so shocking in their time that *The Awakening* was criticized and blasted for its assertiveness. It is apparent that these women authors wrote from their version of the wild zone; they wrote about women's experience, through a woman's eyes. Although they faced restrictions, they tested the waters and used their writing as the springboard Cixous spoke of. The result was novels and short stories that still stand as feminist voices in the midst of the dominant, male society.
BIOGRAPHIES: KATE CHOPIN and GEORGE SAND

The women of Kate Chopin --Louise Mallard, from "The Story of an Hour," and her most famous character, Edna Pontellier, of The Awakening-- whether it be in two pages or 130, all take part in a discovery. An awakening created for them by Chopin, an American woman author of the late nineteenth century. As we will see, Chopin wrote within her male-dominated culture, but her voice was entirely that of a woman. Her works evolved from the wild zone. She experimented with women and their positions in society. The result was strong women characters who, each in their own right, awakened to a new perspective on the world around them. Her women characters are models of the feminine experience. Surely, Chopin's world was an influence on her characters, for it is within that culture that their awakenings took place.

Katie O'Flaherty was born in St. Louis on February 8, 1851. At the time, St. Louis was not a healthy place with epidemics of flu and cholera claiming many lives, including one of Katie's sisters. When Katie was four, her father died. In fact, Chopin's life was never influenced much by the men in her family as her father, grandfather, and great-grandfather all died while she was young. It is possible that these deaths "prevented her, as she matured, from experiencing in her own family the traditional
submissiveness of women to men" (Skaggs 2). After her father's death, her great-grandmother, Mme. Charleville, became the main influence in Chopin's life by teaching her, among other things, French (Seyersted 21).

Chopin married Oscar Chopin, the son of a French father and a Creole mother, in 1870. Kate and Oscar moved to New Orleans where they began a family. They lived there until 1879 when they moved to Natchitoches where Oscar managed a cotton plantation. Oscar died suddenly in 1883, however, leaving Kate with six children and a plantation. She and her children remained in Natchitoches for one year after Oscar's death, before moving back to St. Louis and her mother's home (Seyersted 22). Once again, death altered Kate's course as her mother died in 1855. It is at this time that Chopin began to read, write, and further educate herself.

The family doctor, Frederick Kolbenheyer, encouraged Kate to study Darwin, Huxley, and Spencer, as well as authors like Guy de Maupassant and women authors like Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman. Because of these influences, as well as the time she had spent reading throughout her life, Kate Chopin began writing in June 1889 to help support her family (Skaggs 4). Ten years later, in April of 1899, The Awakening was published. Because of the "harsh critical reception" it received, Chopin did not publish anything afterwards (Skaggs 4). On Aug. 4, 1904,
Kate Chopin died, leaving dozens of short stories and one impressive novel.

Chopin's themes deal with women, for the most part. It seems she was most comfortable with that theme because she wrote quickly and confidently. Her son Felix said his mother "wrote very fast, and on completion, seldom had to make more than a few slight corrections" (Toth 116). She was influenced by the feminism in Madame de Staël and George Sand as well as the realism in Flaubert and Maupassant (Seyersted 32).

Her writing was serious work to Chopin; one biographer states, "she wrote as she pleased, jealously guarding her literary integrity in form and subject" (Seyersted 31). Chopin wrote about what she knew and what she felt. She is credited with being "concerned with the living present rather than the past, with universal rather than regional aspects of life" (Seyersted 26). This universal refers to the broadness of her topics and the accessible themes of her works.

The world in which Chopin existed was one of male dominance. With the influence of the women in her life and the independent life she was forced to lead after her husband's death, Chopin's background encouraged and produced her literary accomplishments.
George Sand also wrote in the late nineteenth century about women, although her perspective came from France. Sand herself is well-known for her male attire, her many lovers, and her numerous novels. She too wrote about women: women in France, women in love, women trying to find their place in society. The women in Sand's novels are very often poor peasants, tied closely to the land. Sand had an affinity for this kind of simple life and she enjoyed portraying these strong women in ways most did not perceive them. She did also write about the upper class, as in *Indiana*, but it is the peasant characters such as in *La Petite Fadette* that are immediately associated with Sand. Both of these characters, from two different social classes, challenge their positions in the world and come to realize a new, awakened sense of who they are as women. These women of different social standings offer the reader examples of awakenings occurring to all different sort of women with different sorts of lifestyles. Much of the power of Sand is derived from this broad range of characters and encounters.

On July 1, 1804, Amantine-Lucile-Aurore-Dupin was born to Maurice Dupin de Francueil and Sophie-Victoire Delaborde; this Aurore is more commonly known to us as George Sand. Just like Chopin, whose father's death left her to be brought up by her great-grand-mother, Aurore's father died when she was also four years old, leaving her to a struggle
between her mother and paternal grandmother. Aurore and her mother moved to Nohant in Berry, the Dupin's family estate. Here she was raised under the strong influence of her strict grandmother and taught by tutors hired for her. Sophie, Aurore's mother, was not well-liked by her grandmother because Sophie was not of noble origin. When Aurore was nine, Sophie accepted a cash settlement from the grandmother and left, promising to return for Aurore (Dickenson 13).

The struggle between Aurore's mother and grand-mother lasted most of her life, and tore her between the guilt she felt for leaving her mother and the obligation she felt to her sick grandmother (Dickenson 13). Aurore attended the Couvent des Anglaises from the age of thirteen. She learned at the convent what a female was supposed to do (drawing, dancing, English, Italian), and then she continued her own education (Dickenson 15). She read the *Iliad*, the *Georgics*, much religious material, poets, and philosophers. The first female author Aurore discovered was Madame du Châtelet, a translator of Newton and the mistress of Voltaire; Aurore "found her mere existence encouraging" (Dickenson 23).

George Sand was married once, to Casimir Dudevant, but she did not stay married long. She had many relationships, including her most well-known with composer Fredrick Chopin. Her first affair, however, was with Jules Sandeau who was also the co-author of her first novel, *Rose et Blanche*, published in 1831. The author's signature to this work
read: J. Sand. In 1832, George Sand published her first major work, Indiana, under the name G. Sand. This book brought her immediate attention.

Sand continued writing many novels. She wrote not only for enjoyment but because she needed to earn money. For most of her life, she supported her two children, she rented a flat for Chopin in Paris, she paid for excursions to Majorca and Venice, she paid for her nephew’s education, she adopted a foster-daughter, and she fed 40 families of Nohant with her own money (Dickenson 130). Clearly, her financial obligations were immense and she needed the money earned from her writings to fulfill them all. Sand wrote about women with close ties to the land, and women with strength. Her women characters "are generally not passive victims, but agents who act to control or improve their life" (Dickenson 27), something we also see in Chopin. However, unlike Chopin who remains somewhat unrecognized today, Sand died in 1876, already "accepted as one of the greats—probably more so than any other woman writer" (Dickenson 166).
AWAKENINGS IN PROGRESS

The women characters of Kate Chopin's and George Sand's works are very diverse in their lifestyles, experiences, and relationships, yet they do all have a common bond. I have entitled that bond an awakening, a discovery of themselves and their relationship to the world. As I have already discussed, these awakenings are truly a woman's experience in that they transcend the boundaries placed on women by the male-orientated culture. The fact that these women are all different yet all take part in their own personal discovery validates the fact that women can experience all sorts of awakenings. This is important to many readers because it is here where they can connect with the story; it means such an occurrence is possible for them. This being so, it is important to examine these awakenings individually in order to arrive at a better understanding of what they are and what they entail.

First, it is helpful to be introduced to the characters. Edna Pontellier is the main character of Chopin's The Awakening. As one can probably assume from this title, Edna is an ideal example of the discovery process. In another work by Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," is Louise Mallard. This work is short, yet Louise's character becomes alive and her awakening is so real that the term awakening is readily applied. George Sand's
characters immediately differ from Chopin's in that they are French, but this fact, too, adds strength to the idea that these awakenings happen to a wide range of women. Fadette is the main character in _La Petite Fadette_. She is a peasant girl, but the reality of womanhood is clearly manifested in her experience. Finally, Indiana is the awakened woman of Sand's novel of the same name. Indiana is closer to Edna on a social scale, although her awakening is a very different process. These four women have an interesting array of experiences, all of which are truly female. These women, and these women authors, are derived from the wild zone. Their experiences are real and unique to them as women, as we will see.

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Critics have paid much attention to Edna Pontellier concerning the idea of an awakening. Edna is a role model of sorts for other women and their awakenings, for it is Edna who goes through the most dramatic and complete transformation. Edna's world is the Creole society in New Orleans. Her husband is successful, and her life is comfortable, perhaps too much so. Summers are spent on Grand Isle, where Edna first encounters Robert, the catalyst for her awakening.

Peggy Skaggs states that Edna's awakening begins with "a growing awareness of the inadequacy of her existence" (96). True enough, Edna is not purely content in her
lifestyle or with her husband. In fact, her attitude towards Mr. Pontellier is that "she knew of none better" (26). The novel begins during the summer Edna learns to swim, and this new-found skill gives Edna a boost of confidence on which her awakening depends. Chopin writes, "She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before" and that Edna was "intoxicated with her newly conquered power" (46). Here lie the seeds to Edna's transformation; for it is in learning to swim that Edna first sees potential for change and growth in herself.

Robert Lebrun, a handsome young man who also passes time on Grand Isle, introduces Edna to a new power: the power of emotions. Edna begins to actually feel something besides indifference. Robert and Edna spend much time together, while her husband is in town, simply talking and enjoying each other's company. Edna's attachment to Robert becomes strong enough that she invites him to join her on a boat ride which is also a new freedom. Chopin writes, "She had never sent for him before. She had never asked for him. She had never seemed to want him before" (51). This pleasurable time ends when Robert leaves to seek his fortune in Mexico. Edna is deeply hurt, "For the first time she recognized anew the symptoms of infatuation" (64), and she felt "she had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded" (65). These emotions point more directly to a sexual awakening in Edna, but she goes much
further than that once she has returned to New Orleans and her husband leaves for New York. It is then that "her soul rather than her body (undergoes) the primary awakening" (Skaggs 102).

Edna's independence then, appears to be the beginning of her awakening. She feels new and strong emotions, more potential in herself, independent, and she sees a change from her repetitive life. Learning to swim and experiencing real emotions are mere glimpses of what's ahead. Edna strives for the rest of the novel to obtain some sort of "autonomy" (Skaggs 104). That is what this awakening is about. It is a quest for an identity of one's own. Edna is looking for a lifestyle more suitable to who she is instead of the continuous dependence on her husband. She comes to a realization that she is her own person; she no longer sees herself as a wife first and foremost, but as an individual woman with thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Because of this realization she begins to demand a few rights and decisions about how she wants to live.

Within the context of her situation, Edna's awakening appears to be so strong that it reaches a difficult point for her. Her transformation is so drastic and her perspective on the world changes so much that she is unable to deal with her new-found knowledge and chooses to end her life. In the final scene of the novel, Edna uses her new skill of swimming to conclude her story. Robert has left
her with the words, "I love you. Good-by—because I love you" (134). She spends the night lying awake, in confusion and desperation, before she decides to leave for Grand Isle. Her spirit has been badly damaged, or as Chopin writes: "Despondency had come upon her there in the wakeful night, and had never lifted" (136). Edna returns to the water, naked, feeling "like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known" (136). It is important to realize that Edna's suicide did not occur simply because Robert has left her, but her death is the culmination of all that has happened to her. She feels despondent because she no longer sees her place in the world, or rather, she no longer sees the world as having a place for her awakened soul.

This is the culmination of Edna's awakening. She is still in a familiar world, yet her place in it has changed because her perspective has. For awhile, she was within the wild zone, she was living a truly female life beyond the life defined for her by the male society. While Robert was in Mexico, she had hope that he would return and her life would be different. That is not to say that she now depended on him, but he became a sort of symbol of the possibilities facing her. When Robert leaves, she is pulled out of that existence back into her old, traditional world. She is despondent, and she finds no future for herself in this male-centered world that has certain expectations and
restrictions for her. Her awakening is complete in that her vision has changed, the vision she had of the world around her. In addition to her renewed view, her suicide reflects the fact that an awakening took place. Edna's reaction was drastic because her experience was so full, and she felt so alive. To be robbed of that existence was too much for her, and the fact that she felt strongly enough to take her own life is proof that the awakening changed her inner self.

The impact of this ending will be discussed later, but before moving on it is important to realize the extent of Edna's transformation. Her experience was quite new to the Creole society that read the book. A contemporary review of The Awakening said the story was "...familiar enough. A woman is married without knowing what it is to love" (The Dial 75). This review seems to trivialize Edna's metamorphosis, and furthermore asserts that her discovery is "provided by another man" (75). Applying to this novel the more modern theories discussed earlier, we are more able to appreciate the awakening and realize its relationship to the wild zone, but this does not mean Chopin was unaware of its power.

Also at this time, critics attacked Edna's suicide, and suicidal women in general, as evidence of her "hysterical tendency," that she was too "sensitive" (Toth 120). Chopin herself responded to this accusation by noting that many businessmen also commit suicide, but almost no attention is
paid to them. She writes to the Literary Symposium of St. Louis: "But do not men do the same thing every day? Why all this talk about women?" (Toth 120). There is all this talk about women because these actions by female characters were beyond the realm of understanding in the male-defined world. The critic from The Dial stated that this novel was "not altogether wholesome in its tendency" (75). Applying our modern standards to those of the 19th century is not valid or fair, but I feel that these misunderstandings and trivializations occur because Edna's experience is so very new, so very inherent to a woman, and so much a part of the wild zone. Of course, Chopin was not thinking of the wild zone per se, but she was expressing her vision of the female experience, what we could now define as the wild zone.

Edna's experience took place within a white, upper-middle class society. Her own personal awakening was somewhat defined by the way she lived; the standards and challenges she faced were inherent to this lifestyle. Edna is also viewed as a good example of the feminine voice, but other characters who have different experiences are also illustrating this point of view. Awakenings are not limited to those of the upper-class, those who are unhappily married, or older women. Fadette, of La Petite Fadette, is an awakened character created by George Sand. Fadette and Edna do not exist in the same society, thus the same standards do not apply. Fadette's world is much smaller.
She is a peasant girl, often thought of as a witch by other peasants. She is poor and dirty, yet, like any peasant character of Sand, she has a pure soul and a purity because of her connection to the land. Sand describes her as, "la petite Fadette, qui est l'enfant le plus malheureux et le plus maltraité de la terre, rit toujours et ne se plaint jamais de rien" (96). Fadette is already a happy character. She does not live the sad, monotonous life of Edna Pontellier, yet Fadette is still an outsider.

Fadette lives in the village, but she is not a part of it. She is thought to be a sort of sorceress, and her unkempt, dirty appearance often overshadows her personality. She is a timid little girl who lives with her grandmother and younger brother. Fadette sees no real potential in her existence. Her life is secluded, and there are rumors that her family has made a deal with the devil (86). Fadette is unable to see beyond her small world, even into the village, because she sees no potential for herself. Fadette has no idea of the opportunities available to her, such as living among the villagers (which is, in this context, highly valued) and taking part in real relationships with other people. This situation seems fertile for an awakening, and Fadette seems in need of a transformation.

Like Edna's awakening, Fadette is inspired by a male figure, Landry, the son of a respected farmer. His family is not poor, but Landry must move to a neighboring farm and
work there to earn more money. Fadette lives near this farm, and it is in the countryside that the two meet. Landry is the first to see Fadette as anything near beautiful, for she is first described as, "petit, maigre, ébouriffée et hardie"² (83). Landry is the first to open Fadette's eyes. He tells her: "C'est que tu n'as rien d'une fille et tout d'un garçon, dans ton air et dans tes manières; c'est que tu ne prends pas soin de ta personne"³ (136). These words are blunt and to the point. Landry is straightforward with Fadette, yet in his words lies a hope or belief of Fadette's potential to be a beautiful young girl. She realizes this, and is not offended. She responds, "Je te remercie, Landry...Tu m'as dit à peu près ce que tout le monde me reproche, et tu me l'as dit avec beaucoup d'honnêteté..."⁴ (137). Fadette appreciates Landry's honesty, and these words give Fadette the first impression that a change is possible.

Landry does not see Fadette for the rest of the week until Sunday in church when he sees her praying; or rather, he discovers her praying. The posture is hers, but it does not appear to be the hair or figure of Fadette. Landry is amazed to discover, during the prayers, that this beautiful young girl is, in fact, Fadette. Her dress is the same, but it is clean, her hair is clean and combed, and her skin "avait l'air aussi net et aussi doux que la blanche épine du printemps"⁵ (158). Landry is so surprised that he lets his
prayer book drop to the floor, surely a noticeable noise in the quiet of the church. Fadette is well aware of the impact she has made, and she leaves mass without speaking to Landry, leaving him to wonder if she really is a sorceress who performs miracles (159).

This scene at church marks merely the physical change in Fadette. This physical transformation is surface evidence of the change in attitude and self-image that has taken place in Fadette. Although Fadette's awakening does not take place on the same scale as Edna's, within her peasant world, it is quite a transformation from one end of the spectrum to the other. Within a different context, she does fulfill the definition of an awakening because she becomes more aware of her surroundings and her relationship to those surroundings. She is known as a meek, strange, witch-like girl, and she cleans herself up to become quite pretty and eventually the wife of a hard-working, respectable man in Landry. It's more than Fadette's outside appearance changing; her attitude has changed so that she now sees herself having more potential. This is evident when she marries Landry. Before this change in her, she would have thought of herself as not worthy, or much too ordinary for Landry.

Furthermore, Fadette's position in her society changes from witch to magical healer. It is perhaps this change that enrichens her awakening even more. Before her
awakening, the community thought of her as having received powers from the devil, now, she as seen as a true Christian with special gifts given to her by God. Sand explains the transformation:

Mais le don de nature n'est point une fable, puisque la petite Fadette l'avait et qu'avec si peu de leçons raisonnables que sa grand'mère lui avait données, elle découvrait et devinait, comme qui invente, les vertus que le bon Dieu a mises dans certains herbes et dans certains manières de les employer. Elle n'était point sorcière pour cela...elle avait l'esprit qui observe...et cela c'est un don de nature on ne peut pas le nier.6 (174)

Fadette is no longer a sorceress; she is the possessor of gifts from God. She becomes very important to the village in curing their sick animals and people, even Landry's brother, Sylvinet, is among those healed. It is because of her transformation that this is possible. Fadette's new position is respected and honored in her society, she has found her place.

This ending is obviously not as shocking as Edna's suicide, but that does not mean that it lacks value. Fadette does not complete a final act of desperation, but she does defy and challenge the village to reevaluate her as a person. Fadette, in fact, chooses to take her place in the most acceptable definition of a woman's place, as wife.
Therefore, Fadette's decision does not make the impression that Edna's does; yet in her own peasant world, it is revolutionary. Revolutionary because she goes from the status of poor, witchy peasant to the respectable, healing wife of Landry. Marriage seems most appropriate for Fadette because it was unexpected of her character before the awakening. Fadette, the little sorceress, changes herself and adapts to the world around her, thus finding her place in it. The events surrounding Fadette's awakening are different from Edna's, and her final act is not a shocking one, yet her awakening is still complete.

In *Fadette* the theme of searching for one's place is very prevalent. Just as many women do, Fadette searches for her own identity, reaching for her own potential beyond the confines of her upbringing. The society Fadette exists in is definitely restrictive and male-controlled. It is a farming community where men are regarded as the strong supporters of the community. Within this context, Fadette must find her place. To do this, she must explore herself and her possibilities; with Landry's help she is able to do so, and what she discovers is a beautiful woman who can have a happy marriage and use her powers to help others. Fadette must battle against the images others have of her as a witch, as a unintelligent peasant, as a woman. Since she is a woman, she's already a step behind the male culture. Sand writes of Fadette's experience to find her place, something
which many women struggle with. This search takes place in the wild zone because it is a woman's battle. Fadette must first define herself as a woman and then her position in her village. It is the necessity to define herself as a woman that takes her into the wild zone.

More on the same level as Chopin's Edna is Indiana of George Sand's first novel Indiana. Indiana, like Edna, is married to a businessman. Her life is comfortable and she lives from day to day without too much difficulty. There is, however, something missing from her life. She feels it is incomplete and unfulfilling, so much so that she seeks comfort in a lover.

Indiana's life with her husband is one of dependence and fragility. She depends on Colonel Delmare for everything, and he expects that she will always obey him. She is described as "une fleur née d'hier qu'on fait éclorer dans un vase gothique" (50). She is quiet, obedient and timid, yet there is a spirit in her that occasionally reveals itself. When there is an injured man outside their home, Indiana is the first to have the courage to approach him. Sand writes, "Et, s'avançant vers le blessé avec un courage dont aucune des personnes présentes ne s'était encore sentie capable, elle approcha une lumière de son visage" (63).

This little sign of courage is just a glimmer of the true spirit of Indiana that is daily squelched by her
husband. Colonel Delmare is definitely not the most receptive of husbands. At one point he declares, "les femmes sont faites pour obeir et non pour conseiller" (204). It's next to impossible for Indiana to flourish as a woman in this setting, but she truly wants to.

She dreams too. She dreams of real love in her life. Indiana does not love her husband, as Sand writes quite matter-of-factly: "elle n'avait pas encore aimé" (88). She dreams of future days and future love:

Un jour viendra où tout sera changé dans ma vie, où je ferai du bien aux autres; un jour où l'on m'aimera, où je donnerai tout mon coeur à celui qui me donnera le sien; en attendant, souffrons; taisons-nous, et gardons notre amour pour récompense à qui me délivrera (89).

Although these are childhood dreams, Indiana still waits for the day that love will find her and it will awaken within her what she knows exists. Again, it is a man who will ignite the awakening within Indiana. Not a completely friendly or caring man, Raymon is still powerful; in fact, "Raymon avait une incroyable puissance sur tout ce qui l'entourait" (127). Raymon is the mysterious lover for Indiana. Just as Robert awakened Edna, Raymon is the first to introduce love and strong emotions as Indiana has dreamed of them. Although Indiana has fallen for him, the spirit within her is still strong. She confronts Raymon and tells him:
Vous ne savez pas que je n'ai pas encore aimé, et que je ne donnerai pas mon cœur vierge et entier en échange d'un cœur flétri et ruiné, mon amour enthousiaste pour un amour tiède, ma vie tout entière, en échange d'un jour rapide\textsuperscript{13} (147-148).

Indiana wants true love in its most pure form because she knows that she deserves it. She has been unfortunate in the past, and her marriage is not the ideal, but there is still a part of her that desires someone to love her as much as life itself.

Indiana's awakening, although constantly taking place, reaches a new level when her husband dies. A part of her cannot let go of him completely, and she even feels somewhat responsible. Ralph, her always faithful friend, is the one to tell Indiana the news, "Je viens de vous annoncer que vous êtes libre, et que vous pouvez unir votre sort à celui de M. de Ramière. Delmare n'est plus"\textsuperscript{14} (301). Ralph is well aware of what Indiana has been seeking. He is not aware, however, of the fact that Indiana has just discovered Raymon de Ramière married to another woman. Indiana cries, "Mon époux est mort! C'est moi qui l'a tué!"\textsuperscript{15} (301).

Although Indiana has been awakened to a new-found freedom to love and the freedom to pursue her dreams, her hopes have been dashed by the marriage of Raymon and the death of her husband.

She is not, however, left in this state. Indiana does
find the true love she has been dreaming of. She finds it where it has always been, in the heart of Ralph. Ralph who has always been a friend to Indiana and who has always loved her from a required distance is finally able to give Indiana what she has been looking for in others all along. It would seem that Indiana's awakening has made a full circle. She finds happiness in her marriage to Ralph when before it was the strongest tool of repression. This does not mean, however, that her awakening is any less real or less complete than the others. The awakening that takes place within Indiana does bring her back to marriage, but with the realization of her self worth and the happiness she has always wanted. As Sand writes at the end of the story, "Indiana regarde M. Brown avec une idefinissable expression de tendresse et de joie" (339). That is all that Indiana wanted from the dreams of a young girl.

These dreams of Indiana's were a woman's dreams that had been denied by a dominating husband. She could not, for a very long time, get beyond his realm of control to explore herself. Once she does, Indiana is impressed by the possibilities for her. With the death of Delmare, Indiana is able to live as a happy woman, married and alive, having fulfilled her dreams. Indiana's story is, once again, that of a woman's because she must get past those boundaries of the male culture. Her voyage into the wild zone leads her to the discovery of her dreams.
George Sand's writings were accepted very early as examples of feminism. In 1908, an article in Current Literature states that Sand "spoke for the wives and daughters...[urging] that love should be their only law-giver" (59). A year later in the same periodical, Sand is defined as a "Precursor to Modernism" and the first representative of the woman's "attitude of defiance...which was later to become the dominant note of feminism" (519). So, it is clear that Sand was acknowledged for her efforts, and, more importantly, that she wrote of the woman's experience. Indiana evolves into a strong female trying to find her place like Fadette and Edna.

Another literary character of Chopin's joins the aforementioned women in their quest for their place and the process of awakening. Louise Mallard of "The Story of an Hour" is a woman who sees clearly her potential and her possibilities, but loses them too quickly. This story of Chopin's is very short yet it carries a forceful impact. Louise is married to Brently, a successful, important man. Brently is very respected in the community, and he cares very dearly for his wife who has a serious heart condition and must be looked after. Louise, however, feels smothered by him and all of his concern. Shortly after her husband leaves for a business trip, she is notified that there has been an accident and her husband tops the list of those killed.
Louise's first reaction is to weep "at once, with sudden wild abandonment" (352). For a few moments, she is taken over with grief, as one would expect, but she soon recovers and goes to her room to be alone. In her room, she sits in a comfortable chair in front of a window and gazes at the "new spring life" (352). The world is very alive outside Louise's window, just as she is beginning to become alive. She feels a powerful, new emotion washing over her; she tries to fight it off, but she is "as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been" (353). Something strong is taking over Louise, and she cannot deny it any further.

Chopin's descriptive narrative explains, "When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: free, free, free!" (353). What Louise is awakened to is freedom from the restraints of her marriage. No longer will her husband's overly-protective nature stop her from something as simple as a walk outside. She sees herself in a new position, without a husband to restrict her. Chopin describes this awakening in Louise as a very physical occurrence. She writes:

The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body. (353)
Louise is literally coming alive; her body is awakening to the world and the possibilities that now surround it. She realizes that it will be difficult to attend her husband's funeral, "But she [sees] beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome" (353). The moment is intense for Louise. Her body, mind, and soul are just beginning to see the potential that lies in this freedom. Her sister and friends are concerned, however. They ask Louise to please come out of her room. Louise is unwilling because she is "drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window" (354). She is looking into the future and finding many more beautiful spring days that she will enjoy herself. When she finally does exit, "there [is] a feverish triumph in her eyes" (354).

Louise's happiness is soon cut short by the entrance of her husband. He had been nowhere near the scene of the accident and is confused to discover the situation at home. Brently is "amazed" to watch the following scene when Louise, discovering her husband is not dead and her freedom stolen from her, dies from the weakness of her heart. Chopin concludes, "When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease- of joy that kills" (354). It seems apparent to the reader, and Chopin's characters also, that Louise's heart could not withstand the shocking events, as
the doctor's diagnosis states. Chopin's last line also contains a duality that leads the reader to believe that what killed her was the sudden gain and loss of her freedom. Louise's joy in discovering complete freedom is suddenly and violently stripped from her. Louise comes to an abrupt realization that her "self-assertion which she [had] suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being" (353) is once again being denied her.

This ending, Louise's death, is evidence of how strong and profound Louise's discovery was. Her realization is similar to Edna's because she has gotten a glimpse of what her world could be, and then it is torn from her. Chopin writes that while Louise thought her husband was dead, "Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her" (354). The freedom and new life Louise sees outside her window cannot exist while her husband is alive and possesses her. When Brently opens the door and reenters Louise's life, the doors which have just been opened to her awakened being slam shut. Louise's awakening is the most visible of these four in that Chopin illustrates the transformation of her whole being by comparing it to the world outside the window.

The comparison between Louise's awakening and the awakening of Spring can be seen as a metaphor for the wild zone. The wild zone has been defined as that shaded area existing for women only, inaccessible to males. Louise becomes so connected to that world outside her window, and
the spring that is awakening with her. For a moment, Louise has a bond with those spring flowers as they bloom together. We see here Louise's discovery of her place, her existence as a woman without the imposing shadow of her husband. For a few moments, Louise exists as the woman she wants to be. The tragedy is that her freedom and her newly-awakened person is torn away from her. Like Edna, she can no longer accept the old world once she has seen her awakened world.
RESTRICTIONS

Among the four women characters we have seen in these works of Kate Chopin and George Sand, there are many similarities. Not only do all of these women experience what I have called an awakening, a discovery of the world and their place in it, these women all face restrictions, restrictions which, in fact, add to the difficulty and heighten the success. Whether it be a husband, another man, marital obligations, maternal obligations, or society in general, all of these women are forced to overcome these challenges. What is curious is how each of these women faces the challenge and wins, or according to some opinions, they succumb to the difficulties. These restrictions placed on the characters of Sand and Chopin make their awakenings all the more difficult for them, obviously, but more realistic and accessible to the reader.

It is clear in The Awakening, Indiana, and "The Story of an Hour" the husbands dominate the relationship and the lives of their wives. As we have already seen, Mr. Pontellier and Delmare did not love Edna or Indiana with much intensity, and the love of Louise’s husband was overly protective. These three women are smothered by their spouses' protectiveness. If there are children, they are the wife's responsibility, at least to the extent of being sure they are properly cared for and being sure the family
appears very content to the rest of society. In Edna's case, most of the responsibility is placed externally upon her. She loves her children, but won't let them confine her. The women are also expected to manage the house and do their husbands' bidding. They are controlled and monitored by these men all the time. Much of this, of course, is due also to their societal positions. Two of the women, Edna and Indiana, can accept no more, and they begin to defy their husbands, but without them noticing much.

Edna begins by going out on the day, Tuesday, that she is to receive visitors. Then she brings her children to her mother-in-law's and leaves them there with their nanny. Finally, as her boldest action, Edna moves out of her husband's house while he is away and moves into her own "pigeon house." These events that take place in stages throughout the novel are not only evidence of the awakening that is taking place, but they are also in some way a rebellion against Mr. Pontellier.

She starts with minor offenses, such as being gone on the day she is to receive guests. When her husband hears of this at dinner he is shocked, "Out!...Why, what could have taken you out on Tuesday?" Edna is expecting this, but her answer is true and simple, "Nothing. I simply felt like going out, and I went out." To further anger Léonce, Edna tells him that she did not leave an excuse except to say that she was "out" (70). Although a seemingly minor
infraction, Edna has displayed a bit of rebellion towards her husband. Her actions are not simply for rebellion's sake, however; she is testing her freedom, to see how much she can experience. She is not surprised by her husband's anger, and it doesn't deter her either. Edna is determined to do some things for herself, and she knows her husband is an obstacle. She must overcome some of his restrictions because they are preventing her from discovering herself.

Indiana, in the novel by Sand, is not quite as rebellious as Edna, but she is a strong character nonetheless. Her reach for freedom is not as evident or blatant as Edna's, but in time she is able to discover both herself and a happier life. During the time Indiana is beginning to examine her life and her situation, Ralph plays a large role in the conclusions she draws because he becomes someone to compare her husband to. She complains:

Voilà bien son mépris pour les femmes...elles ne sont à ses yeux que des animaux domestiques, propres à maintenir l'ordre dans une maison, à préparer les repas et à servir le thé. Il ne leur fait pas l'honneur d'entrer en discussion avec elles..." (212-213).

Indiana's is upset because her husband has expected her to serve him, yet he doesn't even respect her enough to converse with her. She is beginning to see, however, that not all men, especially Ralph, expect this; she is more of an equal with Ralph. She even admits that she would do
anything for him: "Je suis sa servante, il ne me demande pas davantage" (213). She is not a servant, though, because Ralph respects her. What Indiana is coming to realize is that her husband, who should have made all of those childhood dreams come true, is exactly what prohibits her from the life and self that she wants.

Indiana begins to challenge her husband in search of those dreams. She is brave enough to venture to Raymon's house, and to invite him into hers while Delmare is away. Neither venture is very successful, as it is Ralph who must once again protect her from being discovered. Indiana's final act of rebellion is leaving her husband for Paris and Raymon. She has received a letter from him, and she is hoping to find him waiting anxiously for her return. However, it is disappointment that awaits her. Entering Raymon's house, she cries, "Reconnais-moi donc...c'est moi, c'est ton Indiana" (296). She has left her husband, and is ready to devote herself entirely to Raymon because she feels he will finally love her and give her the life she has dreamed of.

Raymon is less than responsive. His first reaction is to hide Indiana, because, as we soon discover, he is married and living with his wife. What is impressive about Indiana is that she does not give in at this point. This knowledge faces her like all restrictions have in the past, and she does not surrender; "L'indignation rendit la force à
Indiana; elle se leva haute et puissante 29 (297). Indiana is strong, and she is able to face yet another blockade that has been placed before her.

Chopin's character, Louise Mallard, is not nearly as strong as Edna or Indiana. In "The Story of an Hour," when Louise discovers that her husband has died, she begins to feel the restrictions slipping away from her life. Chopin illustrates Louise's awakening by letting us watch her first moments of freedom when "[S]he could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life" (352). Spring, in the story, is more than symbolic to Louise; it is as if she, too, were blooming in her freedom.

All of her life, Louise has been protected by her husband. She has a weak heart, so it gives him all the more reason to protect and coddle her. But Louise is not as weak as one might think. Chopin describes her: "She [is] young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines [bespeak] repression and even a certain strength" (353). Louise has been sheltered all her life, but she is still strong and full of spirit. What has been holding her back is her over-protective husband. This is why his death suddenly unleashes a whole new world for her, and it is his return that steals away her hope for that new freedom.

Although readers don't watch Louise question and challenge her freedom as they are able to do with Edna and
Indiana, the barriers that Louise faces are just as real. She loved her husband, "sometimes," she says, yet when she looks to the future she thinks, "There [will] be no powerful will bending [mine] in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow creature" (353). The will she has been living by is not her own, it is her husbands, and she has been told that she is too weak to exist on her own. The death of her husband has broken down this barrier; she now has a "possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognize[s] as the strongest impulse of her being" (353).

Louise's strength could possibly be all the more evident because her freedom is suddenly thrown upon her. No, she has not had to work for it, but she has never even thought it possible to explore her possibilities. She does have hope, though, as we see her looking out the window:

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long. (354)

So, it is clear that Louise has found a new freedom, and her restrictions have diminished with the death of her husband. She did suffer, as we see from the above passage, but what separates her is that she didn't have to fight for the
freedom.

Fadette is the only character who does not have a husband restricting her, but she does have societal standards placed upon her by a male. It is Landry who confronts Fadette with her image and tells her that it is not acceptable to the village. Before her transformation, she is considered a witch, ugly, unacceptable. She transforms herself into a more feminine person, conforming to society and taming her wild spirit. Her magical powers, too, change from those of a witch to gifts given to her by God to help everyone. Once they are defined as such, the community is more willing to accept her.

It is acceptance into this culture that Fadette is striving for, but to do so she must conform. Fadette's awakening is a discovery of her potential, but her restriction is that it must exist within the boundaries of the village. We do not know how much Fadette can grow because there are lines drawn around her by her society; she is held back. At one point, she wishes to leave the village entirely, but it is concern for her little brother that makes her stay. Fadette's awakening is complete, yet the restrictions that face her are not so easily discarded as to allow further growth. In the end, however, we see Fadette is accepting of that and content with the exploration she has already completed.

Another challenge faced by all these women is their
maternal obligations that do not to permit them to act without first taking into account their children. It is not the men who tend to them or worry about their happiness, safety, development. All of this is left to the mother and/or the nanny, whom the mother must choose very carefully and constantly monitor. It is not, in these stories, that the women do not care for the children. In fact, they love them very much, but full responsibility for the children is placed on them.

Maternal obligation is not limited to off-spring either. As in Fadette's case, it is her responsibility to her little brother and grandmother. These women, especially in Fadette's case, also feel a responsibility to take care of everyone they love. They place much of this obligation on themselves, but it is also because that is what society has come to expect from them. Women are traditionally given the task of watching over those who need care, and this has become expected of them.

Edna Pontellier, again, takes the most drastic steps out of her traditional role when she leaves her children to their grandmother. She does this in the midst of her discovery so that she can continue to do things for herself. It's not that she doesn't love them, but as she put it:

I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to
comprehend, which is revealing itself to me. (67)

Edna is realizing her self worth; her potential is revealing itself to her as a part of her awakening. She would give her life because of the love of her children, but she would not concede the worth she is beginning to see in herself.

In Edna's society, as Ivy Schweitzer writes:
Motherhood, like the fictions of romance, is a discursive function of a certain ideology, here a bourgeois ideology which makes femininity and maternity inseparable, crucial to the maintenance of patriarchal society and laissez-faire capitalism, but incompatible with female desire, autonomy, or independent subjectivity. (169)

Although Edna loves her children and she feels a responsibility to them, they are not a part of her self-discovery. With a label and image of "mother," Edna can only advance so far; there are things expected of her as a mother that restrict her awakening. To overcome these obstacles, she leaves her children in the care of her mother-in-law, where they are safe, to concentrate more fully on herself. This may appear selfish or cruel, but it isn't when one realizes that she loves them enough to secure their happiness and safety, and what she is doing is for her happiness.

Although Fadette does not have any children to care for, her maternal obligation reaches out to her entire
family. She tends to her elderly grandmother, and she watches over her little brother because her mother has abandoned them. Part of what makes Fadette so endearing is this obligation and care for others. It is also part of what restricts her. Like any obligated person, Fadette does not feel that she can leave her grandmother and brother to tend to herself. Fadette does not feel such a need to take care of herself because of this. Dickenson writes, "...she has the best of feminine virtues under her tomboy appearance. It is maternal concern for her brother which has kept her in tatters" (59).

Fadette also assumes a motherly responsibility towards Landry and his twin brother, Sylvinet, especially when Sylvinet feels neglected or when he is ill. Sylvinet discovers his twin speaking to Fadette, and he assumes that Landry will have no more time for him. He tells himself, "Je souffrirai tout seul, pendant qu'il se réjouira d'être débarrassé de moi"21 (179). Sylvinet feels he is somehow holding his brother back, and he must withdraw so as not to be in the way; "Le pauvre besson prit comme une habitude d'être triste et pâle"22 (179).

Although Louise and Indiana do not have children or family they must tend to, they are still restricted by maternal roles that are placed on them by society. It is important to note that these women also feel obligated because they love their children, but society's standards
still control the way in which they care for them. This is, perhaps, the point at which the authors, Sand and Chopin, are most closely connected with their characters. As we have discussed concerning Edna, Indiana, Fadette, and Louise, these women played certain roles in society: Edna is expected to be home on Tuesdays to receive guests, Indiana is to remain quiet and obedient to her husband, always portraying the happy wife, Fadette is the poor peasant witch, not good enough to live amongst the others, and Louise is the sickly wife told to be content with whatever her husband allows her. Again, these restrictions relate back to the husbands, but many times the husbands are also enforcing rules of etiquette and appearance that society has defined for the women.

These women, especially the upper-class women, had certain standards to live up to. Society demanded that they be home to receive guests, that they entertain friends, and that they take care of the children. Edna, Louise, and Indiana become symbols of how well their husbands are doing, how happy the marriage is, how well the children are being raised. They are never allowed to do something for their own happiness; it is assumed that guiding the lives of their families is enough. What mattered most in these lifestyles was appearance. How society perceived an individual and their family was more important than actual happiness. This is why Edna's husband began remodeling their home when she
moved out: it had to appear there was an acceptable reason for her to move out. Her search for happiness was not legitimate. Louisa locked herself in her room to discover and enjoy her freedom because it would not be acceptable to appear happy about her chains being lifted. She was expected to mourn her husband's death and feel lost without him because that is what everyone had been telling her. Indiana is rarely given a chance to be anything but a young wife and the possession of M. Delmare.

These restrictions challenge and strengthen the awakenings of these three women. Although Fadette's society is not upper-class, it is unwilling to accept her as more than a witch-like peasant girl. She must prove herself to be a human of equal worth, with real potential. Edna, Indiana, Louise, and Fadette are all defined, implicit or understood, as women with duties and positions. They are placed in roles, and they have obligations to those roles. Deviating from them would be challenging society and its standards. This is the most frustrating of all these restrictions because society's definitions cannot be changed by one person.

Appearance is everything in these novels. It was also important in the lives of the authors. Perhaps appearance and conformity to society's standards was all the more important because Sand and Chopin depended on the money made from selling books. Unacceptable characters or story lines
would be considered unworthy of reading and buying. As we know, Sand supported herself, her children, her lovers, and forty families living in Nohant. Chopin was a widow with a small business and six children to raise. There was a definite need for each of these women to sell their books and make money from them. The challenge that faced them and their characters was how much society could accept. How much could these women risk before they were scorned by their societies?

It is interesting to note here that The Awakening was the last work Chopin published because of the "harsh critical reception" it received (Skaggs 4). She in fact wrote other stories that she didn't even try to publish including a short story entitled, "The Storm." Peggy Skaggs, a biographer of Chopin writes:

Had she tried to publish it, no doubt the critics would have found it shocking indeed—shocking in the explicit, albeit artistic, description of the love scene; even more shocking in the fact that Calixta frankly enjoys this adulterous interlude. (62)

Clearly, Chopin is not afraid to write from her heart about the heart of women, but she is afraid about how it will be perceived and accepted by her society.

It is also intriguing to consider Sand's personal distaste for the institution of marriage when many of her characters devote themselves to marriage. Donna Dickenson,
a biographer of Sand, states that Sand was "an enemy of 'maris' but not of marriage, of husbands but not of marriage" (46). Perhaps Sand herself never discovered the Ralph, the maris, she dreamed of. Sand is also well-known for her liberal way of leading her public life. She smoked, had many relationships, and even dressed, at times, in men's clothing, although that may have been because it was simply more economical (Dickenson 80). Sand's personal life, then, does not reflect the life led by some of her characters. I can only suppose here that one of the many reasons was that Sand really wished for a more simple life like those of her characters so chose to express this in her writings. It is also safe to assume that Sand knew well her books would not be well-received without taming them, so she adapted her characters to the society that would read their stories.

The fact that both of these women were conscious of the general public's acceptance of these books no doubt had to affect the way they wrote. We can only speculate that Sand and Chopin saw greater awakenings for their women characters and that what we read has been adapted so as not to scare away the buyers of their works. This fact itself would restrict the characters considerably before their story even began to be told.
DEATH OR DEPENDENCE

The awakenings of Edna, Fadette, Indiana, and Louise are powerful and enduring because the characters struggle for the chance to explore themselves as women. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the obstacles overcome by the women strengthen their awakenings by challenging them throughout the process; the end result is more successful because it has faced opposition, but that is what's important: the awakenings are successful. Each ends with a different conclusion or resolution, but also with a newly awakened woman. The major question left us is if an awakened woman would truly want to commit to the institution of marriage or still feel helpless enough to end her life. A closer analysis of each of these endings will prove that the awakenings are successful. They are consistent with the wishes of the each woman character and are consistent within each individual context. These varied endings also strengthen the argument that all different types of awakenings are valid. Finally, it also becomes apparent that these 19th century works hold up very well to 20th century criticism, and that they can even be seen as examples of 20th century theories before they existed.

Marriage seems an odd resolution to the turmoiled life of Indiana. Throughout the novel we watch her rejection of her husband and her married life. It isn't until Ralph
shows her true love that Indiana feels fulfilled and marriage becomes more engaging. The same can be said for Fadette. Landry encourages Fadette to reach her potential just until the point she is ready to marry him. This sort of ending does not seem congruent with a feminist critique. We almost wish these women would take their new-found independence and run with it. Instead, they run into the arms of a man. This does not, however, discredit their awakenings.

An awakening is a process for a woman to go through; it is an experience or voyage, not a resolution. Within the context of their situations, marriage is appropriate for Fadette and Indiana. Both characters are happy at the end of their stories; they have found a place they are content to be in. This happiness is stronger because it is the happiness of an awakened woman.

Death is the other resolution offered us by these writings. Perhaps the most difficult ending to understand and accept is the suicide of Edna Pontellier. Manfred Malzahn writes: "Ultimately, Edna's rebellion is a failure: she does not find a new place in society, having given up her old one for good" (33). This is a highly arguable point, however, because Edna's suicide could be seen as casting-off of society's restrictions. As is expressed in the end of the novel, Edna is returning to nature. Chopin explains, "She felt like some new-born creature, opening its
eyes in a familiar world that it had never known" (136). This world is familiar to Edna because it is where she exists as herself, yet it is foreign because it has been denied to her for so long. Her return to nature and the sea is a sort of homecoming for her, and she readily embraces it, leaving behind her old life. No, she has not found a new place in society, but she no longer wants to exist in society as she now perceives it.

Louise's death is the most tragic ending, even moreso than Edna's suicide, because it leaves an impression that a woman cannot handle her awakened state. One could argue that the mind and soul of a stereotypical female has trouble accepting the results of an awakening. I argue that Louise's death occurred because her awakened state was taken from her; she was robbed of a freedom she had just acquired. Similar to Edna, Louise's awakened being no longer sees a place for herself in her old life: married and dependent. When she sits in her room and watches Spring bloom outside her window, she is stronger than ever. The realization that those days of her own are no longer ahead of her kills her.

There is a common theme running throughout these endings. It is that all of these awakened characters who have experienced something uniquely their own, something from the wild zone, are all pulled out of that zone and back into reality. If it is understood that these awakenings occur within the wild zone, as discussed, then it seems the
endings express the inability of a woman to remain in that truly female place, outside of the male-dominated culture.

This brings us again to the discussion of restrictions. It is known that Sand and Chopin were concerned about selling their books, and it is easily speculated that they tamed their characters somewhat so as not to be too disturbing to the public. These endings then may also be evidence that the authors felt it impossible for a woman to live outside the male culture. These works, written in the 19th century, express much of what modern criticism asks of women authors today, but they were doing so without precedence. Sand and Chopin wrote without the shadow of feminist criticism, but they also wrote without its support. There was no Hélène Cixous telling them to write about being a woman or Elaine Showalter stating a purely female experience does exist. Sand and Chopin wrote about what they knew, about women. They took their characters to the limit, for, as we know, The Awakening was considered quite scandalous. Perhaps these endings retreat from the wild zone because their authors felt it too much to be accepted by their culture.

Again, these endings do not discredited the awakenings or the authors of the awakenings. All of these women experienced rich and intense discoveries, and the endings are loyal to their characters. If we find ourselves disappointed, it is because we are ignoring the advice
previously given to us by Patricia Meyer Spacks: "To impose modern feminist standards, or modern standards of any kind, on our foremothers virtually guarantees discovery of their inadequacy as compared to our enlightenment" (272). We must remember to consider the outcomes within context. Sand and Chopin's characters have endured modern theory because they are at the root of it. These authors began writing of the woman's experience before it had a name. What they left was empowering examples of the female experience.
TRANSLATION NOTES

Note: All following translations are my own.

She had also restyled her hair, and instead of appearing like a piece of dressed wood, her stature was graceful and supple like the beautiful body of a honey bee.

From La Petite Fadette

This sudden and inevitable light inundated the folds of Indiana's heart; the headband, which for so long had been loosening itself, completely fell away from her eyes.

From Indiana

1) Little Fadette, the saddest and most mistreated of the earth, always laughs and never complains of anything.

2) small, thin, dishevelled, and fearless

3) It's that you aren't at all like a girl, but more like a boy, it's just the way you act; you don't really take good care of yourself.

4) Thank you, Landry... You have told me what everyone else finds wrong with me, and you've told me with honesty.

5) (her skin) was so clear and soft as the spring hawthorne

6) But the gift of nature isn't at all a fable, seeing that Fadette has it, and with the few lessons that her grandmother gave her, she discovered and figured out, as those who invent, the virtues that the good Lord placed in certain herbs and certain ways of using them. She is not at all a sorceress for that...but she has a mind that observes, ...and that's a gift of nature that no one can deny.

7) a flower born in winter that blooms in a gothic vase

8) And, advancing towards the injured man with a courage that none of the others had yet felt capable of, she approached the light of his face.

9) Women are to obey, not to ask questions.

10) She had not yet loved.
11) The day will come when my whole life will change, when I will do good to others; a day when they will love me, when I will give my whole heart to him who gives me his; in the meantime, let's suffer, let's not speak up, and let's keep our love to reward him who will deliver me.

12) Raymon has an incredible power over all who surrounded him.

13) You don't know that I have not yet loved, and that I will not give my pure heart entirely in exchange for a wilted and ruined heart, my enthusiastic love for a lukewarm love, my entire life, in exchange for a quick day.

14) I was just going to tell you that you are free and that you can unite yourself with M. de Ramière. Delmare has died.

15) My husband is dead! I have killed him!

16) Indiana looked at M. Brown with an undefinable expression of tenderness and joy.

17) That's his scorn of women...they are only domestic animals in his eyes, good only for maintaining order in the house, prepare the meals and serve the tea. He doesn't honor them by letting them into the conversation.

18) I am his servant, he doesn't ask more of me.

19) Remember me, then...it's me, it's your Indiana.

20) Indignation gave strength to Indiana; she stood up high and powerful.

21) I will suffer alone while he will be happy to be rid of me.

22) The poor twin was habitually sad and pale.
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