

Gothic Motifs in *The Awakening*

Satu Jarva
University of Tampere
Faculty of Communication Sciences
Language, Translation and Literary Studies
Master's Programme in English
Language and Literature
MA Thesis
March 2017

Tampereen yliopisto
Viestintätieteiden tiedekunta
Englannin kielen ja kirjallisuuden maisteriopinnot

JARVA, SATU: Gothic Motifs in *The Awakening*
Pro Gradu -tutkielma, 66 sivua
Maaliskuu 2017

Tutkielma tarkastelee amerikkalaisen kirjailija Kate Chopinin tunnetuimman teoksen, *The Awakening*, goottilaisia piirteitä, historiallista kontekstia ja ajallisia teemoja. Teoksen goottilaisia piirteitä on tutkittu varsin vähän, mutta muita teemoja, esimerkiksi sukupuolten välisiä voimasuhteita ja psykoanalyttisiä vaikutteita on tutkittu runsaasti.

Kirjan kirjoittamisen aikaan, 1890-luvulla länsimainen yhteiskunta oli siirtymässä uuteen aikakauteen, ja tuo siirtymäaika, vuosisadan viimeinen vuosikymmen tunnettiin nimellä fin de siècle, aikakauden loppu ja uuden alku. Kulttuuriset, teolliset ja poliittiset muutokset heijastuivat ajan taiteeseen, jonka kautta siten manifestoituivat fiktiivisesti monet aikalaisten pelot ja halu palata takaisin menneeseen, usein myyttiseen kulta-aikaan. Kirjallisuudessa erityistä suosiota nautti goottilainen tyyli. ”Gothic” eli käännettynä synkkä, makaaberi tai kauhukirjallisuus on säilyttänyt suosionsa lähes kolmesataa vuotta, aina sopeutuen uuteen aikaan ja sen haasteisiin.

Chopinin kirjan sankaritar on traagisten valintojensa vuoksi saanut osakseen, kuten kirjoittajansakin, runsasta kritiikkiä, ja hänen kohtalonsa on puhuttanut sekä lukijoita että kirjallisuuskriitikkoja vuosikymmenien ajan. Kirjan julkaisemisen aikaan 1899 sitä pidettiin liian rohkeana kuvauksena naisen seksuaalisesta heräämisestä, ja sen aiheuttama skandaali jätti jälkensä Chopinin kirjailijan uraan sekä yksityiselämään.

Chopinin teoksen goottilaiset piirteet ovat hienovaraisia ja kirjailijan tyylin mukaan vaativat lukijalta aktiivisen roolin omaksumista. Teos on monitahoinen kertomus, jonka kerrokselliset tasot avautuvat historiallisen kontekstin puitteissa, viktoriaanisen ajan ihmiskäsityksen ja sosiaalisten tapojen sekä tottumusten kautta. Monet goottilaisen genren piirteet nousevat esiin, kun aikakauden sosiaaliset normit murenevät päähenkilön valintojen vuoksi: tunteet, musiikki, sublimaatio ja temporaaliset tekijät luovat teokseen goottilaisia sävyjä. Lisäksi kirjailijan elämäkokemus kaikkine vastoinkäymisineen on kerronnassa taustalla melankolisena pohjavirtauksena, omana intertekstuaalisena kerroksenaan, luoden teokseen unenomaista, epätodellista ajattomuutta, mikä on tunnusomaista goottilaiselle genrelle. Goottilainen merkitystaso on vain yksi Chopinin teoksen monista tasoista, mutta se on myös yllättävän vaikuttava ottaen huomioon narratiivin hienovaraisen tyylin ja henkilökuvauksen.

Avainsanat: Kate Chopin, Gothic, gender, temporality, Creole, fin de siècle

Table of Contents

1 Introduction.....	1
2 Gothic Fiction in Historical Context	7
2.1 The Origin and Rise of Gothic Fiction.....	9
2.2 Establishing the Victorian Context: The invisible Victorian Woman and the Ghost.....	10
2.3 New Woman and Fin de Siècle: Towards Modernity.....	13
2.4 The Victorian Construct of Temporality.....	17
2.5 The Gothic and the Uncanny.....	18
2.6 The Gothic Sublime and Fear.....	20
2.7 American Gothic and Other Subgenres.....	22
3 The Gothic Awakening: Edna's Failing Fantasies.....	28
3.1 Previous Studies and Classifications.....	32
3.2 Chopin's Creole Culture: Creating the Other.....	37
3.3 The Gothic Power of Music	43
3.4 Temporality and the Sublime Present	45
3.5 The Uncanny Signs of Destruction and Death	52
3.6 The Gothic Role Play in the House: Mothers vs Monsters	55
4 Conclusion.....	59
Works Cited.....	62

1 Introduction

Kate Chopin was an American writer, who lived during the turbulent years of the Civil War and saw the dawn of the new era for the American people. Chopin (1851-1904), nee O'Flaherty, was born in St. Louis, Missouri. Her Irish father was killed in a railroad accident when she was just four years old. Her mother descended from two of St. Louis's oldest Creole families. Because the family had strong sympathy for the Confederates, the years of the Civil War were troubling: Kate lost her half-brother during the wartime. She was only nineteen when she married into a distinguished Louisiana Creole family, and the marriage proved to be happy. The Chopins lived in northwest Louisiana and New Orleans until the premature death of Kate's husband Oscar in 1882. After his death Kate managed the family plantations by herself and did it quite successfully, but due to her mother's urgings the young widow returned with her six children to St. Louis.

The financial burden was on the shoulders of the young widow alone, and mostly by her own choice, but economically she was reasonably secure. Then, hardly a year passed and her mother died too, leaving her, as "her biographers concur, 'prostrate with grief'" (Ewell 16). Kate Chopin suffered many losses before her writing career started, as her loved ones passed away. Chopin's daughter Lelia recalled the melancholy that was a constant companion to her mother:

When I speak of my mother's keen sense of humour and of her habit of looking on the amusing side of everything, I don't want to give you the impression of her being joyous, for she was on the contrary rather a sad nature. She was undemonstrative both in grief and happiness, but her feelings were very deep as is usual with such natures. I think the tragic death of her father early in her life, of her much loved brothers, the loss of her young husband and her mother, left a stamp of sadness on her which was never lost. (qtd. in Ewell 17)

The stamp of sadness can be found in her stories as well, her experiences echo in the fiction to come. Aparecido Donizete Rossi suggests that as Kate Chopin's own life experiences were turned into literature, so did the "inclusion of the female Gothic tradition into her fiction" (69).

A family friend, Dr. Frederick Colbenheyer, who had delivered several of her children and was an ardent admirer of the young widow, had a strong influence on Chopin and he supported her through difficult years. He encouraged Chopin to start writing fiction, and she took his advice. There was a demand for local-color stories and it was as much an artistic as a practical decision to use her knowledge and talents to this kind of tales. She wrote short stories, for both children and adults, and these were published in such magazines as *Atlantic Monthly* and *Vogue*. Her major works were later collected into two short story collections, in 1894 *Bayou Folk* and *A Night in Acadie*, that was published in 1897. (Ewell 6-18, 24, 94) *Bayou Folk* was a collection of twenty-three sketches and tales, which were, as *Publishers Weekly* described 17 March 1894, representations “‘of [the] unfamiliar characters and customs . . . of these semi-aliens’” (Ewell 54).

Barbara C. Ewell states that Kate Chopin was intelligent, curious and well-educated, even daring at times. On her honeymoon in Switzerland she used her new freedom, her status as a married woman in an unconventional way, as she comments her solitary walk: “How very far I *did* go...I wonder what people thought of me – a young woman strolling about alone. I even took a glass of beer at a friendly little beer garden quite on the edge of the lake” (qtd. in Ewell 12). Edna Pontellier, the heroine of her most famous story *The Awakening*, also enjoys a bottle of beer in solitude, feeling “restless and excited” (Chopin 75) and there seems to be more than one similarity between these women, as Chopin’s memoirs suggest.

Many of Kate Chopin’s stories are situated in the rural Creole society in late nineteenth century Louisiana, describing the Southern locations and habits of the “semi-aliens”. Helen Taylor states that Chopin took

pains to emphasise the specific linguistic and social differences between French-speaking regions of Louisiana and the rest of the USA [. . .] Writing at a distance in St Louis, Missouri, following the deaths of her husband and mother, she was involved in interpretation and explication, not only to portray for readers the essence of a state that fascinated her but also to record a world that was disappearing fast into the maw of ‘Americanness’. Much of her fiction records what a newly post-colonial state felt like

within a larger homogenising nation, particularly in terms of the impact on its French Creole and French Acadian peoples. (147-160)

For Kate Chopin Louisiana was an exotic site and in all her stories it is the southern women that “embody the tensions and transformations within post-bellum life.” Her fiction was based on the “mixed Catholic/Protestant, Native American/French/Spanish/African American/English cultures” of Louisiana, and her stories “played into readers’ fantasies and desires, especially about the Francophone Acadians of Louisiana’s Red River community and the French Creoles who moved between Paris and that notorious southern city, New Orleans” (Taylor 147-160).

Gothic tales and folklore were brought to the new world and South by immigrants and slaves: Spanish, French and English people, as well as Acadians themselves. They brought to Louisiana their language and culture, “so in the 1850s and 1860s the language of Louisiana folklore, religion, myth, and legend had already incorporated frightening elements such as changeling and foundling legends, witchcraft, the classic European Gothic pantheon (werewolves, vampires, ghosts, and specters), Voodoo, Hoodoo, Papa Legba, and the appalling names of Madame LaLaurie and Marie Laveau”(Rossi 71). Hoodoo and Voodoo are common in Louisiana, these are religious practices that originated in Africa: Papa Legba is one of Voodoo’s godly entities. LaLaurie was a serial killer, who tortured and murdered slaves and Laveau a Creole and the Voodoo queen of New Orleans (80).

The heroine in *The Awakening*, 28-year-old Edna Pontellier, is a Kentuckian and an outsider in Creole culture, which is depicted colourfully, in a cosy manner and with great detail in the novel. Her husband, Léonce Pontellier, is a wealthy Creole businessman from New Orleans. On a vacation at Grand Isle, a resort on the Gulf Coast, she grows attached to a young man, Robert Lebrun, and starts to fantasize about love and freedom. The tension grows between Edna and Robert, and he abruptly leaves the island and travels to Mexico. When the summer season by the sea is over, and the family returns to town, Edna starts her quest towards independence and sensual awakening. She neglects her social routines and is overwhelmed by new ideas and at times lead by whims. While

her husband is on a business trip, and her two sons visiting relatives in the country, Edna finds herself a lover and moves away from her home to a small “pigeon house”, where she intends to live, separated from her husband, who does not have any idea of her plans. She is finally reunited with Robert, when he returns to New Orleans, but Edna’s romantic dream is not fulfilled: she awakens from this dream into a harsh reality after a pusillanimous farewell note from Robert. She returns to Grande Isle, swims far out into the sea and drowns herself.

The meaning of Edna’s suicide remains an open question and thus an invitation to different kinds of interpretations. It could be read as a liberation or desperate escape from patriarchal society and its restraints, or perhaps as an inability to accommodate to the real world; to continue her life as a mother and wife to a man she did not love. Peter Ramos lists some of these readings as follow: Edna’s suicide is the best possible result, a triumph, under the circumstances: the pressures of patriarchal society, secondly, majority of the contemporary responses argued that Edna’s fate was “only cosmic justice for her moral deviation throughout the novella” and some critics have suggested that Edna’s swim does not lead to death at all. A less popular reading argues that Edna’s final actions are “inconsistent with her character and, as such, flaw the novella as a whole” (146). Ramos himself suggests that Edna’s suicide is a subtle warning: “her final actions serve as an example of what can happen to a protagonist, whose unwillingness to continue dedicating herself to any of the available social roles leads her to abandon all of them in favour of an enticing yet ever-elusive freedom, the kind one associates with a tantalizing, idyllic childhood” (147).

Barbara C. Ewell argues that the most important issue of the novel itself is: “how does one (especially one female) achieve personal integrity in a world of conventional restraints?” (143). By submissive actions and adapting to the social norms, would be the obvious answer, but the protagonist’s actions defy all reason through the novel. The purpose of this thesis is not to examine gender differences or women’s struggle in the patriarchal society in detail, but nevertheless these issues are strongly incorporated in the structures of nineteenth century society, and thus cannot be

avoided: sexual oppression, difference and resistance are among the struggles that feminist critical movement has addressed, and still does. Rossi notes that the “resistance”, a word that summarises the longtime struggle against patriarchal order, no matter if physical or textual, gives meaning to the relationship between feminism and the Gothic: female Gothic writers turned their Gothic tales of resistance into “a critical weapon against the patriarchal orders and burdens imposed on women, and, in doing so, they became feminist icons of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries” (68-69). The Gothic literary genre was transformed in the hands of Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Mary Shelley and Emily Dickinson: “Shelley confronted the sacred patriarchal institutions of science, religion, and myth in her *Frankenstein* [. . .] Emily Dickinson, with her cutleries and entombments, turned the Gothic into poetry in a way never anticipated by the Romantics” (68). The position of Kate Chopin in the genre of feminist Gothic writers is a matter of opinion and definition: what is the amount of “Gothicism” in the author’s work that is needed to include her in the genre? Is there enough of female resistance in her work to make her a feminist writer? Some of the most influential and common critical approaches to *The Awakening*, including feminist approach, will be discussed later in the study to answer these questions.

My research questions are as follow: What Gothic motifs surface in the novel? How are these motifs being used to symbolize or underline the turns of the plot? Thus, the research method is reading for the Gothic motifs and symbols in the novel. As Rossi points out, Chopin’s life experiences were food for her fiction, and there was a “phantasmatic connection with the Gothic” as her words were filtered through mourning and melancholia. (70) This mourning and melancholia was related to the tragic circumstances that deprived Chopin of so many of her loved ones.

The theoretical framework is based on the historical and social context of the novel, and in the relevant Gothic mode. Since there is a significant gap in the previous research of the Gothic motifs in Kate Chopin’s work, a handful of scholars and critics have given attention to the theme, for example Janet Beer, Avril Horner and Daniel Rankin, who, according to Rossi, wrote in 1932

that “*The Awakening* was a curious morbid pathos of mental dissection” and “morbid in theme” (Rossi 65). In addition to that, Charles Crow argues that Chopin’s short-story “*Désirée’s Baby*” (1892) is “perhaps the most complex and subtle of Creole Gothic tales.” He states that the story blends “the tradition of women’s regional realism (of which Chopin was a master) with European and American Gothic [...] As so often with the best Gothic fiction, the story is innovative in its narration, using its time sequence and shifting points of view to create ambiguity” (Crow 92-93). Thus, the objective of this thesis is to prove that a Gothic reading of *The Awakening* gives a new perspective to the reading of the novel. My intention is to study how Gothic motifs, such as transformation, temporality and the sublime are reflected through the protagonist Edna Pontellier. These motifs manifest in the way she makes choices, expresses her individuality and looks at the surrounding society, family-members and friends with new and realistic eyes. She shatters the shackles of the normative world: “She laughed and bantered him a little, remembering too late that she should have been dignified and reserved. ‘How handsome Mrs. Pontellier looked!’ said Madame Lebrun to her son. ‘Ravishing!’ He admitted. ‘The city atmosphere has improved her. Some way she doesn’t seem like the same woman’” (Chopin 60). The protagonist has started to shed her false self and identity.

There are different varieties of Gothic novel, including the early Gothic novel, sometimes referred to original Gothic literature, Urban Gothic, Victorian, Imperial, Southern, Postmodern and Female Gothic novel. An overview of relevant Gothic literary subgenres is included in the theory section of the thesis. The primary source material for the thesis consists of the novel itself, secondary material of the studies made of the novel, texts written about Gothic literature and various studies made of the contemporary historical time-period, the late nineteenth century.

2 Gothic Fiction in Historical Context

This theory section includes descriptions of the most common Gothic motifs, many of which are also represented in Kate Chopin's fiction and a brief glance at the origins of the Gothic as a literary concept. As Rossi points out, Chopin was influenced by Burke, Dante and Coleridge and this literary influence combined with her relationship to Louisiana as "a land of the Gothic" is the key to understanding the special atmosphere of her stories: there is "solitude and existential drama" in *The Awakening* and "Désirée's Baby" is framed by fear and horror (Rossi 72).

Gothic symbolism and themes that can be described as the most common and widely accepted genre conventions, have been represented in literature almost three centuries, always adapting to the surrounding social and cultural environment, changing, finding new routes to present the fearful but sustaining the key elements of Gothic, representing the horror and hidden aspects, the dreams and nightmares and the unspeakable.

Some of the key elements that create the Gothic experience are the non-human entities, the uncanny, abjection, the sublime, ambiguity, the grotesque, taboo, transformation and temporality. The early Gothic tales were often set in the past. Castles, ancient ruins and convents were their natural settings; the nature of these tales was often barbaric and violent (Punter 8-9). Settings changed in the Victorian era from medieval to contemporary, but as Elizabeth MacAndrews points out, "a man's house turned out to be still his Gothic castle and his soul, already reflected in paintings and statues, began to look back at him from mirrors and, worse still, from his double, a living, breathing copy of himself" (7).

A range of possible critical approaches to Gothic can be outlined as follows: the psychoanalytical, historicist, feminist, colonial and postcolonial perspectives. According to Andrew Smith, "psychoanalytical approaches indebted to Sigmund Freud tend to read Gothic narratives as if they could be interpreted as dreams", which, like Gothic narratives, possess surrealism and symbolism: tales like this require decoding of their latent content, so the true core of the story can

be revealed. In Freudian terms the author is treated like a patient, whose life, anxieties and neuroses are being analysed. On the other hand, “it is also possible to psychoanalyse the text by examining how the symbolism articulates anxieties that are inherent to a culture, as well as to consider the kinds of effects that reading such narratives might have on a readership” (Smith 5-6). Dreams are important for Gothic authors, and MacAndrew notes that in fact Horace Walpole turned his dream, of which he remembered only a scrap, into a novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) which was the starting point of the Gothic tradition. In addition to Walpole, other authors, like Mary Shelley, have used their dreams to create Gothic fiction (6-9, 22). She states that

[a]ll Gothic tales are to some extent dreams ... both Poe and Hawthorne are known to have drawn deliberately upon the material of their dreams, shaping it into fictions, but leaving the ambiguous, symbolic dream atmosphere intact in a manner that resists interpretation ... Their stories are not dreamlike; they are dreams - and nightmares at that ... Directly or indirectly expressive of dreams, the closed worlds of the Gothic novels are themselves symbolic and dreamlike. They also frequently contain accounts of the dreams of their characters. (186-188)

In this chapter, the focus is on the historical categorization of Gothic novel, and its subgenres will be discussed briefly. Looking at the Gothic genre from a historical viewpoint is a well-grounded idea, because history and Gothic are closely associated: “Markman Ellis elaborates on ‘how history is adopted and recycled in the gothic novel’, while also considering ‘how ‘the gothic’ is itself a theory of history’ and ‘a mode for the apprehension and consumption of history’” (qtd. in Alae and Robab 1896).

The main interest will be in the Gothic mode itself, its attributes and cultural myths that still sustain its presence in our modern twenty-first century society. The focus of this theoretical framework is on the specific Gothic motifs, which penetrate the narration of *The Awakening* in various ways, in relation with the historical surroundings and social environment of the late nineteenth century United States. These motifs include temporality, uncanny, fear and sublime. The ghostly presence of the Victorian female could be categorized here under the title uncanny as well, while ghosts are by their nature uncanny: the ghost is familiar figure turned strange.

2.1 The Origin and Rise of Gothic Fiction

The term 'Gothic' refers mainly to literature, culture and architecture, and during the last, almost three decades, it has become impregnated with a variety of symbols and connotations. According to David Punter, the original and literal meaning of the word gothic was, 'to do with the Goths'.¹ The term, while suggesting a barbaric, unknown past and the Dark Ages, became descriptive of almost all things medieval for the eighteenth-century people. Indeed, Gothic stood for "the old-fashioned as opposed to the modern, the barbaric as opposed to the civilised, crudity as opposed to elegance". The term 'Gothic' also refers to medieval architecture, which the late eighteenth century admired to the extent that the wealthy even built Gothic ruins and buildings (5-6,8).

Gothic fiction mirrors the social context and the political structure at the given time in history, it is a reflection of attitudes, public opinion, fashion and gender relations, and most importantly, change. These aspects are, of course, what many other genres of literature have in common, but Gothic has a twist of the unordinary, almost unlimited imagination – the most daring ideas hidden in symbols and implications - and the possibility to reflect on issues that perhaps haven't been appropriate to tackle otherwise in the contemporary society.

The rise of the Gothic genre began, in literary terms, according to David Punter and Glennis Byron, at the same time with the first wave of industrialization that took place in Europe from the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth century. Urban centres, with new type of work and social roles, became the new living environment for rural people, who were thus disconnected from the natural world. The world changed in an enormous way, leading to a sense of isolation and alienation. (20) The loss of connection with natural world is manifested in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), where the horror of the creature's artificial origin is emphasized: a living

¹ The Goths (approximately first century CE-600 CE) were a Germanic tribe, but the knowledge of these people was scarce in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth century. (Punter 5)

human is replaced by a strange, uncanny automaton. This was just a starting point, and later, in the twentieth century, “technological explosion created a new set of anxieties that are reproduced and intensified in the Gothic” (Punter and Byron 24). The end of the world was even easier to imagine, because of the advanced weaponry and the invention of nuclear power, which lead to the fear of radiation.

According to David Punter, the most prominent characteristics of the Gothic novel are “an emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense” (1). Thus, the haunted castle, a lady in distress, ghosts and villains, monsters, vampires and terrors are familiar landmarks and, as it were, basic elements of the Gothic fiction (Punter 1). These were the ingredients of early Gothic literature, and later, in the Victorian era too, and some of them still hold a firm position in the fiction of the twenty-first century. Some of the old monsters may have vanished and a villain may have a different kind of gestalt today, but some have survived the test of time and adapted, like zombies and vampires.

2.2 Establishing the Victorian Context: The Invisible Victorian Woman and the Ghost

’REAL Ghost Stories! How can there be real ghost stories when there are no real ghosts?’ But are there no real ghosts? You may not have seen one, but it does not follow that therefore they do not exist. How many of us have seen the microbe that kills? There are at least as many persons who testify they have seen apparitions as there are men of science who have examined the microbe. You and I, who have seen neither, must perforce take the testimony of others. The evidence for the microbe may be conclusive, the evidence as to apparitions may be worthless; but in both cases it is a case of testimony, not of personal experience. (Stead 17)

Ghosts, both fictional and non-fictional, were very popular in the Victorian era (1837-1901). There were vigorous attempts to verify their existence, and that was the publisher and journalist William Thomas Stead’s spiritual mission. A ghost is an important part of the Gothic tradition, as a supernatural element, a haunting apparition, and a reminiscence of the deceased, but this supernatural phenomenon also inspired a large amount of medical, psychological and occult studies

in the nineteenth century. The living could also appear as ghostlike phantasms: Edmund Gurney, F.W.H. Myers and Frank Podmore suggested that ghosts could be defined as external and “internal manifestations of the workings of the brain” and they published their ideas of the apparitions of the living in their study *Phantasms of the Living* in 1886 (Grimes 84).

William T. Stead argued in *Real Ghost Stories*, that there was a ghost inside everyone, and “we are all haunted by a Spiritual Presence, of whose existence we are only fitfully and sometimes never conscious, but which nevertheless inhabits the innermost recesses of our personality.” According to Stead, the science had now discovered, that a man consists of a body, the mind that is the “Conscious Personality” and the soul, the “Unconscious Personality” (Stead 18-19). Stead even suggested, that the mind was divided into two parts, the active, conscious mind that was masculine, and the female subconscious mind, as if there were two personalities inside every human being. For Stead that was the dual nature of man: there was the body and the soul, two personalities which manifested in the relation of man and wife, roughly speaking the master and the suppressed, “according to the old ideal when the man is everything and the woman is almost entirely suppressed”, so the unconscious is manifested only when the master, the masculine aspect is asleep or entranced and only then, through this suppressed unconscious, arouses the divine revelation and mystic visions to man (21-23).

The significance of the eerie, untouchable ghost also had a social aspect, when it appeared in the difference of a man and a woman; “for many Victorians the haunted aspects of the mind were comparable to the late Victorian idea[s] about gender roles, and in particular the ‘ghostly’ role of women in society” (Grimes 86). Thus, a woman, as an unconscious entity, was invisible, socially and politically in the light of the day but manifested herself in the darkness of the night in a form of a “mystic vision”, a transparent ghost. Ghosts are not alive nor dead, “ghosts are ambiguous beings

that are abject². But women at the end of the nineteenth century, themselves ghostly in their marginal positions in society, are also abject” (Grimes 102). The dictionary meaning for abject, which also belongs to the group of Gothic motifs, is worthless, mean, sunk to a low condition, despicable, an outcast. On the other hand, Dani Cavallaro argues that the “abject is also simultaneously repulsive and attractive” (202), but continues that “Western culture has repeatedly constructed the female body as a principal manifestation of the abject due to its fluid, sprawling and leaky nature, demonized it as an unsavoury subversion of aesthetic ideals of unity and integrity, and accordingly subjected it to regimenting strategies intended to frame its boundlessness” (204).

Understanding the mind was becoming more important, and thus psychology became a subject of social concern. The Gothic literary tradition gained new elements too, when depicting the dream world started to gain more ground in novels as well. As Elizabeth MacAndrews points out, these tales aspired to give dreams, and their function in mental life, a fictional manifestation: “The grotesque and dream worlds are not separate. Together they form Victorian Gothic fiction” (152-155).

The connection between supernatural and female identity, and, in the late nineteenth century, Freud’s ideas of hysteria, give an impression, that the Victorian female body and mind were under severe scrutiny. As Grimes indeed points out, hysteria was considered to be an illness that manifested itself both in the female mind and body, but also there was an urge to control and classify women’s bodies in “unprecedented ways” (94).

Nevertheless, as transparent and repressed as women were in the Victorian society, the ghost had an empowering effect too, which manifested itself through women’s writing, as Grimes argues,

² An excellent approach to the abject is: Kristeva Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Roudiez Leon S. Columbia University Press, 1982.

“altered states of perception like hypnosis, dreams, hysteria, and ghost-seeing become catalysts for creative expression and for political awakening in women’s writing [...] ‘the powers of horror’ that women ghost-story writers experience and evoke create female identity at the fin de siècle that is powerful, empowering, and hopeful as much as it is ‘horrific’” (87).

The end of the nineteenth century was a time of social and economic change. There were legal changes that improved the position of divorced mothers in relation their children and women’s rights to ownership and property. The New Woman emerged in the United States and Europe, and she demanded the right to education, employment and greater social freedom for all women. Writing stories for magazines was a socially approved method of gaining financial security, as it was for Kate Chopin as well, when she was widowed after her husband died from malaria. Grimes states, that majority of the ghost stories published in the nineteenth century in British and American magazines were written by women. Thus, many women writers found a lucrative ground for creativity, interpretation of the female experience and their “ghostly role in society”, and last, but not the least, a secure income in popular ghost stories (Grimes 91).

2.3 New Woman and Fin de Siècle: Towards Modernity

The Awakening was written in the period of *fin de siècle*, and this French term means *end of the century*, referring to the last decade of the nineteenth century. This was the closing of an era and the beginning of another, leading the way from Victorian era towards modernism. There were new beginnings, cultural and political, and it was a period “in which the arts are used viscerally to debate contemporary concerns, and in which art itself becomes matter of controversy” (Marshall 5). The period saw the expanding of the markets of popular papers: Marshall states that the late Victorian period gave birth to the “New Journalism”, for example newspapers like *Daily Mail* in 1896. Celebrity gossip and sensation were popular topics. Thus, a form of journalism, which continues in the Britain even today in the mass market dailies, was created. Other new ideas of the period were

the “New Woman” and the “New Drama”, the latter with Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, as a British production (Marshall 3-4).

The concept of “New Woman” had an influence on the interpretation and reception of Chopin’s novel and thus it is necessary to discuss the roots of this phenomenon, which influenced the last decade of the nineteenth century in such a significant manner. The “New Woman” as a term applies to the changing role of the European and American white women during the 1890’s and the first two decades of the twentieth century. According to Mahajan and Jaideep the roots of “New Woman” are found in the organized movement of the first wave -feminists who raised the woman’s issues in public debates and in print media: Sarah Grand formulated the term in her article “The New Aspect of the Woman Question”, which was published in the *North American Review* in 1894. Furthermore, British-American author Henry James made the phrase popular when he used it

to describe American emigrants living in Europe. Sensitive women who possessed material wealth showed a free spirit in their attitude and behaviour. They became responsive as a result of various social, political and economic forces and took up the new positions in cultural, social, political and economic life. (Mahajan and Jaideep 2)

This seems to suggest that the term applied to educated women, who had influence and perhaps even a career, leaving a large amount of lower class women outside the influence. There were glimpses of this phenomenon already in the 1880s in the fiction and in the periodical press:

The 'wild woman', the 'glorified spinster', the 'advanced woman', the 'odd woman'; the 'modern woman', 'Novissima', the 'shrieking sisterhood', the 'revolting daughters' - all these discursive constructs variously approximated to the nascent 'New Woman'. As she was apprehended at the end of the nineteenth century, the New Woman was predominantly a journalistic phenomenon, a product of discourse. (Ledger 3)

Sally Ledger further points out that “[t]he New Woman of the fin de siècle had a multiple identity. She was, variously, a feminist activist, a social reformer, a popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet; she was also often a fictional construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women’s movement.” (1). She points out that as a product of discourse the New Woman was just as “real and historically significant as what she *actually* was”

(Ledger 3). It can be agreed upon that the reality of the nineteenth century cannot be perceived with our eyes, but we must measure our perceptions, the written historical descriptions against the past reality as objectively as possible, trying to find the real events that are constructed by the discursive, written events.

The pen was a mighty weapon and also written text was the primary means of communication, in addition to political debates, in the nineteenth century, before the age of mass communication, radio and much later television. Thus, it was predictable that female authors would tackle the controversial and timely gender issues more or less openly. Ellen Moers states that the nineteenth century was “the greatest period of female social progress in history”, because of the achievements in education, laws and contraception; these issues were forwarded by active Victorian feminists. Their opinions spread, and affected the women authors as well. “For just as every woman writer knew conservative women, who urged her toward convention and silence, she also knew active feminists, who prodded her pen towards the other, radical side of the Woman Question” (18-19).

Thus, there were these forces, ideals that tore the woman writer in two directions, the old and the new way of thought. Some authors were more careful, not to disturb the already irritated male critics. After all, the New Woman of the 1890s was also the Wild Woman condemned by the anti-suffrage journalist Eliza Lynn Linton (1822– 1898) as the woman who drank, “smoked with men, pursued careers, traveled the world, sought a life beyond marriage and motherhood, advocated free love, and campaigned for women’s suffrage in order to have a voice not only in local matters, but also in national and imperial politics” (Murdoch xxvi-xxvii).

Charlotte Brontë was asked about the Woman Question by her female friend and she replied that “there were ‘evils - deep-rooted in the foundation of the social system, which no efforts of ours can touch: of which we cannot complain; of which it is advisable not too often to think’” (Moers 18). Another famous British writer, George Eliot, has been criticized for her “ambivalent” interest

in the subject, while she had met all “the leading feminists” in the women’s movement and had a position as a Victorian female role model she never took any radical stance on the Woman Question (Alaee and Khosravi 3). This claim remains to be debated, but that discussion is not relevant for the thesis. Let it be noted that indeed George Eliot was not attempting to be a feminist, as “her aim as a novelist was not to argue for a diminishing of the social inhibitions and a widening of the options that affect the lives of ordinary women; instead [...] Eliot was always concerned with the superior, large-souled woman whose distinction resides not in her deeds but in her capacity to attract attention and arouse admiration” (Moers 194). Even though her heroines are not intellectual, they are “women of genius noticed by the world” (194). The role of Kate Chopin, on the other hand, seems to be more than clear in the New Woman -debate. Ann Heilmann argues that

in its quest for female self-determination, *The Awakening* aligns itself with nineteenth-century female traditions of writing, in particular the Anglo-American fiction of the New Woman. Chopin's frank treatment of female sexuality broke new ground at a time when married women held no legal rights over their bodies, and when few other female or feminist writers hazarded openly to explore women's sexual desire. Unsurprisingly, therefore, many contemporary reviewers considered the author to have violated the dominant codes of moral propriety no less than had her heroine. (87)

Furthermore, in his comparison of Chopin’s heroine, Edna, to Hester Prynne, who is the heroine in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, Jürgen C. Wolter points out that both of these heroines, who challenged their society as a whole, were “much ahead of their times and [...] prototypes of the New Woman of modernism” (27-28). He further suggests, as some other critics³ do, that *The Awakening* should be read as a modernist text, because the “evaluative openness” of the ending involves the reader in the “construction of moral sense”, creating “the active reader” that the modern text requires (28). Thus, the active reader faces a challenge how to interpret Edna’s choice of suicide, and the key word here is *choice*. As Avril Horner points out, choice is an aspect of modernism, which Chopin used in “A Vocation and a Voice” and “Athénaïse” too, when she

³ See Avril Horner, Emily Smith-Riser and Joseph Allen Boone for further discussion.

“sought new modes of expression to express the dilemmas that face her characters” (132-136).

Edna’s choice definitely activates the reader, who has to decide, thus, to actively take part in the story and decide, how to interpret the ambiguous ending of the novel, and what it *means*.

Marshall Berman states that “[t]o be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world— and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are” (15). Edna begins to see glimpses of the world that could be hers and hers alone, with the freedom she dreams of, but finds out that this new world is not yet within her reach. Edna’s passionate attempt to live in the present moment, is also an aspect of modernity.

Furthermore, in Charles Baudelaire’s thinking modernity was the here and now, “a transitory moment in time, co-existing with that which transcends time and space: the eternal” and he believed that “the essence of modernity exists in the moment that binds time and space together before it is lost in the ever-changing landscape of the modern” (Abbott 5). In terms of modernity the suicide and destruction of Edna Pontellier in the waves of an ocean would only suggest the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one.

2.4 The Victorian Construct of Temporality

Times changed rapidly, it speeded, as it were, with the help of new inventions, and gender issues took a slow turn for the improvement of women’s rights, as has been established in this study.

Urbanization was the element that gave the perception of time a new dimension. Large factories were built and there was a movement from “rural time” to a system, where factory workers had to “clock-in and clock-out”, so that time became a means of control (Whitmore 22). Patricia Murphy argues that

Class- and race-specific as well as masculinist, the Victorian construction of temporality represented the time that governed the social order, the time that tracked the men who dominated the system, the time that influenced standards in the political,

religious, scientific, and literary arenas. Those individuals who were not members of the British power base were, in effect, disassociated from its time. (qtd in Whitmore 22-23)

It would seem that time was in the hands of men, furthermore, time was constructed and solidified as a thing that is ordered and measured as a British unit of control when the World Standard Time is established in Greenwich in 1884 (Whitmore 23). The most significant marker of the changing time concept was the railroad. According to Ralph Harrington, the society was structured by time, by the regulation and quantification of time. This was due to new technologies, transport and communications in particular. Time was re-invented, and contemporaries worried that time-dependency would make society less healthy and even dangerous: there were railway collisions, steamships wrecked and the world was mechanized by timetable. Kate Chopin's father was killed in a railroad accident, when the special train of stockholders and dignitaries "inaugurating the Pacific Railroad was wrecked on the Gasconade River bridge" (Ewell 6). Thus, there were risks, but also benefits, while the railway "speeded life up".

Indeed, it was said that time was worth money in England even more than in any other country in the world. For some, this time-conscious era was a cause of anxiety and the pressure of time was stressing, and railway became the symbol of this anxiety. Timekeeping became easier in the nineteenth century because cheap and accurate clock became available for everyone (1-12). This meant that people's lives became regulated by timetables and clocks made it possible to follow these schedules.

2.5 The Gothic and the Uncanny

It is commonly argued, that Gothic fiction always includes an element of the supernatural or horror, it "gives shape to concepts of the place of evil in the human mind" (MacAndrews 3). One of these elements is the uncanny. The supernatural relates to the outside, external world of imagination and nightmares, but the uncanny rises from the mind, it is "psychological, representing disturbances in

the internal body [...] the supernatural is the cause and the uncanny an effect” (Grimes 6-7). The term itself was formulated by Sigmund Freud, and in his famous essay “The Uncanny” (1919) he basically suggests that the uncanny is something oddly familiar but still strange, concealed and disturbing. His list of things that can cause a feeling of uncanniness include ‘death’, ‘spirits’, ‘ghosts’, ‘magic’, ‘sorcery’ and ““doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self”” (Grimes 7-8).

Other feature of the uncanny are repetition, animism, automatism and the death drive (Bennet and Royle 38-39). Gothic fiction is full of these effects that are simultaneously familiar, but still strange and frightening. A good example of this is the Zombie, as a form of anthropomorphism, that is, figures of the dead coming to life. There is the sense of familiarity, when a person, perhaps a family member is turned into a zombie, but also the strangeness of the undead, a corpse moving around and looking familiar.

The monsters of the Gothic are the monsters of the mind, the very essence of nightmares and supernatural. There are no real Gothic monsters in *The Awakening*, but a short introduction of these creatures is necessary, because they serve as an example of the uncanny and temporality, which are two essential Gothic motifs. The uncanny feature of the monsters has already been discussed above, but the idea of timelessness needs to be clarified. It is a feature that vampires, zombies and ghosts share - immortality. They are ageless, beyond the reach of time, dead but not dead, in an ambiguous state between life and death. Time is an important motif in the Victorian Gothic in other ways too, and this aspect will be discussed later in the analysis.

The zombies have evolved with the vampires and sustain their appeal in the group of Gothic monsters. As Kevin Boon points out, during the past three decades the increasing impact of zombie mythology in our mainstream culture “has established the zombie as the predominate symbol of monstrous other” and their increased appeal in the late twentieth century is “linked to the mythology’s ability to stir existential anxieties about our own mortality within the larger context of cultural attitudes about the nature of self” (50). Zombies reflect the surrounding society and

historical context, and they were the first symbols of mass consumption and contagion; being bitten by a zombie makes you one of them, a part of the mindless mass. The function of Gothic nonhuman entities is to define the politics of the normal, and they point the lines that must not be crossed. Monsters - vampires, zombies, werewolves and robots - are located in the margins of culture. The difference in appearance or behaviour is usually the monsters' mark, it is easy to distinguish from the safe and ordinary. Vampires symbolize danger and bodily transgression, and Gothic tales "make use of the realization that monsters in fiction frighten because they are already the figments of our dreaming imaginations. They are the shapes into which our fears are projected" (MacAndrew 8).

2.6 The Gothic Sublime and Fear

It is necessary with regard to the analysis of *The Awakening* to understand the concept of the sublime, because it is one of the key elements in the Gothic mode and in the novel as well. Negative sublime may lead a person to the loss of reason, destruction of morals and dismissing the ethical codes of society. According to Eliade, in Christianity an abstract God, or the "terrible power has to be distanced from the negative sublime and re-conceptualized as a "mere moral allegory" (qtd. in Mishra 290). This negative sublime, which is also the nature of Gothic sublime, is always something uncanny or beyond representation, and thus different from the religious sublime (290). Friedrich von Schiller argues that the religious mind transforms mysteries into "a moral allegory; the daemonic is in some ways tamed; life becomes liveable; the subject is ethically responsible." It seems that this does not hold for "the Gothic subject for whom the sublime, in the metaphysical terms in which it is being defined here, inhabits the 'pure daemon' in us" (Mishra 291).

The uncanny and the sublime, which is often associated with "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling", as Burke defines it (Mishra 291), are intertwined and arise from the same source, as it were. However, according to Donna Heiland, "the sublime breaks down boundaries between a perceiving subject and something outside herself"; the uncanny on the other

hand, “confronts the subject with something long repressed or forgotten, but does not allow that breakdown of boundaries. Instead the person is literally or figuratively ‘haunted’ by this reminder of a past she cannot identify and cannot escape” (6). Another example of the uncanny is Frankenstein’s monster, his creator’s double; the monster is something Dr Frankenstein wants to forget, he tries to repress the memory of creating the monster, but is unable to do that. His nameless creation will not leave him alone.

Having evaluated multiple sources on Gothic themes and features, there seems to be one element that can be agreed upon to be universally applicable to Gothic genre, and that is the feeling of fear. According to David Punter, “fear is both the root and the product of the attempt to bring all things under rational control, and rationalism will be a self-defeating system because that which cannot be thus assimilated will therefore become all the more taboo; reason will create its own enemies” (27). In the eighteenth-century fiction, there was an awareness of this problem that emotions and passions could not be controlled or outlawed by reason. That, what is left outside, becomes the source of fear (Punter 26-27).

Dani Cavallaro states that terror and horror, “fear’s interdependent affects” are complementary, “constantly interacting phenomena; the field where they interact is that of fear as a pervasive condition; the omnipresence of fear is paralleled by the ubiquity of dark tales of Gothic orientation” (vii-viii). To put it shortly, the difference between terror and horror is that “horror makes people shiver, terror undermines the foundations of their worlds” (2-3). I would suggest that fear is in the mind of the reader/viewer of fiction, this emotion has to be generated through interpretation or perhaps through a shocking, abrupt effect aroused in the recipient. Whether fear is enough to produce a Gothic effect or to define a literary work as Gothic is another question, but according to David Punter fear is present in all Gothic fiction in some form, possibly as a theme, style or in the social relations (21).

Fear can be primal fear of survival, fear of the unknown, poverty, loneliness, the future, the dark or the monster, just to name a few. Everybody is afraid of something; it is in our genes in order to preserve the human being from harm. The lack of primitive fear in a modern society, at least in the parts of the world where human lives are not threatened on daily basis, the lack of fearful things has been replaced by entertainment industry. Our inner fears surface and are released by catharsis, an experience that arises through imagination, by the appearance of the fictitious frightening. Fear can also be pleasurable: “popular Gothic literature can indeed function like a thrill ride, with familiar conventions assuring the rider/reader of a safe return. More challenging Gothic works can be unsettling or intellectually stimulating. The theory of terror, from the beginning, was based on the stimulation of the imagination and intellect” (Crow 2).

In *The Awakening* the fear is primeval, it is the fear of drowning and death that is depicted by Chopin. When Edna learns to swim she is intoxicated by her new skill, and one night she swims out into the open sea alone: “A quick vision of death smote her soul, and for a second of time appalled and enfeebled her senses [. . .] She made no mention of her encounter with death and her flash of terror [. . .]” (28). The vision of death is quick, a reminder of the possibility of dying and also an omen. The ocean is ambiguous, it is the call of the freedom and independence and at the same time the eternal, deadly oblivion.

2.7 American Gothic and Other Subgenres

The Gothic in the United States originated from a national and cultural landscape that was very different from the European cultural and ancient background with its ruined castles. In his article “Nineteenth-Century American Gothic” Allan Lloyd Smith stated, that

Without a feudal past and those relics so convenient for the European Gothicism, castles and monasteries and legends, the American landscape seemed an unlikely place for such fictions. Yet four indigenous features were to prove decisive in producing a powerful and long-lasting American variant of the Gothic: the frontier, the Puritan legacy, race, and political utopianism. (Smith 163)

The Puritan legacy was an already waning theme in the nineteenth century United States, but the Gothic idea of good and evil had been nevertheless established, and the legends of seventeenth century witchcraft in Salem still provided material for writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne and John Neal. The Puritans legacy included the sense of dread, and fostered “a tendency to think of sin and virtue in terms of black and white [...] but the actual conjunction of black and white in American society through its unprecedented dependence on slavery, like the conflict between settlers and Native Americans, gave yet another twist to the development of American Gothic” (164). In Toni Morrison’s words, this contrast empowered “the definition of the ‘other’, the resident nonAmerican whose abjection supported the self-definition of the dominant whites” (Smith 164). The dominant white was most certainly dominant white *male*. The perception of women’s situation - the rising political agitation for women’s rights - was reflected in the Gothic literature as well. With the fear of the feminine emerged the murderous husband, and for example Edgar Allen Poe’s “Ligeia,” “Usher,” “Berenice,” and “Morella,” all include female victims. The death of a beautiful woman was an explicit theme in these stories.

The women expressed their anxieties, fears and experiences in patriarchal society in their Gothic stories as well, Charlotte Perkins Gilman did this in her short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) especially powerfully, telling the tale of a woman condemned to therapy and isolation that is almost imprisonment by her husband and his sister (Punter 175). The female Gothic experience was expressed in ghost stories written by Emma Dawson, Mary Wilkins Freeman, and Edith Wharton too. This phase of American Gothic literature was overshadowed by the themes of “patriarchy, slavery, racism, Puritan extremes of the imagination and the political horror of a failed utopianism”, but the new direction was “toward a concern with social and political issues as well as toward an agonized introspection concerning the evil that lies within the self” (Punter 175).

The Awakening, though it is not a Gothic novel by its general definition, does have features that are typical of Southern Gothic and Female Gothic literary tradition. Furthermore, Southern

Gothic variety usually has following characteristics; decayed, forgotten places, eccentric and often stereotypical characters and emphasized gender roles. Motifs of isolation, stagnation and inability to escape are also typical features of Southern Gothic literature. These themes are found in *The Awakening* as well, both on the surface of the narration and in the unconscious undercurrent: Edna's escape from the norms of society, her home and family is in the core of the novel, but her escape proves to be a futile attempt, ending in suicide. The motif of isolation becomes evident by the strangeness of Creole culture, in which Edna is an outsider: "She is not one of us; she is not like us" (Chopin 19), utters Edna's Creole friend to Robert, who Edna falls in love with.

Edna, though identified as an American woman in the novel, is from the Southern states, as was Kate Chopin. The Southerners, as a group of people who identify themselves as Southerners, are different and they usually want to highlight the difference. "They are seen, and see themselves, as less energetic, less materialistic, more traditional and conventional, more religious and patriotic, more mannerly and hospitable than other Americans" (Thernstrom et al. 945). This Southern identification took shape in the early nineteenth century among whites from the areas where plantation systems and slavery were firmly established (944).

Peggy Dunn Bailey states: "[t]hat Female Gothic literature may represent Female Gothic reality is a possibility suggested in nineteenth-century fiction by American women writers like Augusta Evans Wilson, Kate Chopin, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman" (273). She also claims that "particularly important to the identification and interpretation of the Female Gothic text (no matter when or where it originates) is the identification of the Female Gothic heroine "who is typically a motherless young woman. There is a threat of confinement or perhaps violence she has to face; and these circumstances usually are met in familiar environments that are meant to be safe, domestic places" (273). The heroine of in Chopin's story has grown up without a mother, but the lack of a mother, since her childhood years, is described briefly in a subtle manner, not giving away any

feelings of sadness of melancholy. On the other hand, the story tells us that Edna's father "was perhaps unaware that he had coerced his own wife into her grave" (Chopin 71).

The aspects of Victorian Gothic mode were discussed earlier in this study. Urban Gothic, which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in Britain and United States, was a "new landscape of fear", a subgenre, which "adopts the 'historical' perspective found in the early [Gothic] novels when it implies that the terrors of criminality are anachronistic anomalies, vestigial stains of the city's modernity. This defines its status as Gothic." Thus, the source of disorder was found in the past, not in the more current problems of the city (Mighall 32, 51). Modern, industrialized city became the centre point of Gothic fiction instead of old, ruined castles and rural regions. The primary source, and the birth place of urban fiction was London, where the wealthy and the poor lived alike. The Gothic monster was closer now, within the self, as was depicted in the one of the early Urban Gothic novels, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), where the primitive and native "savage" still existed within "the civilized" (Mighall 139). Mr Hyde is physically as deformed or "underdeveloped" as he is morally, and his violent actions are those of a typical criminal, as it was characterized in those days. Thus, the scientific development of the era recognized the importance of "the body" in the representations of criminality, and, according to Robert Mighall, the central principle in criminology was the idea of atavism, which means reversion to the primitive. There was a relationship between "late-Victorian somatic horror fiction and scientific developments which encouraged this focus." Furthermore, the late nineteenth century saw the rise of "an anthropological approach to social problems which characterizes a range of discourses including criminology and the psychiatry from which it emerged" (Mighall 132-136). Mighall notes that here was a movement into two directions, and the anthropological focus of Gothic mode lead both "outwards to the margins of the Empire, and inwards to focus on the domestic savages, which resided in the very heart of the civilized world,

and even in the ancestral memory of the modern civilized subject” (136). Thus, the Imperial Gothic started to evolve.

The Urban Gothic mode is vividly represented in twenty-first century television, for example in series like *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016), which takes place in Victorian London, a city full of vampires and witches, where the Frankenstein’s monster lives side by side with Dorian Gray and Dr Jekyll. More modern version of Urban Gothic is presented in the series *Being Human* (2008-2013) in which a werewolf, a vampire, and a ghost share a city-home and try to live together. Urban Gothic lives on and prospers, and another proof of that is the American tv-series *Supernatural* (2005-), where two brothers have been fighting evil supernatural beings for years, as the series goes on season after season.

Imperial Gothic fiction was most commonly set in the British Empire and temporally in the late nineteenth century. The settings were crucial; novels were usually located in Africa, British India and the mysterious and dark “Orient”, in opposition to the civilized West. Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) is a novel, in which this opposition is manifested in a most striking manner. Count Dracula is the personification of the foreign, mysterious and threatening enemy and invader, who has to be stopped, otherwise colonialism is reversed. The Romanian countryside is pictured as a strange land inhabited by superstitious peasants and gypsies. Through the novel the voice of England rules over the count Dracula, who, with his striking non-western features, is left almost voiceless. Race and ethnicity are emphasized in the narration in multiple ways, which, at least for a modern-day reader, are easy to detect. *Dracula* can be categorized as an Urban Gothic novel as well, as many scenes of the novel are set in London. Imperial Gothic is historically linked to colonialism, and, as Donna Heiland suggests, “colonial relationships would seem to be by definition gothic, colonizer and colonized standing as doubles of each other in a relationship that is not so much hierarchical and haunting. Britain is shadowed by its colonies and vice versa” (157). Thus the dichotomy of the controlling and the repressed, which continues even after the diminishing of the

British empire, as William Hughes and Andrew Smith suggest: “the Gothic is, and always has been, *post*-colonial, and this is where, in the Gothic text, disruption accelerates into change, where the colonial encounter—or the encounter which may be read or interpreted through the colonial filter—proves a catalyst to corrupt, to confuse or to redefine the boundaries of power, knowledge and ownership” (1).

The idea that Gothic evolves and embraces the new, modern, futuristic vistas of our time and times to come is inevitable for the survival of the genre, but some of the old motifs still hold their position in literature and mass-media, as has been established in this theory section. My claim is, that a Gothic product of imagination still quite “often involves [d]ark, rambling houses, Byronic men, wild emotions, secrets and lies, hidden and lurking dangers, and the possibility of a ghost” (Wyatt 105). These elements do not necessarily make a creative product of imagination a Gothic work. Shakespeare’s plays include these elements, for example Hamlet and Macbeth, but these are not nowadays categorized as typical Gothic. Shakespeare was, on the other hand, considered the first “legitimate ancestor” of Gothic literature by Gothic writers, who also appealed to Thomson and Milton (Noske 173). Surely it can be agreed upon that Shakespeare’s plays include Gothic motifs. Gothic fiction that has been a source of awe and wonder in the eighteenth century, may well invoke feelings of amusement in today’s reader: as the Gothic monsters evolve, so do the elements that give the reader the experience of Gothic.

3 The Gothic Awakening: Edna's Failing Fantasies

Romance and poetry, ivy, lichens,
and wallflowers need ruin to make them grow.
Nathaniel Hawthorne, preface to *The Marble Faun* (1860)

An overview of the importance of the turn of the century has been established in the previous chapter, and indeed the period of the late nineteenth century has many special features, which affected the lives of millions of women and men too on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean: significant developments in the many fields of science, for example electric light was invented, initiated the development that lead to many technological achievements of the twentieth century. Better understanding of disease prevention was partly responsible for rapid population growth and in the nineteenth century, by estimation, seventy million people left Europe mostly migrating to the United States of America.

There was cultural interaction and changing of opinions over the Atlantic Ocean, for example George Eliot was Harriet Beecher Stowe's important disciple, and was in correspondence with her (Moers 39). The beginning of the Gothic tradition in the new country, however, was not an easy one: the important Gothic features, the mystical past in the form of castles and monasteries were absent from the American landscape:

there was a distressing lack of ruins, either for Gothic effects or for gentle, reflective melancholy. There was no Tintern Abbey to be viewed by moonlight; nor were there at first any country churchyards or deserted villages, though these would come in time. (The deserted villages of the Indians were not made of stone or brick, and seldom left a trace.) There seemed, to eyes trained in Europe, a lack of history in America. There was in fact almost too much history, but somehow it was difficult to see, or to see as suitably artistic. We may think of American literature as a process of learning to see American history, and the Gothic would play its part in making the invisible visible. (Crow 10)

The Gothic aspects were often borrowed from the European culture and tradition, but new ones were discovered, as was discussed in the previous chapter. The Victorian people were standing at the threshold of a new modern era, the twentieth century, perhaps not particularly interested in

taking a leap, but rather anxious and afraid of the changes they could not avoid or postpone.

Looking backwards in time gave security and peace of mind at least for a while, and that would partially explain why supernatural things and Gothic literature were so popular. The contemporary Gothic themes manifested as tales about the past, nostalgia and medieval times.

H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) on the other hand took its reader into the future, which was full of horrors. Although it is an early Science Fiction novel it explores the changing, mutating and decaying human mind and body in a Gothic manner, perhaps as a response to Charles Darwin's theory that emerged at the time. Indeed, the Late-Victorian society was struggling with the new ideas of Darwinism⁴. These theories included the statement that humans "are descended from a hairy, tailed quadruped which . . . had itself evolved from some amphibian-like creature, and this again from some fish-like animal" (qtd. in Buzwell 1). The safe religious vision of the biblical birth of mankind was disrupted by this disturbing image, which also suggested that change was inevitable. This idea was also portrayed in *Frankenstein*, where God was not the creator of all beings, but a scientist. The past had been turned strange and the future seemed frightening as well for the Victorians. The new scientific innovations did not bring new or fresh ideas to stagnant gender politics, on the contrary: although Darwin's emphasized the animal kingdom and human development in general, his studies still reinforced man's superiority over woman. For example, Murphy notes that Darwin argued in *Descent*,

that '[m]an is more powerful in body and mind than woman,' and he displays 'greater intellectual vigor and power of invention.' In an unflattering comparison between women and children, Darwin surmised that the latter 'resemble the mature female much more closely than the mature male.' Darwin additionally pointed to certain traits women supposedly evidenced far more than did men—'powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation'—which, at least to some extent, he deemed 'characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization.' (Murphy 3)

⁴ See *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871)

This comparison would clearly place women “with their powers of intuition” in the category of marginalized, uncanny entities with childish qualities and inferior mind, resembling the Victorian villains of Gothic fiction and thus, the Other. Many new contemporary theories affected Kate Chopin’s thinking and creative work, one of which was Darwin’s theory of biological evolution. Chopin was familiar with Darwin’s work, she studied his ideas and used them in her stories and especially in *The Awakening* there are explicit references to it. At first she thought that “the theory of sexual selection offered a profoundly liberating sense of animal innocence in the realm of human courtship, especially for the Victorian woman” (Bender 460). She read Darwin’s *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) closely, and as Bert Bender notes, for the next ten years her “courtship plots are studies in natural history according to the logic of sexual selection - the primary mechanism in ‘the whole process of that most important function, the reproduction of the species’”. (460) Although Chopin accepted the basic premises that

evolution proceeds through the agencies of natural selection and sexual selection, she quarrelled with his analysis of the female's role in sexual selection. And - throughout the 1890s - as she continued her meditations on sexual selection and its implications for the meaning of love, her initial optimism developed into ambivalence and finally into a sense of despair that Darwin had not expressed in *The Descent of Man*. (Bender 461)

As a result, Chopin’s women often manage to deny Darwin’s definitions of the inferiority of women in various ways in her stories. Darwin wrote that in civilized nations women’s position was better than in lesser “savage” ones, where the power of selection was male’s, while the female was kept in an “abject state of bondage” and now women had “free or almost free choice”, but the bind was still felt by Chopin. Her female characters claimed the power to select and most importantly, on the basis of their own sexual desires, rather than on the basis of a man’s economic or social position, as Darwin’s civilized women were expected to do (Bender 462). There is a passage in the novel that makes this clear. Chopin’s opinion about the Darwinian power of selection is firmly underlined, when Edna has a conversation with Mademoiselle Reiz about relationships. Reiz would

choose, if she was still young, a man of “grand esprit”, a man worthy of her devotion, Edna does not see the point of her gentle plea, not to choose the man she should not love, who perhaps is not worthy of Edna’s devotion. Edna, however, does not see the point: “do you suppose a woman knows why she loves? Does she select? Does she say to herself: ‘Go to! Here is a distinguished statesman with presidential possibilities; I shall proceed to fall in love with him.’ Or, ‘I shall set my heart upon this musician, whose fame is on every tongue?’” (Chopin 81).

In *The Awakening* Edna makes her choices on the basis of her desires. There is a feeling of alienation that grows day by day, widening the gap between husband and wife. Edna has no passionate feelings towards her husband, whose sexual advances she rejects: “[a]nother time [. . .] [s]he would, through habit yielded to his desire; not with any sense of submission or obedience to his compelling wishes, but unthinkingly, as we walk, move, sit, stand [. . .] she could not realize why or how she should have yielded, feeling as she then did” (Chopin 31), but she desires a lover and starts an affair with Alcée Arobin. The first time in her life there was passion, “it was the first kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded” (83) but it leaves her empty, with a feeling of irresponsibility, with “the shock of the unexpected”, the ghost of her husband at the corner of her eye and Robert’s reproach, but there was “neither shame nor remorse”, only regret “it was not love which had held this cup of life to her lips.” Edna begins to see life as it is, to comprehend “the significance of life, that monster made up of beauty and brutality” (Chopin 83-84). Love and desire have consequences, as Doctor Mandelet remarks: “The trouble is [...] that youth is given up to illusions. It seems to be a provision of Nature; a decoy to secure mothers for the race” (Chopin 111).

Ewell notes that from the contemporary writers perhaps the most influential to Chopin was Guy de Maupassant. From him she adapted the surprise ending and her pointed use of details, but most important effect was his unique vision of life, he, as Chopin described, “looked upon life through his own being and with his own eyes; and who, in a direct and simple way, told us what he

saw [. . .] he gives us impressions” (qtd. in Ewell 19). There are textual features in *The Awakening* that indicate that Chopin experimented with new literary styles, this is especially visible in her choice of temporal aspects. She also wanted to write, like Maupassant, what *she saw* (Ewell 24). furthermore, Rossi states that Maupassant acts as a crucial connection between Kate Chopin and the Gothic:” through his influence we see Chopin’s phantasmatic connection with the Gothic tradition” (Rossi 72). Maupassant provided Chopin with a detour, “one in which feminism and the Gothic are ways out from tradition, authority, and the status quo” (Cixous qtd. in Rossi 72).

In order to define the “morbid” themes of the novel and uncover the Gothic motifs of temporality, transformation and sublime in Edna’s adventures, careful excavations are required, both on the surface of the narration and underneath. Chopin’s text invites the reader to *see* things as well and her style is rich with images, sounds and metaphors. These qualities, in relation to Edna’s awakening self and depictions of her thoughts and emotions, give the story layers, where the voices of Edna, Chopin and the ocean, as a metaphor of nature and sexuality, are mingled.

It is also necessary to briefly discuss how *The Awakening* is open to various critical interpretations. It has been most commonly categorized by literary critics as a modernist, naturalist, realist and feminist novel. There are many psychoanalytic interpretations of the novel as well, while the clear symbolic features of the plot give a rich ground to such studies.

3.1 Previous Studies and Classifications

The Awakening was not a success when it was published in 1899, on the contrary it was criticized publicly and even banned from some libraries. Kate Chopin’s first St. Louis review, published in the *Republic*, claimed that *The Awakening* was “the story of a lady most foolish”, and soon after that the review in the *St. Louis Mirror* stated that the novel “leaves one sick of human nature.” The *Globe Democrat* followed this line of thought and called it “a morbid book.” The feedback was

mostly negative, but there were those who found the novel worth praising. In March 1899 *Book News*, in its first notice by Lucy Monroe⁵, called it “a remarkable novel” that was

so keen in its analysis of character, so subtle in its presentation of emotional effects that it seems to reveal life as well as to represent it. In reading it you have the impression of being in the very heart of things, you feel the throb of the machinery, you see and understand the slight transitions of thought, the momentary impulses, the quick sensations of the hardness of life, which govern so much of our action. It is an intimate thing, which in studying the nature of one woman reveals something which brings her in touch with all women — something larger than herself. This it is which justifies the audacity of "The Awakening" and makes it big enough to be true [. . .]
(qtd in Chopin et al. 295)

The New York Times and *Boston Beacon* praised it too, but most other papers described the novel “unpleasant and immoral”, and many “directed vicious attacks upon the main character Edna Pontellier, as a discontented "fool woman" who “went outside marriage to seek sexual fulfilment.” (296) The reviews claimed also that *The Awakening* (1899) was ”depressing”, ”not healthy”, *The Los Angeles Sunday Times* proclaimed on June 25, 1899, that it was “morbid in feeling”, and some critics even claimed that the novel ”should be labelled poison”(Ewell 154-157). *Morbid* is a synonym for macabre which in turn goes hand in the hand with the grotesque motifs of the Gothic: Frankenstein monster serves as an example of grotesque.

The story of a woman who abandons her family to pursue independence and who opens to the power of her feminine sensuality was not what the critics expected of Chopin. The author was persuaded by her friends to defend herself, but her comment is devoid of remorse: Chopin could not understand, why her earnest attempt at truth and realism received such an unfavourable response from critics (Ewell 154-157). She was, after all, already regarded as a skilful regional realist writer, and firmly placed in “the Local-Color School of American fiction”, which was an important and new development (Nagel 86). Kate Chopin was persuaded by her friends to make a comment as a

⁵ Lucy Monroe was the literary editor for Herbert S. Stone, *The Awakening* 's publisher. She was an art critic, a member of Chicago literary and artistic circles, and a "New Woman" who cared passionately about opportunities for women. (Kate Chopin's Private Papers 295)

response to the severe criticism her second and last novel had received (Ewell 157). Her statement was published, under the heading “Aims and autographs of authors”, in *Book News*:

THE AWAKENING. By KATE CHOPIN.

Having a group of people at my disposal, I thought it might be entertaining (to myself) to throw them together and see what would happen. I never dreamed of Mrs. Pontellier making such a mess of things and working out her own damnation as she did. If I had had the slightest intimation of such a thing I would have excluded her from the company. But when I found out what she was up to, the play was half over and it was then too late. ST. LOUIS, MO., May 28, 1899. Kate Chopin (qtd in Chopin et al. 296)

After the negative reception of her novel Chopin felt rejected, and considered the whole episode a scandal. In her remaining years Chopin wrote only a few more stories (Ewell 157). She died in 1904. It took decades for the dust to settle, and *The Awakening* was accepted in the American literary canon much later, and with the rise of feminist criticism in the late twentieth century, was labelled as an early feminist novel. The question remains, does it really conform to feminist dogma? It was published at the same time with the first wave of feminism, and historical events and changes, such as the rise of the “New Woman” would support the idea of breaking boundaries of gender conventions, and indeed Chopin introduces us a woman with dreams and wishes of her own.

Even though Edna’s story is about female self-discovery, my claim is that the features that label it as a feminist work are still weak. Kate Chopin was not political, neither does her protagonist Edna rise against the rules of the society, she avoids rising to the barricades and mostly dreams of her own way and independence inside her mind. These are daydreams, not suitable to be fulfilled, while she lacks the courage to totally and irreversibly break away from the domestic and social surroundings: “She had all her life long been accustomed to harbor thoughts and emotions which never voiced themselves. They had never taken the form of struggles. They belonged to her and were her own, and she entertained the conviction that she had a right to them and that they concerned no one but herself” (Chopin 47). Thus, it is not a feminist novel in our modern sense, but

it certainly was different, daring and something that was not expected of Chopin by her contemporaries, because Edna did, after all, succumb to her desires and into the arms of Alcee Arobin, her lover, breaking the family ties, which were strongly respected by the Victorians. *The Awakening* tells a story of a woman of her time, whose life is ruled by the strict gender and social conventions of the late nineteenth century, but Chopin is not offering solutions or making clear statements that could be read as feminist thinking.

Thus, the feminist point of view has been applied and argued through the recent decades of literary criticism, and it is undeniable, that Edna's female qualities, that is, her femininity affects her behaviour and events in the novel and there are multiple examples of these deep-rooted gender conventions, that penetrate the plot. Although Edna has qualities that can be described as typically masculine, she has a strong resemblance to her handsome father, and she is not a prototype of a decent Victorian lady, the fact remains that she is defined as a person through her gender and the manner how she is being looked at, the heroine is being objectified through the male gaze: As Léonce was watching his wife return from the shore, he "fixed his gaze" on his wife and regards her "as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage" (Chopin 2). This is just a one example of the manner in which Edna is kept eternally female, a piece of property, and the masculine dominance, that is present in the novel as "gaze" in the novel, cannot be denied.

The novel has been said to illustrate naturalistic motifs that are perhaps most important in placing it within the American literary canon. According to Barbara Hochman, up to a point, *The Awakening* exemplifies

the naturalist plot of individual decline, with its concern for the pressures of environment and circumstance, and its focus on forces (both inner and outer) beyond the control of the characters. Like many 'naturalist' writers, Chopin ... reject[s] a plot in which marriage becomes the ground of closure (as it does in the work of Dickens, George Eliot, William Dean Howells and sentimental/domestic American fiction). (Hochman 211-235)

Hochman points out that questions about marriage are being raised at the outset, and the protagonist is followed “through progressive isolation to death” (212). Through the handling of narrative time, Chopin complicated “the sense of downward slide typical of most naturalist texts” (Hochman 213).

With all the changes taking place in the civilized world, the one that must be considered and which had a major impact in the United States is the tragedy of the American Civil War. The period after the war is referred to as the postbellum: a period of substantial change, anxiety and paradox. Realism and naturalism occurred earlier in Europe, and American authors were most interested in French and British genres, which become established in the postbellum United States (Budd 21-46). In the United States the then current and dominant mode of fiction was romance, but realism, according to Richard Chase,

became conscious of itself as a significant, liberalizing and forward-looking literary program. Whole areas of the American novel, both classic and modern, are closed to any reader who . . . thinks that it contains no meaningful element of realism. The great writers, classic and modern, did not devote themselves exclusively to translating everything into symbols, myths, and archetypes, thus removing literature from the hazards of experience and the vicissitudes of change. These writers functioned in the real world, or tried to; they reported significant aspects of the real world in their fictions, and often they had, besides archetypes, ideas -political, cultural, religious, historical. (qtd.in Budd 21-46)

Although realism and the Gothic seem contradictory, these literary modes were related to the same questions. “The Gothic of this time was realism’s shadow or dark twin. In a period of national growth and faith in progress, the Gothic continued to confront the nightmares in the shadows of American life, and continued its role as the engine of innovation in American literature” (Crow 65).

As has been established in this thesis, Kate Chopin was well-known for her skills as a local-color regionalist writer, and that mode of literature was popular in the late nineteenth century, United States, but Josephine Donovan contends that “postbellum women were marginalized in both ambition and subject, that local color was their self-censored realism” (Budd 21-46). That statement would surely place Chopin in the canon of realist writers as well.

Within the new American realist literary progress the function of literature “was to reject the outworn values of the past in favour of those of the present [...] the writer was to reject the romantic material and formulas of earlier fiction, as these derived from the limited beliefs and social life of their moment of origin, in favour of a realistic aesthetic which demanded that the subject matter of contemporary life be objectively depicted” (Pizer 278-280).

All in all, *The Awakening* is not a work of one particular literary genre, but displays features from all the mentioned above. Thus, I must agree with Sarah Klein, who argues that “[i]n constructing her heroine's journey, Chopin enriches the text with the curious complexities of multiple literary traditions, each of which she both asserts and undercuts within the novel. Although the novel at times alternately embraces the traditions of realism, naturalism, and romanticism for example, Chopin's work also diminishes the tradition of each within the text” (Klein 1). Chopin’s text both invites the critic and reader to make interpretations on its literary stance and evades an absolute conclusion of an only one possible interpretation. There is no alternative but to accept all the alternatives as applicable to some extent, because the reader cannot know, what the author wanted to elaborate with these multiple choices of style.

3.2 Chopin’s Creole Culture: Creating the Other

The Creole culture, the French-speaking community of the American South is in an important role in *The Awakening*, and it is in order to take a look at this particular group of people. According to *The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* the word Creole “refers to people, culture, to food, and music, and to language. Originally from the Portuguese crioulo, the word for a slave brought up in the owner's household, which in turn probably derived from the Latin creare (create), it became criollo in Spanish and creole in French” (247). For the Creoles in Louisiana the following definition from the same encyclopaedia is worth noting:

Louisianians of French and Spanish descent began referring to themselves as Creoles following the Louisiana Purchase (1803) in order to distinguish themselves from the Anglo-Americans who started to move into Louisiana at this time [. . .]In the United States, in the 20th century, Creole most often refers to the Louisiana Creoles of color. Ranging in appearance from mulattos to northern European whites, the Creoles of color constitute a Caribbean phenomenon in the United States. The product of miscegenation in a seigneurial society, they achieved elite status in Louisiana, and in the early 19th century some were slaveholders [. . .] Louisiana Creoles of color thus constitute a self-conscious group, who are perceived in their locale as different and separate. They live in New Orleans and in a number of other bayou towns. (Thernstrom et al. 247)

Sybil Kein states that Creoles are people of the New World, and acknowledging the historical facts this “term should not exclude anyone based on color, caste, or pigmentation” (xv). In her study the term indicates to the people who chose this self-identity and accepted “status and/or marginalization that accrues with identifying themselves a Creole.” Thus, this culture and the people in it, is a mixture of French, Caribbean, African and Spanish components. (xv) Klein states furthermore that the Creoles have been mostly ignored or stereotyped negatively, and despite of their long history as Americans – starting from the late 1600s, the literary studies of this culture have been scarce (xvii).

As Sybil Kein points out, language is an important, an integral part of a person’s identity. The Creole language suffered, as did the people who used it, from oppression and “racist derision”. In the case of the Creole, language was a tool for division, separating the “the schooled from the unschooled, the intellectual from the peasant, the free from the slave, the rich from the poor” (131).

Kate Chopin was half Irish and from her mother’s side a descendant from two of St. Louis’s oldest Creole families, and her knowledge of Creole culture is an essential part of her literary work. She knew the language as well, and used the Creole dialect in two of her short stories. Her collection of short stories, *A Night in Acadie* (1897) includes a story with a Creole character, Cesar Francois Xavier. The story’s title is “Neg Creole” and Sybil Kein argues, that the language use is slight;

[t]he character is described as ‘black, lean, lame, and shriveled.’ Further, ‘He wore a head-kerchief, and whatever rags the fishermen and their wives chose to bestow upon him. Throughout one whole winter he wore a woman’s discarded jacket with puffed sleeves.’ Is this not the black-clown oddity that Thomas ‘Daddy’ Rice made famous in the minstrel shows in the same century? (134)

Kein points out that it was a popular pattern to add “‘neg’ or Negro to Creole”, in order “to make a distinction between white Creoles [like Chopin herself] and ‘les negs.’” Furthermore, Chopin’s collection *Bayou Folk* (1894) “makes use of more of the language and also includes a verse from the Creole song ‘Lisette to quitte la plaine’” (134). In the story “La Belle Zoraide” Chopin describes the language “as ‘the soft Creole patois, whose music and charms no English words can convey’, [but] the servant who speaks it is reduced to the stereotypical deferential underling” (Kein 135). Statements like this give an ambiguous undertone to Chopin’s work. “La Belle Zoraide” is a story about a beautiful mulatto girl, who is raised by her mistress, not as a servant but gently by her side. She is denied a man she loves, because he is too black. The man is sent away, but Zoraide gives birth to a child, which she is not allowed to keep. She thinks that her child is dead and loses her sanity, becoming an old woman holding a bundle of rags she has shaped like an infant in swaddling clothes. The irony of the story is that Zoraide’s mistress wants a better future for her with a mulatto man, but her love for the girl she raises destroys her sanity, depriving her of the man she loves and her baby (Kein 134).

Chopin tells Zoraide’s story with clear connection to the surrounding contemporary society and thus giving it a realistic air, but the use of Creole language with hints to the inferiority of Creoles of colour make the reading of the story equivocal. Was Chopin careful not to irritate those white Creoles, who insisted on the new definition of Creole as exclusively Caucasian and on purity of white ancestry, or was it a tradition, which she never considered as repressive? She was, after all, a daring person, who had in her younger days “scandalized Cloutierville, Louisiana, by smoking cigarettes, showing her ankles, and flirting with other women’s husbands” (Chopin et al. 301). Thus, Chopin’s work has aroused arguments on both sides, but as Anna Shannon Elfenbein points out,

“the representations of characters of color and ambiguous race in the novel enrich its social texture and enhance its characterization of the tragic false consciousness of Edna Pontellier [. . .] these representations are evidence of Chopin’s genius as a literary realist” (182). She also argues that “[s]ome other critics have implicitly rejected this argument because they regard her portrayals of characters on the color line as evidence, not of her genius, but of her racism” (Elfenbein 182). This being said, the question of these opposed opinions remains a controversial one.

Language is also a means to create the sense of strangeness and Chopin used French phrases lavishly in *The Awakening*, but oddly, without any explanatory footnotes. Thus, Edna’s position as an outsider is reflected to the reader who has no skills in French language, creating a repeated sense of strangeness – of being outside.

There is a scene in *The Awakening*, where Edna, on a boat trip, encounters “a young barefooted Spanish girl, with a red kerchief on her head and a basket on her arm . . . she had a round, sly, piquant face and pretty black eyes [...] Her feet were broad and coarse. She did not strive to hide them. Edna looked at her feet, and noticed the sand and slime between her brown toes” (33). Robert talks to the girl on the boat but no one else understood what they said. The girl, Mariequita, is later referred to as “a sly one, and a bad one” by Mademoiselle Reiz. The interesting detail about Mariequita is her kerchief. Joan M. Martin states that

The mixture of European, African, and eventually Indian blood combined in New Orleans to create women described as being so hauntingly beautiful that in response to pressure from angry white females, Governor Miro enacted on June 2, 1786, his infamous “tignon law,” which made “excessive attention to dress” by women of “pure or mixed African blood” a criminal offense. The women were told, among other things, that they had to refrain from wearing the fine clothes and jewelry they owned, they could not wear feathers or jewels in their hair, and, finally, they had to cover their hair with kerchiefs. (Martin 62)

The idea was, according to Virginia Gould, “to force the free women of color to symbolically re-establish their ties to slavery by wearing the kerchief, the garment traditionally worn by slave women to signify their status as workers” (62). This was intended as a means of control for the

women, who were too light skinned or elegant and thus competed with white women, threatening the established social order (Martin 62).

The law was enacted a hundred years earlier, but the repercussions may still have existed and felt by the lower-class women. Mariequita did not threaten this order by her appearance, she was below the class of people who travelled by the same boat, but the status of Robert Lebrun, Edna's beloved, was not far above hers, and they share a common language, but it is not clear from the narrative, if the language is Spanish or Creole. Furthermore, it becomes clear that Robert and his brother have quarrelled about this girl earlier, in a manner that aroused dim, unrecognized jealousy in Edna. Even though the girl is pretty, her appearance is to some extent almost revolting: Edna "looked Mariequita up and down, from her ugly brown toes to her pretty black eyes, and back again" (34), almost as if looking at an animal or a some kind of novelty, existing at the margins of Edna's social sphere and society. She is the symbol of the dark-skinned Other, a foreign creature, but young and free to speak what she pleases, because only Robert speaks her language.

Whether Chopin was a racist or not is a matter of opinion and reader response and thus a subjective one. In any case, Kate Chopin was aware of the problems and the issue of slavery. She grew up in Missouri, where, before the Civil War, her family and her neighbours were slaveholders. Apparently, she was as a child attended by a slave woman called Louise (Maguire 124). Also, her father-in-law was a landowner and a hard and peevish man, who isolated his wife, Oscar's mother, and treated his slaves harshly (Ewell 11-13). It is necessary to point out that Chopin's short story "Desiree's Baby" is a tale about colour and prejudice. It has a peculiar structure of a fairy-tale mixed with a ghost story and it is also a love story in a Gothic form. Desiree is a beautiful young woman, found as a baby and adopted in a wealthy, loving family. She marries a handsome but cruel plantation owner, but she loves him nevertheless and he is passionately in love with her. Desiree gives birth to a baby, but it is not white and her husband drives them out of their home. She leaves with the child and is never seen again. In the end of the story it is revealed that the husband's

mother was a slave and Desiree's baby inherited his colour from his father. In this story the colour of the skin creates the alien Other, the unwanted and rejected.

The otherness, strangeness that is revealed in *The Awakening* through Mariequita is not a unique encounter, Edna is also stranger in the Creole society, and her husband is a Creole as well. "She was an American woman, with a small infusion of French which seemed to have been lost in dilution" (Chopin 4). In the lively group of people gathered on the island it is Edna who is the Other, who feels uncomfortable in the relaxed atmosphere, where touching others affectionately was a natural thing: "She was not accustomed to an outward and spoken expression of affection, either in herself or in others" (Chopin 17). The touch of Adele Ratignolle is a fond, tender caress, a sign of friendship and affection, first confusing to Edna, but soon she "lent herself readily to the Creole's gentle caress" (Chopin 17). Edna's mother died when she was quite young, and though she has two sisters, they are not close to her in an intimate, loving way. Edna lacks the motherly support, there is a hole in her soul in this respect. Neither does she feel close to her husband, who she married almost by accident:

He pleased her; his absolute devotion flattered her. She fancied there was a sympathy of thought and taste between them, in which fancy she was mistaken. Add to this the violent opposition of her father and her sister Margaret to her marriage with a Catholic, and we need seek no further for the motives which led her to accept Monsieur Pontellier for her husband. (Chopin 18)

Edna's feelings for her husband are mildly affectionate, but there are strains in their relationship because of Edna's indifference towards social norms and her role as a wife and mother. The friendship with Adele Ratignolle includes intimacy she has not felt with any other woman. The pianist, Mademoiselle Reiz, is a friend and a mentor to Edna, who understands her creative side and supports her attempts to pursue a career as a painter. These women are reflections of other identities and female roles, which are available to Edna. They are an open invitation and two forces that pull her in two directions. Because she is unable to choose, the pressure inside her mind grows, creating an atmosphere of alienation, restlessness and sadness.

Edna's female gender is an indicator of otherness and her behaviour strengthens it. Her husband considers her whims to be a "morbid condition" (Chopin 69). The coloured women in the novel, in addition to Mariequita, are *the Other* that is almost invisible. The servants are there to serve Edna and her family but their role is not important, they are hardly *seen*. Women of the Victorian era were marginalized and inferior to man, as the Other or a ghost, but the coloured women were even more ghostly than white women. Thus, there is a "doubled otherness" involved in the narration (Bennett and Royle 239).

3.3 The Gothic Power of Music

Music and sounds play a very important part in the process of Edna's awakening. Music stirs something in her, touches the subconscious where her deeply buried emotions, fears and dreams dwell. Darwin explains the "wonderful power" of music as follow: "music can cause a person to 'tremble,' to feel 'the thrill or slight shiver which runs down the backbone and limbs,' or to experience 'a slight suffusion of tears' that resembles 'weeping' caused by other emotions" (qtd. in Bender 467).

Music has almost mythical powers in the novel, the notes evoke spontaneous pictures in Edna's mind. One night on the island, when "the moon's mystic shimmer was casting a million lights across the distant, restless water", Mademoiselle Reisz is asked to play. "The very first chords which Mademoiselle Reisz struck upon the piano sent a keen tremor down Mrs. Pontellier's spinal column [. . .] The very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body. She trembled, she was choking, and the tears blinded her" (26). Bender argues that Edna's strong emotional response to this piano performance, in fact a composition by Frédéric Chopin, is based on Darwin's idea that "music was originally the means by which our 'half-human ancestors aroused each other's ardent passions'" (467). Because Darwin saw women as, partly at least, representatives of inferior races from the past, it is only natural that the

sounds of the island nature, birds and the ocean, with the tantalizing piano music, invite the primeval animalistic emotions to surface in Edna. The audible aspects of nature are present on the island, which is surrounded by the ocean. In New Orleans Edna's physical connection to nature is severed, but she can still hear the call of the ocean and Mademoiselle Reiz continues to play for her.

Frits Noske emphasizes the importance of music as a feature of the Gothic genre. In addition to the Gothic music as itself there is a place in the Gothic literary genre for the audible aspects as well. This function of music has been rarely mentioned in Gothic studies, and, by 1981 when his study was written, never in relation to the structure of the Gothic text (164). The notion of Gothic sound surfaces again at least in a study by Angela M. Archambault. Both studies mention the early Gothic fiction, such as Radcliffe and Lewis as their examples on the use of Gothic sound. Archambault points out that "sound as a textual device in these texts has a compelling and unmistakable role as a deliberate structure that exists to both promote and amplify the sublime and themes of ungovernable forces so essential to the Gothic genre" (45). Although sound is often the source of terror: the uncanny whispers of a ghost, a wolf howling in the moonlight or a haunting melody in a nightmare, "the sound of voice is not immediately represented as cacophony or belonging to a supernatural realm – it begins, on the contrary, as what most would consider to be innocuous sonority – or even romantic happenings of serenades or birdsong [. . .]voice first emerges in the Gothic novel as a means of establishing a romantic connection between two protagonists" (Archambault 4). The romantic connection is established in *The Awakening* as well. Edna is "very fond of music", and musical notes evoked pictures of solitude, hope and longing in her mind, in a random manner. That night the pictures did not rise, but overwhelming emotions (Chopin 26). The connection to love and desire was established. The great pianist and composer Chopin made music suitable for romantic dreams and melancholy: his Nocturne, Tristesse (Sadness) and Prelude No 4 are among those gentle strains.

After the vacation Edna sings to herself a little song that his beloved Robert used to sing on the island, and is connected to her memories: “[s]he could hear again the ripple of the water, the flapping sail. She could see the glint of the moon upon the bay, and could feel the soft, gusty beating of the hot south wind. A subtle current of desire passed through her body [...]” (Chopin 56). The connection is established here too, but all of these connections are mostly related to her own emotions, not the person that she desires. One theme that Mademoiselle Reiz played evoked a picture, a sight ”of a man standing beside a desolate rock on the seashore. He was naked. His attitude was one of hopeless resignation as he looked toward a distant bird winging its flight away from him” (Chopin 25). The symbolic meaning of the isolated figure is that the circumstances cannot be changed and thus, one is left with desolation in solitude. In the novel, the sounds of the water work the same way as music, it is the initiator and the element that maintain her compulsions, feeding her desires and variable state of mind.

3.4 Temporality and the Sublime Present

Temporality as a Gothic feature is often used to express and underline immortality. In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* this is quite evident, and, also ghosts, gods and vampires share this unnatural feature. Also, timelines in the Gothic are often blurred and interrupted in order to create a feeling of discomfort or uncanny.

As time becomes important for the Victorians, as a source of stress, but also as a sign of changing times and development, in *The Awakening* the protagonist, Edna Pontellier loses her interest in all previous attachments, she does not care for timetables or regulated appointments, drifting into an almost timeless limbo. She is often late, even on the island she is often late to luncheons, which, are formal occasions. In the Pontellier household “Mr Pontellier left his home in the mornings between nine and ten o’clock, and rarely returned before half past six or seven in the evening – dinner being served at half past seven” (Chopin 50). Tuesday was Edna’s reception day,

when she received visitors the entire afternoon “attired in a handsome reception gown”. When she deliberately misses a Tuesday’s reception, having gone out, her behaviour is strongly disapproved by her husband. “Why, what could have taken you out on Tuesday? [...] Why, my dear, I should think you’d understand by this time that people don’t do such things; we’ve got to observe *les convenances* [The conventions]⁶ if we ever expect to get on and keep up with the procession” (50-51). Edna completely abandons her Tuesdays at home, her reception days, which have been the same for six years of marriage: “she made no ineffectual efforts to conduct her household *en bonne ménagère* [like a good housewife], going and coming as it suited her fancy, and, so far as she was able, lending herself to any passing caprice” (57). The slowly advancing summertime on Grand Isle, laziness and the all-prevailing, seductive murmur of the waves contradict with the busy, daily routines of New Orleans.

There is the “containment in space” embracing the protagonist, like a time capsule that is moving forward in its own space and pace. The motion is cyclical, like the plot itself. There is the childhood memory of a meadow and the end in the ocean, resembling the meadow, and these moments are fused together. Edna’s life is a full circle, not a linear timeline, and as Hochman points out, it completely lacks, in fact refuses melodramatic encounters and climaxes (225). It is a circle like a wedding ring that Edna wants to get rid of. The ring is a symbol of eternity, a cycle that never ends but repeats itself in the circular movement.

Gothic tales manipulate and distort time and Gothic has an “ability to allow contradiction and paradox to persist in the narrative, as a means of creating a multiplicity of times, spaces and meanings. The past is never really passed, localities are layered with conflicting historical resonances and what might appear to mean one thing also means its opposite” (Hughes and Smith

⁶ Chopin included a lot of French phrases and word in the text, in the original edition there were no explanatory footnotes, these are included in the later ones.

1). The style of narration has been used to create distortion and blur the sense of time in Gothic tales, sometimes by using a mixture of narratives and narrators as in *Frankenstein*, where there is a narration inside narration and often these narrators speak to the reader through letters, which may or may not be answered. Letters are important in *Dracula* and in *The Turn of the Screw* as well. In *The Awakening* Edna waits for the letters that never arrive. Letters from the loved one, Robert, are written, but only to his mother Madame Lebrun and to Mademoiselle Reiz, and through these letters Edna receives the information she craves. “The letter was on the bookshelf. It possessed the greatest interest and attraction for Edna; the envelope, the size and its shape, the post-mark, the handwriting. There were only few lines [. . .] Edna experienced a pang of jealousy because he had written to his mother rather than to her” (46-47). Edna visits Mademoiselle Reiz and has access to Robert’s letters, which her friend allows her to read after a strong persuasion: “Mademoiselle played a soft interlude [...] Edna did not know when the Impromptu began or ended. She sat in the sofa corner reading Robert’s letter by the fading light [...] the music filled the room. It floated up upon the night [. . .] losing itself in the silence of the upper air” (64). The final note from Robert is written to her, on a piece of paper he leaves behind after their last encounter: “I love you. Good-by – because I love you” (112).

Communication with the husband is later in the novel conducted through letters as well. When Edna’s husband and children leave, Léonce to New York on business and little boys to their grandmother’s country house, she is left in solitude and freedom and in a growing sense of alienation, which is broken by the letters from her husband which she answers; these are the only points of contact she has with her family. She lives in a moment, created by a temporary and ambiguous sense of freedom without her family and the pressure of domestic duties, spending her days as she pleases. As Barbara Hochman points out, Edna

is repeatedly drawn to a space or a state characterized by its lack of apparent beginning or end. Still, *The Awakening* shows with brutal clarity that exaltation itself always comes to an end. And when it does, the result is neither freedom nor

articulation - only increased vulnerability [...] Thus the text is pervaded by a concern with the complex relation between beginnings and endings; yet Edna herself seems to live only in the present moment. (Hochman 218)

Edna's expectations are separate from reality; she lives in a moment in time, in her memories of the summer with Robert and waits for him to return from Mexico, while keeping a lover. Her actions are ambiguous, and she is detached from her previous, "normal" life. As Hochman says, in the novel "Chopin generates a reading experience informed by a sense, not of rapid descent, but of timelessness or containment in a space that seems 'free' even as it is always moving forward" (Hochman 225).

When Robert leaves Grand Isle, Edna recognizes the "symptoms of infatuation" from the past experiences, the few fleeting moments of arising emotions she has experienced before, but

[t]he 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; was hers, to torture her as it was doing then with the biting conviction that she had lost that which she had held, that she had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded (Chopin 45).

The wisdom that could have been acquired from the past experiences is of no significance to her. She becomes oblivious and "seeks not to articulate her plight, but rather to escape from the inexorable forward march of chronological or historical time, from all plots and stories with beginnings and endings" (Hochman 219).

There is, however, no escape but the beginning is merged with the inevitable end, with the evocation of Edna's childhood memories which accompany her disappearance in the sea, the memory of her childhood Kentucky and of the meadow where "I felt as if I must walk on forever, without coming to the end of it" (Chopin 16). Thus, throughout the novel "Edna actively courts immersion in experiences that reproduce the 'exaltation' of timelessness, the feeling of walking on forever with no sense of an ending" (Hochman 220).

Exaltations, that are not religious by nature, not in the sense that religious sublime is described by, become subliminal stages of being. They came to Edna like waves flowing over her, and these feelings always come to an end. A person cannot stay in a sublime state for long, unless she reaches the rare state of illumination, but Edna is not a sublime creature, on the contrary, she abandons her religion. She goes to a church on her holiday to attend a mass and during the service in a Gothic church, "a feeling of oppression and drowsiness overcame Edna" (Chopin 35), she gets a headache in "the stifling atmosphere of the church" (35) and has to leave the building: the church is a place of oppression and restraints, which she is trying to avoid.

As a religious category sublime can be, as Vijay Mishra notes in his study on various representations of sublime,

linked to the idea of wonder, awe, majesty, and, indeed, to a sense of nonrational attachments to the figure of God, as the idea of God is embraced through feeling and emotion [. . .] God becomes not simply a matter of the faculty of reason but also a faculty of (aesthetic) judgment. In this different, nonrational, numinous understanding of God, the subject confronts an absolute Other, a wholly Other, who exists beyond concepts [. . .] There is a numinous awakening from within as the mind turns spontaneously to an experience which arises only after the category of 'the numinous' is called into play. (Mishra 290)

The essence of sublime was discussed briefly earlier in the theory section and as it was explained, according to Mishra, sublime experience requires the reconfiguration of God into a "terrible power" and this in turn "arouses in the believer feelings of dread, terror and mystery, albeit in ways which emerge as positive feelings" (290). The negative sublime must be transformed into a moral allegory, if one does not do so, it will lead to "the oceanic feeling of self-dissolution" and, as Derrida notes, this is a "form of demonic rapture that has as its effect, and often as its first intention, the removal of responsibility" (Mishra 290). This is what happens to Edna, her "demonic rapture" which arises from her newly awakened sensuality, joy and bodily sensations allow her to abandon her responsibilities to live in a moment, outside moral conventions and to do as she wants: "She

was blindly following whatever impulse moved her, as if she had placed herself in alien hands for direction, and freed her soul of responsibility” (Chopin 32).

The Gothic sublime invades her mind and all Christian moral allegories dissolve from her memory and consciousness: there are only fleeting moments when she feels the pressure of her choices. After Edna admits to her friend Mademoiselle Reiz that she is in love with Robert and decides to leave her home and rent a small cottage, she ponders: ”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” (Chopin 82).

The feeling of terror arises occasionally in Edna when she is swimming: the skill is new, invigorating and the fear of drowning is both terrifying and exiting, thus fear is mixed with pleasure. The feeling of danger is present, as if a premonition of the tragedy to come: “A certain ungovernable dread hung about her when in the water” (27). The ocean is Edna’s ultimate lover, it awakens her sensuality and finally lifts her into sublimity of a lasting kind.

The Awakening is situated mostly by the sea, and the echoes of the never-ending waves are heard throughout the novel. Ellen Moers discusses the metaphor of “Oceanic feeling”: it is probably the only metaphor that has “standing in religion, physiology, and psychoanalysis, as well as in literature. It applies to the sensation of selflessness and release from the flesh and to the comprehension of the universal Oneness that are often experienced on the open seas” (260). For Moers, the oceanic feeling is a central, mystical female experience (260).

Edna learns to swim that summer and there is a joy of discovery of this new talent, as well as the beginning of an awakening to something else, sexuality she has repressed as a good Presbyterian, love she has denied and finally, liberation from all restrictions and obligations. The

unconscious begins to surface through her bathing in the ocean, as the oceanic feeling: “As she swam, she seemed to be reaching out for the unlimited in which to lose herself” (Chopin 28).

The term *oceanic feeling* was formulated by Freud, who got the original idea of the term from his friend Romain Rolland, and suggested that it is the preserved “primitive ego-feeling” (72) from a person’s infancy. In *Civilization and its Discontents* Freud explains the term:

It is [. . .] a sensation of eternity, a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded – as it were, ‘oceanic’. This feeling is purely subjective fact, not an article of faith; it brings with it no assurance of personal immortality [. . .] but it is the source of religious energy [. . .] One may [. . .] rightly call oneself religious on the ground of this oceanic feeling alone, even if one rejects every belief and every illusion. (Freud 64)

A child’s limitless freedom from all restraints seems to be Edna’s dream, but an infant’s mental state with no responsibilities is not possible. Moers states that the freedom as well as “tactile sensations of near-naked sea bathing” had a specific meaning to “modern women”, and perhaps by coincidence, many of these modern writers lived near the sea or had an access to it. One of those moderns was Kate Chopin, who had an access to the Gulf of Mexico (260-261).

When Edna learns to swim, she receives more than a new skill, she finds emotional satisfaction, and most importantly, she gains control that gives an altogether new structure to her life: “She could have shouted for joy. She did shout for joy [...] A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul” (Chopin 27). The water is a metaphor of sexuality, she learns to swim and awakens emotionally to the feelings of passion and love, and the stronger she gets in her skill, the stronger the emotions and desires.

As important as water is as a metaphor in the novel, Moers suggests that there is a scene of equal importance, the moment when Edna looks back into her childhood memories and recalls the “her first private moment of self-assertion, which took place not by the sea but in a Kentucky meadow ‘that seemed as big as an ocean to the very little girl walking through the grass’” (261). For Edna, the meadow seemed endless, a path without an end, and this memory comes back to her when

she swims to her death. Thus, the meadow and the ocean are connected, the sweet memory from her childhood melts into the liberating depths of the eternal ocean in the final scene of the novel, as if Edna, standing naked on the beach, was returning to her mother's womb, back to the innocence and safety: "she cast the unpleasant, pricking garments from her, and for the first time in her life she stood naked in the open air [...] how strange and awful it seemed to stand naked under the sky! How delicious! She felt like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known" (Chopin 115).

3.5 The Uncanny Signs of Destruction and Death

In Henry James's famous novel, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), the haunted Governess is caught in a spiral movement towards the abyss and foreshadowed breakdown on a path that is paved with good intentions, but disrupted by ghosts. Her passions are never fulfilled, instead she blocks her desire towards her employer, denies it and is faced with possible insanity. The unfortunate events lead to a young boy's death. The signs of tragedy clear in the plot, the warnings that are delivered by the ghosts, but the Governess misreads them.

The loss of one's self and identity is a popular theme in Gothic fiction, it is one of the biggest, universal fears. An excellent example of the loss of mental health is the protagonist in "The Yellow Wallpaper", by the American writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman. The woman's role in Gothic fiction has been, quite often, to die, one way or another, to be locked in an asylum, whether insane or not, or to be kept locked in the attic, like Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*. As Alison Milbank points out, "[t]he Gothic heroine both fears death, and is death's chosen bride" (151).

The signs of the inevitable loss and death are present in *The Awakening* as well, from the beginning. This is not surprising and Rossi points out that "it seems that Chopin started writing out of deep sorrow, and where there is sorrow the Gothic hovers like vulture, for sorrow is the threshold of despair" (70).

There are two lovers on the Grand Isle, always together, walking on air, as it were, they “tread upon blue ether” and a woman in black, following the couple, “creeping behind them” (21) or walking “demurely up and down” (Chopin 2). The woman in black is like a premonition, a harbinger of death, constantly reminding of the inevitable end of love and life. The lovers symbolize eternal love, but in a ghostly manner. The uncanny motif is found in the novel through the ghostly manifestations of the lovers, but also in the mind of the protagonist, when Edna explains to Robert, that” [i]t is like a night in a dream. The people about me are like some uncanny, half-human beings. There must be spirits abroad tonight” (Chopin 29). Spirits are a classic Gothic feature and their presence lingers in the subtle remarks in the narrative and stories told. The same night Robert tells her a story of the ghost of Grand Isle, which rises on that very day, on the twenty-eight of August,

at the hour of midnight, and if the moon is shining – the moon must be shining – a spirit that has haunted these shores for ages rises up from the Gulf. With its own penetrating vision the spirit seeks some one mortal worthy to hold him company, worthy of being exalted for a few hours into realms of the semicelestial. His search has always hitherto been fruitless, and he has sunk back, disheartened, into the sea. But tonight he found Mrs. Pontellier. Perhaps he will never wholly release her from the spell. Perhaps she will never again suffer a poor, unworthy earthling to walk in the shadow of her divine presence. (Chopin 29)

Later, on a boat trip to another island, “Edna could hear the whispering voices of dead men and the click of muffled gold. When she and Robert stepped into Tonie’s boat, with the red lateen sail, misty spirit forms were prowling in the shadows and among the reeds, and upon the water were phantom ships, speeding to cover” (Chopin 39).

Animism is a rhetorical term that refers to a situation where an inanimate object is given “attributes of life or spirit” (Bennett and Royle 37). This mode is frequently used in the novel: “The sea was quiet now, and swelled lazily in broad billows that melted into another and did not break except upon the beach in little foamy crests that coiled back like slow, white serpents” (Chopin 27),

“the night sat lightly upon the sea and the land. There was no weight of darkness [...]” (27) and “the voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamouring, murmuring...” (115).

Death as an uncanny motif means something familiar but at the same time unfamiliar, the unimaginable but inevitable. Death drive, on the other hand, “refers to the idea that everyone at some level (consciously or unconsciously) is driven by a desire to die, to self-destruct, to return to a state of inanimacy” (Bennett and Royle 40). The idea of drowning filled Edna with terror before, but in the final pages of the novel she embraces the deadly ocean as the waves invite her, and there is no fear anymore. On the other hand, she has no desires left either.

The Creole culture is strange, inviting and sensuous to Edna, as the sea and the island itself. Amanda Lee Castro notes that Grand Isle is a romantic getaway and a site of “temporal liberation”, a place where time goes slowly, that remains to haunt Edna when she returns to her home in New Orleans. It is as if she never leaves the island, her mind is fixated on the islands of Grand Isle and Chênère Caminada, where she spent time with Robert. Edna “herself seems like no more than a supernatural being or ghostly embodiment of her former self” (Castro 78).

The praised paradise of Grand Isle, where Kate Chopin herself spent many summers, was severely damaged by the Hurricane of 1893. Grand Isle has been repeatedly affected by tropical storms, some of them more severe than others. Castro argues that “the hurricane’s presence in the novel acts as a metaphor for the deterministic force of the natural environment and for all the forces that can determine our fates” (70). The connection between nature and Edna’s awakening is obvious, the primitive, almost Edenic surroundings stir the “animal” in her, the primal desires that are only natural to the human species. Edna becomes a creature, alive with the forces of life, as Doctor Mandalet observes: “She reminded him of some beautiful, sleek animal waking up in the sun” (71). The subtle change in Edna is obvious to him and he recognizes the symptoms of arising desire.

3.6 The Gothic Role Play in the House: Mothers vs Monsters

“It is debilitating to be any woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters.”
Gilbert & Gubar (53).

Stacey Abbott states that the classic Gothic monster, the “vampire is in a constant state of disintegration and renewal, and it is through this process that it is intrinsically linked to the modern world, which is also perpetually in the throes of massive change “(5). While vampires are eternal, they are free to adapt to new circumstances and modern times, as modern Gothic fiction has established. The monster, that infects its victim with a bite is as infectious as a woman, who is not an angel, or a woman who writes, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue: “a defining characteristic of women’s texts is precisely a monstrously dangerous, contaminating, and Gothically Dickinsonian ‘infection in a sentence’” (qtd in Rossi 69).

Victorian family was the institutional foundation, not only a domestic matter but the basis for perfect society where an individual was able to develop into a proper citizen. Anne McClintock argues that

[t]he power and importance of the family trope was twofold. First, the family offered an indispensable figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests. Because the subordination of woman to man and child to adult were deemed natural facts, other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature. (57)

Thus, the hierarchy inside a family was natural, patriarchal and inevitable. The roles were fixed and the tasks taken for granted. Thus, Mr Pontellier felt that Edna failed in her maternal duty toward their boys,

[i]n short, Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman. The mother-women 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 precious brood. They were women who idolized their children, worshiped their husbands, and esteemed it as a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels. (Chopin 8)

If Edna was not a mother-woman, an angel in the house, was she a monster, or something grotesque, invoking both disgust and empathy in a reader, as Gilbert and Gubar suggest above? Perhaps the answer lies in the myth of this angelic woman. According to M. Jeanne Peterson this “angel in the house” became a model for all ranks of Victorian women and a stereotype. As a wife, she was obedient and adored her husband. She “promoted his spiritual and physical well-being. She supervised the servants’ activities under the watchful eye of her husband and became the devoted and loving mother of a large Victorian family. She was an acquiescent, passive, unintellectual creature, whose life revolved entirely around social engagements, domestic management, and religion” (Peterson 678).

Adele Ratignolle, Edna’s new friend from the island, was all of that, but Edna did not fit in this domestic role, neither did she feel necessary to do so. Her children were looked after a quadroon nurse and her two boys seemed to be quite satisfied with their lives, even if they were not used to running to their mother for attention: “if one of the little Pontellier boys took a tumble whist at play, he was not apt to rush crying to his mother’s arms for comfort; he would more likely pick himself up, wipe the water out of his eyes and the sand out of his mouth and go on playing”(Chopin 7). Edna does love her children in her own way, but does not express her affections in the conventional manner she is supposed to.

The meaning of her choices, to leave her old life behind, is realized by Edna, the understanding of the lingering presence of people and circumstances of her life surface again and again in her mind, although she tries to suppress them. Thus, she learns nothing from her past experiences. The physical awakening, on the other hand, to the human touch and intimacy is like a drug, giving her the pleasure she has denied all her life. She dwells in this mist of recurring ecstasy, and has fantasies of her life together with Robert, but she does nothing to pursue this new life. As Peter Ramos suggests, Edna has no willpower to “commit herself to acting on these fantasies, even though they are no more fictitious than other, more conventional roles” (149).

There are social roles to choose for Edna. She could develop her skills as an artist and sell her paintings, as she in fact does already. This role is presented to her in the form of Mademoiselle Reiz, who is unmarried and lives alone as a respected artist, a musician. The other role is that of a devoted mother and wife, which Adele Ratignolle inhabits successfully, but which Edna has tried and failed. She rejects these identities, desiring “to live outside all socially constructed identities [. . .] In such a chaotic state, circumstance and whim would determine one’s existence, which would become akin to madness and, ultimately, would direct itself toward oblivion, toward self-annihilation” (Ramos 150).

The transformation of Edna into a new woman with a new identity and future of her own is never achieved. Edna’s inner world, her self is under construction and these are the possibilities, the roles available, which the society has to offer, but she denies them. Ramos argues that Edna’s lifelong search for freedom was connected to her unhappy childhood with a rigid father and without a mother. Her quest for “such an unrestricted, undefined and, ultimately, impossible state—a freedom from identity—ironically deprives her life of meaning (and finally of life itself)” (147). He points out that one’s identity, which is socially constructed, is a “practical fiction one inhabits, more or less intentionally and with a certain amount of will” (Ramos 147). The construction of Edna’s identity can only happen in relation with others, but not in solitude: there is nothing to build on without the interaction between individuals and the basis on which to build on. The past has moulded her into what she is, but on her way to “becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world” (Chopin 56), she proceeds too fast and eventually too far as well. The transformation and growth that happen through necessary learning experience is disrupted, because she only desires to rid herself of all the exterior.

Edna’s struggle to create herself from the scratch leaves her in a state of emptiness and agony. The passions she had been feeding with blissful anticipation are gone. “There was no one thing she

desired” (Chopin 115). Edna’s separation from the world has reached the final stage and the reader must separate herself from this uncanny fictive world as well, not loose oneself in the abyss with Edna. Bennett and Royle state that “it is difficult in an absolute sense to separate real from fictional characters” (69). They argue that usually, at some level, the reader identifies with the hero or heroine, and when we read about a character we imagine and at the same time “create a character in reading: it is to create a person. [. . .] [R]eading characters involves learning to acknowledge that a person can never finally be singular – that there is always multiplicity, ambiguity, otherness and unconsciousness” (69-70). Reading Edna Pontellier is a Gothic experience in its ambiguity and identifying with her creates a sense of otherness and alienation. “To identify with a person in a novel or play is to identify *oneself*, to produce an identity for oneself. It is to give oneself a world of fictional people, to start to let one’s identity merge with that of a fiction. It is, finally, also to create a character for oneself, to create oneself as a character” (70). Thus, the fate and death of Edna Pontellier works as a cathartic means: it allows the reader to dive into the waves with Edna and be purified in the endless ocean.

4 Conclusion

The Creole culture embodies the myths of deep South, it did in the nineteenth century and it still does, with its “semi-aliens” and mixed race, that includes representatives of the freed slaves and other nationalities, melted together to create different shades of colour with a richness that Northern states did not have: this was something that the local-color stories conveyed, the picture that was skilfully painted in Kate Chopin’s literary work. The work of art, piece of fiction must be labelled and put in a category of some kind. *The Awakening* is Gothic and romantic, that it is for sure, there are high, sensual emotions and lost loves, the seductive murmur of the waves, mystical moons, apparitions, birds and exotic smells and summer winds that give wings to imagination, dreams of love and passion. Still, these Gothic features are subtle in their representation and require a subtle reading as well. The Gothic subtext is only a part of the wide construct of meanings that penetrate the narrative, but a formidable one.

The novel embodies features of naturalism, realism and modernism, but the basic question remains unanswered: what was Kate Chopin’s desire and aim and how much of herself can be extracted from the text and from Edna Pontellier? Perhaps she was all of them, all the three important female characters. Thus, she embodies pieces of Adele, a loving mother, Edna, a dreamer, sensual and passionate woman and finally, an artist and a lover of music, Mademoiselle Reiz, whose first name we never learn. There is significance in being nameless, the first name is an intimate sign and would give her rigid spinster’s shape more depth and femininity. The fact that she does not swim adds another characteristic to her nature: Mademoiselle Reiz is denied the female sexual experience, which the sea symbolizes and evokes.

When we tear apart and analyse the pieces of a story for the sake of finding the core, the essential, the results we find and the conclusions we make may tell us more about ourselves than about Edna. Exaltation, sublime experiences, rush of emotions, standing on the threshold of a new

age or on the edge of a cliff, with the inevitable push of the winds of time on her back; this is Edna Pontellier and dying is her ultimate choice.

The original name of *The Awakening* was *Solitary Soul*. Maybe there is only *one soul* and different experiences that are embodied in these three female characters, on the textual level, of this one entity or ghost, and these are the choices a female character can make, to survive in this reality, in the nineteenth century society and in the fictitious realm of the novel as well. To be solitary means to be alone or isolated and so she was, a different kind of Victorian woman, not willing to play the part of the female ghost in the society.

Some critics argue that the ending of novel is a mistake that ruins the story as a whole, or the ending is a compromise, written only to punish the confused adulteress who had strayed far from the righteous path. If so, *The Awakening* is just another fairy-tale gone bad. Edna, the Sleeping Beauty, who is awakened from her slumber by a promise of love and new life beside her prince, takes a desperate last dive into the abyss, like the Little Mermaid abandoned by her lover.

The story was forgotten for over a half a century: the ghost of Edna lingered in the depths of oblivion for decades only to surface again, to re-awaken in the modern age, when women are finally, little by little, free to express their desires in the society as they choose. The features of Gothic are revealed when the social constructions crumble in Edna's life: emotions, music, sublime and temporality are the means that create the atmosphere of phantasmatic, eternal moment in time: the Gothic. A melancholy undercurrent pervades the narrative in the sense of isolation and Edna's moods. These are strengthened by music and the sounds of the ocean, and the melancholy emotions turns to sadness and finally into desperation.

Edna Pontellier's character, her socially constructed self is peeled away little by little, starting from the social and temporal context she is planted in. First her status and familial relations - relatives, husband and children, then the wealth she shares with her husband, the lavish gowns, jewelry, gorgeous house and servants: all that her contemporaries and the twenty-first-century

people also have learned to respect and value. Instead she finds out that there is the possibility of freedom and a chance for physical contentment, but these ideas are stripped away too with the realization that nothing lasts, there is no abiding love: the one that gives pleasure gives also pain, and sooner or later all of this is reduced to nothing, only a pale ghost of the memory remains.

Sublime moments, that overwhelm her always fade away and die like waves of the ocean, and there is no fairy-tale ending to the story. To live in a moment is to live in the oceanic feeling, without the past but also without a future, if one is not capable of finding one's place and identity in the society.

In the end, there is nothing else left but the essential, the core of Edna, standing bare naked on the shore, facing the ocean and embracing its call, which invites her to the abyss and final transformation. Her budding spiritual growth that has awakened with peeling away of the false self has no room to flourish in the contemporary society. The roles that are available to her are those of a mother and an artist, the former she has banned and the latter she has no will power to pursue. With the help from the good Doctor Mandelet there might have been a chance to resolve the situation, "but it was too late; the shore was far behind her, and her strength was gone" (Chopin 116).

Works Cited

- Abbott, Stacey. *Celluloid Vampires*. University of Texas Press, 2007. *ProQuest*. Accessed 2 March 2017.
- Alaee, Samira and Robab Khosravi. "Paul Auster's The New York Trilogy: Revisiting Self in The Merging Boundaries of Gothic and the Postmodern." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 5, no. 9, Sept. 2015, pp. 1896-1900. *Academy Publication*, DOI: dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0509.18. Accessed 1 February 2017.
- Archambault, Angela M. "The Function of Sound in the Gothic Novels of Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis and Charles Maturin." *Études Épistémè*, No. 29, 2016. DOI :10.4000/episteme.965. Accessed 19 March 2017.
- Bender, Bert. "The Teeth of Desire: The Awakening and The Descent of Man". *American Literature*, vol. 63, no. 3, Sept.1991, pp. 459-473. www.jstor.org/stable/2927243pdf. Accessed 6 March 2017.
- Bennett, Andrew and Nicholas Royle. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. vol. 4th ed, Routledge, 2014. *EBSCO*. Accessed 8 March 2017.
- Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*. Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- Boon, Kevin. "The Zombie as Other: Mortality and the Monstrous in the Post-Nuclear Age." *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human*, edited by Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro, Fordham University Press, 2011, pp. 50-60. *ProQuest*. Accessed 9 January 2017.
- Budd, Louis J. "The American Background." *Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism*, edited by Donald Pizer, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 21-46. *ProQuest*. Accessed 15 February 2017.
- Buzwell, Greg. "Gothic Fiction in the Victorian fin de siècle: Mutating Bodies and Disturbed Minds." *British Library*, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-fiction-in-the-victorian-fin-de-siecle. Accessed 19 February 2017.
- Castro, Amanda Lee. "Storm Warnings: The Eternally Recurring Apocalypse in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*." *Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 47, no. 1, Fall 2014, pp. 68-80. *EBSCO*. Accessed 15 December 2017.
- Cavallaro, Dani. *The Gothic Vision: Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear*. Continuum, 2002.
- Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*. Dover Publications Inc., 1993.
- Chopin, Kate. "Desiree's Baby." 1893. <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/DesiBaby.shtml>.

- Chopin, Kate. "La Belle Zoraide." 1894. <https://ic.ucsc.edu/~ksgruesz/ltel110f/Chopin.pdf>.
- Chopin, Kate, et al. *Kate Chopin's Private Papers*. Indiana University Press, 1998. EBSCO. Accessed 27 February 2017.
- Collins, Margo and Deborah Christie. "Off the page and into your brains!": New Millennium Zombies and the Scourge of Hopeful Apocalypses." *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human*, edited by Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro, Fordham University Press, 2011, pp. 187-204. ProQuest. Accessed 9 January 2017.
- Crow, Charles L. *Gothic Literary Studies: History of the Gothic: American Gothic (1)*. University of Wales Press, 2009. EBSCO. Accessed 10 January 2017.
- Elfenbein, Anna Shannon. "Reckoning with Race in The Awakening." *Awakenings: The Story of the Kate Chopin Revival*, edited by Bernard Koloski, Louisiana State University Press, 2009, pp. 173-183. Southern Literary Studies. EBSCO. Accessed 19 March 2017.
- Ewell, Barbara C. *Kate Chopin*. Ungar, 1986.
- Freud, Sigmund, et al. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Vol. 21, (1927-1931): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents and Other Works*. Hogarth Press, 1978.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*. Yale Nota Bene, 2000. ProQuest. Accessed 2 March 2017.
- Grimes, Hillary. *The Late Victorian Gothic: Mental Science, the Uncanny, and Scenes of Writing*. Ashgate, 2011.
- Harrington, Ralph. Trains, Technology and Time-travellers: How the Victorians Re-invented Time. 2003. www.yumpu.com/user/artificialhorizon.org. Accessed 23 February 2017.
- Heiland, Donna. *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction*. Blackwell, 2004.
- Heilmann, Ann. "The Awakening and New Woman Fiction." *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*, edited by Janet Beer, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 87-104. ProQuest. Accessed 13 February 2017.
- Hochman, Barbara: "The Awakening and The House of Mirth: Plotting Experience and Experiencing Plot". *Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism*, edited by Donald Pizer, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 211-235.
- Horner, Avril. "Kate Chopin, Choice And Modernism." *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Edited by Janet Beer. Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 132-146. ProQuest. Accessed 15 February 2017.
- Hughes, Linda. "A club of their own: the 'Literary Ladies', New Women Writers, and Fin-de-siècle Authorship." *Victorian Literature and Culture* (35:1) 2007, pp.233-260.

Reference Number: 2007:7971. *Literature Online*. Accessed 9 February 2017.

Hughes, William, and Andrew Smith. "Introduction: Defining the Relationships between Gothic and the Postcolonial." *Gothic Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2003, pp. 1-6. EBSCO, doi:10.7227/GS.5.2.1. Accessed 22 February 2017.

Kein, Sybil. "Use of Louisiana Creole in Southern Literature." *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, edited by Sybil Kein. Louisiana State University Press, 2000, pp. 117-156. EBSCO. Accessed 27 February 2017.

Klein, Sarah. "Writing The 'solitary Soul': Anticipations of Modernism & Negotiations of Gender in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*." 1998. *Womenwriters.net*, www.womenwriters.net/domesticgoddess/klein.html. Accessed 18 February 2017.

Ledger, Sally. *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle*. Manchester University Press, 1997. users.clas.ufl.edu/snod/Ledger.NewWoman.042515.pdf. Accessed 12 February 2017.

MacAndrew, Elizabeth. *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*. Columbia University Press, 1979.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Routledge, 1995. selforganizedseminar.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/mcclintock_imperial-leather.pdf. Accessed 22 February 2017.

Maguire, Roberta S. "Kate Chopin and Anna Julia Cooper: Critiquing Kentucky and the South." *Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 35, no.1, 2002, pp.123-137. EBSCO. Accessed 10 December 2016.

Mahajan, Priyanka and Randhawa Jaideep. "Emergence of 'New Woman': A Study of Origin of the Phrase in the West from Historical Perspective". *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*, vol. 21, no. 3, March 2016. pp. 01-04. DOI: 10.9790/0837-2103010104. Accessed 13 February 2017.

Marshall, Gail, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Martin, Joan M. "Placage and the Louisiana Gens de Couleur Libre: How Race and Sex Defined the Lifestyles of Free Women of Color" *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, edited by Sybil Kein. Louisiana State University Press, 2000, pp. 57-70. EBSCO. Accessed 27 February 2017.

Mighall, Robert. *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Milbank, Alison. *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction*. Macmillan, 1992.

- Mishra, Vijay. "The Gothic Sublime." *New Companion to The Gothic*, edited by David Punter. Wiley, 2012, pp. 288-306. *ProQuest*. Accessed 17 March 2017.
- Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. W.H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977.
- Murdoch, Lydia. *Daily Life of Victorian Women*, edited by Lydia Murdoch, ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2013. *ProQuest*. Accessed 23 February 2017.
- Murphy, Patricia. *In Science's Shadow: Literary Constructions of Late Victorian Women*. University of Missouri Press, 2006. *EBSCO*. Accessed 20 February 2017.
- Nagel, James. *Race and Culture in New Orleans Stories: Kate Chopin, Grace King, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, and George Washington Cable*. University Alabama Press, 2014. *EBSCO*. Accessed 10 January 2017.
- Noske, Frits. "Sound and Sentiment: The Function of Music in the Gothic Novel." *Music & Letters*, vol. 62, no. 2, 1981, pp. 162-175. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1093/ml/62.2.162. Accessed 19 March 2017.
- Patterson, Martha H. *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915*. University of Illinois Press, 2005.
- Peterson, M. Jeanne. "No Angels in the House: The Victorian Myth and the Paget Woman." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 89, no. 3, 1984, pp. 677-708. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1856121>. Accessed 5 March 2017.
- Pizer, Donald. "Editorial Matter". *Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism*, edited by Donald Pizer. Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 278-280. *ProQuest*. Accessed 10 March 2017.
- Punter, David. *The literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. Longman, 1980.
- Punter, David & Byron, Glennis. *The Gothic*. Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
- Ramos, Peter. "Unbearable Realism: Freedom, Ethics and Identity in "The Awakening." *College Literature*, vol. 37, no. 4, Fall 2010, pp. 145-165. *EBSCO*. Accessed 15 December 2017.
- Rossi, Aparecido D. "The Gothic in Kate Chopin." *Kate Chopin in Context: New Approaches*. Edited by Kate O'Donoghue and Heather Ostman, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 65-82. *ResearchGate*, doi: 10.1057/9781137543967_5. Accessed 1 February 2017.
- Smith, Allen L. "Nineteenth-Century American Gothic." *Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture: New Companion to The Gothic* (1), edited by David Punter, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. *ProQuest*. Accessed 20 November 2016, 12 January 2017.
- Smith, Andrew. *Gothic Literature*. Edinburgh University Press, 2007. *Edinburgh Critical Guides to Literature*. *EBSCO*. Accessed 30 January 2017.

- Smith, Andrew and Hughes, William, editors. *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Stead, William T. *Real Ghost Stories*. NEW YORK: GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY 1921. www.attackingthediabol.com/pdfs/real_ghosts.pdf. Accessed 12 December 2016
- Taylor, Helen: 'The Perfume Of The Past': Kate Chopin And Post-Colonial New Orleans *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Edited by Janet Beer. Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp.147-160. *ProQuest*. Accessed 1 March 2017.
- Thernstrom, Stephan, Ann Orlov, and Oscar Handlin. *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*. Harvard University Press, 1980.
- Whitmore, Ashley. "life Is A Luminous Halo": Gender And Androgynous Time In Virginia Woolf. Wayne State University Dissertations. Paper 1354, 2015. *DigitalCommons*, digitalcommons.wayne.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2353&context=oa_dissertations. Accessed 20 February 2017.
- Wilt, Judith. *Ghosts of the Gothic: Austen, Eliot & Lawrence*. Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Wolter, Jürgen C. "Southern Hesters: Hawthorne's Influence on Kate Chopin, Toni Morrison, William Faulkner, And Tennessee Williams." *Southern Quarterly* vol.50, no.1, 2012. *Humanities International Complete*. Accessed 14 February 2017.
- Wyatt, Neal. "Dark and Stormy Reads: The Pleasures of Gothic Novels." *Library Journal*, vol.132, no.5, 2007, pp. 105. *Social Science Premium Collection*. Accessed 29 January 2017.