The Silent Majority: The Function of Female Characters in *The Awakening*

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Kate Chopin is known as a writer characterized with local color in America, and some of her works hold a strong awareness of inchoate feminism. Her masterpiece *The Awakening* depicts the physical and spiritual awakening of a white American middle-class woman Edna. As for this novel, critics have long focused on the heroine Edna, her inner conflict, and the process of her awakening as well as the open ending. Meanwhile various critical theories emerging during the second half of 20th century brought new perspectives for the study of *The Awakening*. With the theory of new historicism, Margit Stange connects Edna’s self-value to married women’s property acts”; with the theory of post-structuralism, Patricia S. Yaeger deconstructs this novel and maintains that it is not as subversive as it appears to be. Among various studies, there are critics who began to notice the minor and marginal female characters. The study of these color women can bring new understanding towards this novel. Take *Jane Eyre* as an example. Bertha—the mad woman—has long been
neglected by readers and critics. She, as the Other of Jane Eyre, must kill herself in order to give way to the white heroine. It can be said, therefore, that the final death of Bertha is the guarantee of Jane’s legal marriage with Rochester. Due to the sharp contrast between Jane and Bertha, Jean Rhys created the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* to elaborate Bertha’s story before her marriage, for the reason that Bertha has no story of her own in *Jane Eyre*. Inspired by the analysis of minor and marginal female characters, this paper aims at exploring “the silent majority” —women from other cultures and women of color, in an effort to analyze the function of these characters.

*The Awakening* tells the story of Edna’s awakening, and her final suicide. In this novel, her awakening can be divided into several processes. At the beginning Edna realizes her position in the world and begins to have a vague awareness of awakening: “I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn’t give myself.” (Chopin, 64) Her later love affair with Robert also brings gradual spiritual awakening of her self-consciousness, while it is Arobin that brings sexual awakening to her. There are, however, many other minor female characters in this novel, whose appearance is to highlight the awakening of the white American middle-class woman. These women almost keep “silent” in this novel; even Madame Ratignolle who speaks a lot does not have her own voice. According to Spivak, “the possibility that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of the Other as the Self’s shadow” (Leitch, 2193). Here Madame Ratignolle is made as the shadow of the Other. Different from Edna who gradually finds her own voice and identity, Madame Ratignolle from Creole society is what Spivak called “subaltern”. Other minor female characters serve as maids to provide “physical assistance” for Edna’s awakening. Either they keep silent or “spoken” by others. In a word, both the Creole women and the color women have no voice nor can speak for themselves. They are what Spivak called the “subaltern” and the silent majority, whose appearance is to highlight the awakening of white woman Edna. From this novel, one can see that the characteristics shared by awakening women are that they are indirectly treated as white, heterosexual and middle-class. This shows the author’s hidden racialism and her racial superiority.

I. Creole Woman—Madame Ratignolle

Kate Chopin sets the background of *The Awakening* in Creole society. Creole culture is different from traditional American culture, and the differences can be found in the contrasts between Edna and Madame Ratignolle. New Orleans, in
reality, is two cities [...]. “Up town” or the south side of this avenue, which is called Canal Street, is the home of the American population, while “down town”, the north, is the French or Creole Quarter. (Shaffter, 137) The Creole society and American society are divided distinctly and therefore totally different both geographically and culturally. The Creole men are usually characterized with “chivalry”, while their women are characterized with “grace and beauty” (137).

There are sharp contrasts between Edna and traditional woman Madame Ratignolle in several ways. Madame Ratignolle is “the embodiment of every womanly grace and charm” (Fletcher, 193), a typical “mother-woman”, while Edna is a new woman; Madame Ratignolle identifies with her social identity, while Edna’s escapes from her social identity. When these women first show up at Grand Isle, Chopin describes: “In short, Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman. The mother-women seemed to prevail that summer at Grand Isle.” (Chopin, 10) Then Chopin gives a description of Creole women: “They were women who idolized their children, worshiped their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels.” (10) In this novel, Chopin presents contrasts between Madame Ratignolle and Edna, which represent the contrast between two cultures, in an effort to emphasize the theme that the “awakening” belongs only to white American middle-class women.

Contrasts between Madame Ratignolle and Edna go through The Awakening, among which the first contrast is their ways of expression and their attitudes towards the role of being a wife. When Edna first comes into touch with this group of Creole women, she is deeply contrasted and confused. In that summer guests who are on holiday at the Lebrun’s are almost Creoles, and what distinguishes them from Mrs. Pontellier is “their freedom of expression was at first incomprehensible to her, though she had no difficulty in reconciling it with a lofty chastity which in the Creole woman seems to be inborn and unmistakable” (12). Edna is not as daring as the Creole women to express. She will feel embarrassed when talking of things that should be discussed in private. Besides, the most prominent difference between Madame Ratignolle and Edna is:

She is not like the Creole women in being able to continue as a long-suffering, self-sacrificing, faithful, and loyal wife and mother when love is gone. She is also unable—perhaps because of her Protestant rigidity, anarchic individualism, pride, and conscience—to live on and enjoy the fuller, happier life of which her “awakening” has made her aware. (Fletcher, 194)
The Creole's attitude towards the role of being a wife is conventional, and that
ideal wife conforms to the requirement of men. However, Edna does not conform to
this rule, which shows her rebellion. From this perspective, one can see that the
final suicide of Edna can be seen as her lost counterattack against this suffocating
society.

In this novel the depiction of Madame Ratignolle as the "Madonna" forms
another contrast with Edna. Chopin describes Madame Ratignolle's first appearance;
"there are no words to describe her save the old ones that have served so often to
picture the bygone of romance and the fair lady of our dreams." (Chopin, 10–11)
Besides, she also describes the Madonna-like image of Madame Ratignolle: "Mrs.
Pontellier liked to sit and gaze at her fair companion as she might look upon a
faultless Madonna" (14), and "never had that lady seemed a more tempting subject
than at that moment, seated there like some sensuous Madonna, with the gleam of the
fading day enriching her splendid color" (15).

This Madonna image, however, is created by the joint force of Chopin and
patriarchy to contrast degenerate Edna who betrays men's ideal image for women and
the holy Madame Ratignolle who is the model of patriarchal society. Deep analysis
can probe into how this image and motherhood are constructed by men who not only
deprive women of their identity but also strengthen their inferior status. In this novel
the construction of ideal woman and motherhood is identified with the construction of
the Creole people. For a long time, patriarchal men project their desire towards
women onto two images: angel and monster. "Male dread of women, and specifically
the infantile dread of maternal autonomy, has historically objectified itself in
vilification of women, while male ambivalence about female 'charms' underlies the
traditional images of such terrible sorceress-goddesses." (Gilbert and Gubar, 34)
The image of women is served to present men's contradictory emotions. On the one
hand they love women and want to be close with them; on the other hand they have
fear towards women. Simone de Beauvoir once points out that "the Woman-Mother
has a face of shadows; she is the chaos whence all have come and whither all must
one day return; she is Nothingness" and "in all civilizations and still in our day
woman inspires man with horror; it is the horror of his own carnal contingence, which
he projects upon her". (Beauvoir, 166–167) Men, due to their fear and love
towards women, create the images of monster and angel. Both the image of monster
and angel, and the stereotypic image of Creole women are not natural products, but
the construction of power. This image, either angel or monster, is imposed by man,
while the Creole women in this novel are fixed and stereotypic, among which Madame Ratignolle conforms to the requirements of patriarchy and Creole society.

Another strong contrast between Madame Ratignolle and Edna is their inner state. Edna gradually realizes her position in this world and becomes aware of her self-identity. Compared with Edna, the inner state of Madame Ratignolle is static without any change. It can be seen as the contrast between advanced American culture and static Creole culture from macro perspective. It is the construction imposed by patriarchy and Creole society together that creates the Madonna Madame Ratignolle who functions as a foil for white American woman, finally shaping the contrast between “mother-woman” Madame Ratignolle and non “mother-woman” Edna.

From various contrasts between white American woman Edna and Creole Madame Ratignolle, one can see that “mother-woman” Madame Ratignolle, a foil to Edna, serves as the opposition to superior American culture. As the following women of color this paper will mention, she is a static and flat character without voice and personality. It can be seen that the awakening of Edna is not common, nor Edna can represent all the women of her time. What she represents is the “awakening awareness” of American middle-class white women, and it excludes the Creole women with Madame Ratignolle as the representative, and the passive and silent women of color in this novel.

II. The Other Color Women: Take the Quadroon Nurse as an Example

Fanon mentioned in his Black Skin, White Mast that “the wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the Native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements” (14). Not only do they treat the clothes as a standard of their closeness to the white—the civilized culture, but also their accent and most importantly the ratio of black blood in their body are also the criterion of civilization. According to different ratio of black blood, the black can also be divided into different groups: the black, mulatto, quadroon and griffe. They feel, therefore, more close to the white if there is less black blood in their body. Besides, people from other race and culture, for example the American Mexicans especially Mexican women, also suffer bias and prejudice. This kind of division is not casual or arbitrary, but reflects the deep social
stratification.

In this novel there is apparent prejudice against the people of color, especially women of color, which limits the awakening of Edna. Edna's class-consciousness and her racial superiority make her take the service of the color women as granted. Her pursuit of freedom and identity is based on the work of these women. From this point one can see the limitation of Edna gives rise to her failure to escape the requirements and regulations imposed by patriarchal society. In this novel Chopin mentions Edna's attitude towards these color women several times, which shows that Edna does not treat these women of color as the same women as her. Compared with men, she is inferior in patriarchal society, while faced with the color women, she is racially superior. When Edna fails to take good care of two children, Mr. Pontellier blames Edna for her neglect; when Edna is in a bad mood because of the departure of Robert, she blames the quadroon nurse without convincing reason. Both Edna and her husband present the same superiority when faced with people from inferior status: “She began to set the toilet-stand to rights, grumbling at the negligence of the quadroon, who was in the adjoining room putting the children to bed.” (Chopin, 58) Edna holds sisterhood only for people coming from her class. Like racists and slave owners, she may think that the black people are born to be inferior and they are doomed to be the servants to the white. Her limited sisterhood and her neglect of the color people impede the emancipation and independence of women as a whole. Feminism, excluding women from other country, culture and race, is not complete and dooms to fail.

The quadroon nurse in this novel enjoys the closest relationship with Edna and becomes guarantee of Edna's awakening. From the beginning to the end, the quadroon nurse does not say a word, and what she does is to follow the requirements set by the white for her: “The youngsters came tumbling up the steps, the quadroon following at the respectful distance which they required her to observe.” (16) If the hostess is in bad mood, she is likely to be blamed for her work: “She went down and led them out of the sun, scolding the quadroon for not being more attentive.” (63) Does that Edna scold the quadroon nurse for her neglect reflect her care for her children? Actually Edna's motherhood is not complete: As the author mentions that she is not “mother-woman”, Edna does not hold the responsibility of a mother for her children. In this novel one can see that Edna does not care for her children so much, nor does she spend her energy and time to take care of them. What she does is just to buy candies to express her love. When Mr. Pontellier blames Edna for her
negligence, he asks: “If it was not a mother’s place to look after children, whose on earth was it?” (7) Neither Mr. Pontellier nor Edna realizes that actually it is the quadroon nurse’s place to look after children instead of them. It is the quadroon nurse that takes care of these two children day and night; it is the quadroon nurse that looks after the children when Edna goes to the Cheniere Caminada with Robert; and it is the quadroon nurse that accompanies them to Iberville when Edna consorts with Arobin. Despite the fact that she takes good care of the children, she is still a humble, obscure and silent nurse. “The boys were being put to bed; the patter of their bare, escaping feet could be heard occasionally, as well as the pursuing voice of the quadroon, lifted in mild protest and entreaty.” (68) With regard to her relationship with even these two children, she also expresses her inferiority to them, for she “lifted in mild protest” or even “entreaty”. Her inferiority is also reflected in her trying to please the white family: “the quadroon was following them with little quick steps, having assumed a fictitious animation and alacrity for the occasion.” (72) Without name nor voice in this novel, the quadroon nurse is sometimes compared to the beast which conforms to the binary opposition between the white and the black; the white stand for the advanced while the black stand for the barbaric; “the quadroon sat for hours before Edna’s palette, patient as a savage.” (77)

Many critics have overlooked the fact that the awakening of Edna is not common or universal. They hold, therefore, that Edna is the representative of “new women”, regardless of the hidden fact that Edna’s awakening is based on the inferiority of the color women, such as the quadroon nurse. These critics treat Edna as the spokeswoman for all women no matter what their race and nationality is. Edna as the representative, however, stands for the privileged group—white American middle-class people that exclude people from other country, other race and other class. The awakening and independence for the privileged women are based on the sacrifice of the color women. These color women who, with no name, no voice nor personality, form an undercurrent to counteract with the apparent plot and finally deepen this novel. Also these color women take an important role in this novel, for the reason that they exempt Edna from tedious housework. From the macro perspective, this novel depicts the awakening story of a new woman, while from the micro perspective, it tells a story about the color women who have been oppressed by the privileged group—the white and the middle or upper class.

On the one hand they free Edna from housework, promoting Edna’s awakening; on the other hand they are the guards of convention to hinder her awakening. As
mentioned above, there is a sharp contrast between Edna and people of color. Edna represents the “new women” and advanced culture, while women of color and the Creole women represent the traditional and conservative culture. To some extent these traditional women can be seen as an obstacle to Edna’s awakening. Not only does Edna treat the quadroon nurse as an obstacle, but also the children treat her as “a huge encumbrance”; “the quadroon nurse was looked upon as a huge encumbrance, only good to button up waists and panties and to brush and part hair; since it seemed to be a law of society that hair must be parted and brushed.” (10)

In the scene when Edna throws her wedding ring onto floor and tramples over it, it is not her husband but another maid that picks up this ring and returns it back to Edna. The ring in this novel appears twice which functions as the symbol of marriage. The act of throwing it onto the floor reflects Edna’s intention to get rid of her marriage, however, that the maid returns it to Edna is actually to safeguard the convention. Anna Shannon Elfenbein maintains that this maid here does not only work as the substitute of Mr. Pontellier, but she also functions to strengthen and consolidate the patriarch, for in the first scene about the ring, it is Mr. Pontellier that keeps this wedding ring for Edna and returns it to her when she comes back from the sea.

Alienated from her role as a mother by the quadroon nurse, who cares for her two sons with “fictitious animation”, and unable to take off her wedding ring or shatter a vase without being interrupted by a maid, who silently hands the ring back to her, Edna feels herself alone and exceptional. (Elfenbein, 295) Therefore, Edna is in an isolated situation, which presents Chopin’s hidden but consistent treatment of class, race and caste divisions among women in this novel. From the perspective of these women of color, one can see that Edna overlooks the presence of these women and takes their service for granted. What she really cares is her own interest, regardless of the interest of color women. However, it is with the service and labor of these women that Edna can lead a decent life without even lift a finger. This kind of class-consciousness and her blindness to these women of color give rise to her inability to escape the patriarchal imperatives from which she attempts to escape. Even moving out of the house of her husband and getting into her “pigeon house”, she still keeps a maid to take care of the housework, which shows that women of other race and women of color are both an assistance and encumbrance for Edna.
III. The Silent Majority

Compared with women of color, Madame Ratignolle is not as silent as them. Does she, however, really have a voice or speak for herself? In this novel, she only follows the words of her husband and becomes his echo. When her husband is speaking, she even lays down her work only to listen to her husband better: "He spoke with an animation and earnestness that gave an exaggerated importance to every syllable he uttered. His wife was keenly interested in everything he said, laying down her fork the better to listen, chiming in, taking the words out of his mouth." (Chopin, 75). The discourse of her husband stands for the patriarchal society, as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar elaborate the absent king of Snow White in The Madwoman in the Attic:

The Queen's husband and Snow White's father never actually appears in this story at all [...]. At the same time, though, there is clearly at least one way in which the King is present. His, surely, is the voice of the looking glass, the patriarchal voice of judgment that rules the Queen's—and every woman's—self-evaluation. (37–38)

In this novel Madame Ratignolle does not have her own voice, and she exists only as the shadow and echo of her husband. Both Madame Ratignolle's echoing of her husband and the color women's silence, as for Spivak, are all silent. Madame Ratignolle shows up in this novel in the image of "Madonna" and "angel in the house", who does everything either for her husband or for her children; "she was keeping up her music on account of the children, she said; because she and her husband both considered it a means of brightening the home and making it attractive" (Chopin, 32). As the model of Creole women, despite the fact that she appears often and speaks a lot, she does not have her voice nor speak for herself.

In The Awakening, there are till other marginal and minor female characters who keep silent from the beginning to the end. Edna and other women from middle-class all take the labor of these color women for granted, and what's more important is that they do not treat these women the same as themselves. These minor characters, however, play an indispensable role for Edna's awakening and for the theme of this novel at large. As shown in this novel, their static inner state and flat personality function as a foil to Edna's increasingly strong awareness. They exempt Edna from tedious work, and from whom Edna can find her voice and superiority. Through
consolidating and identifying the silence and obedience can the white women find their voice and identity. In a word, the oppressed color women keep silent in order to give way to the awakening of white American middle-class women.

Can the subaltern speak? Spivak’s blunt answer is no, for “the ‘subaltern’ always stands in an ambiguous relation to power—subordinate to it but never fully consenting to its rule, never adopting the dominant point of view or vocabulary as expressive of its own identity” (Leitch, 2194). The marginal female characters are the silenced “subaltern”, and in this novel they keep silent from the beginning to the end; the quadroon nurse does not say a word from the beginning to the end; the little black girl working for Madame Lebrun does not say a word; two black women making ice-cream under the “supervision” of Victor do not say a word even when this “great success” is attributed to Victor; “It was pronounced a great success [...]. Victor was proud of his achievement, and went about recommending it and urging every one to partake of it to excess” (Chopin, 33); not only marginal women but also marginal men keep silent; “a light-colored mulatto boy, in dress coat and bearing a diminutive silver tray for the reception of cards, admitted them” (67); the woman in black appearing several times in this novel is silent; although Madame Antoine on the Cheniere Caminada speaks, she does not have her voice, for she speaks under the discourse of the author; the black woman at the Ratignolle’s keeps silent, only following the instructions from Madame Ratignolle; even Celestine who follows Edna to the “pigeon house” just “lingered occasionally to talk patois with Robert, whom she had known as a boy” (136); Catiche who is a woman of color selling coffee provides significant opportunity for the encounter between Edna and Robert, still remains silent; at the end of the novel when Madame Ratignolle gives birth, the nurse—a comfortable looking griffe woman—keeps silent; the black woman at the Lebrun’s only “grumbles”: “The woman grumbled a refusal to do part of her duty [...]”, “and went mumbling into the house” (80). This black woman “grumbles” and “mumbles” instead of “speaks”, which shows that she acts not like a person but like a beast. This parallel resonates another comparison between the quadroon nurse and “savage”: “the quadroon sat for hours before Edna’s palette, patient as a savage” (77). Standing at the opposition of white civilization, the black have no language; even if the black have language, their language is to “grumble” like the savage, rather than speak like a man. The only minor and marginal female character in this novel that has direct discourse and has physical voice is the maid helping Edna picking the wedding ring up. She says only two sentences: “Oh! You might get some
of the glass in your feet, ma'am", and "here's your ring, ma'am, under the chair" (71). These two sentences, however, do not speak for herself, but echo the convention of patriarchal society, which shows that she is the safeguard of patriarchal convention. According to Spivak, all these women do not express their inner mind, and belong to "the silenced subaltern". At the same time, one can find from these marginal female characters that the maids appearing in this novel are almost women of color who do all the tedious and dangerous work for their hostesses so that they are free to lead a casual and decent life. Kate Chopin grows up in the traditional South in the later half of 19th century, so it is likely her preference to take the labor of the black for granted both in her life and in her works, from which one can see her racism.

The exception in this novel who has her voice is Mademoiselle Reisz. It is Mademoiselle Reisz that encourages Edna's pursuit of art twice in this novel. The first is their encounter when they come back from Grand Isle, Mademoiselle Reisz says: "To be an artist includes much; one must possess many gifts—absolute gifts—which have not been acquired by one's own effort. And, moreover, to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul." (85) The second time is in Edna's memory when she recalls what Mademoiselle Reisz says to her: "The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings." (112) What Mademoiselle Reisz says here correspond to the bird image appearing at the beginning, "a green and yellow parrot, which hung in a cage outside the door" (1), and in the end "a bird with a broken wing was beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water" (56). Not only does Mademoiselle Reisz see clearly the love affair between Edna and Robert, but also she knows the situation of Edna and predicts the denouement: the bird will bruise, exhaust, and flutter back to earth if it does not have strong wings. This spectacle is actually the portrayal of Edna.

Mademoiselle Reisz enjoys independence, freedom and voice, which is the goal of Edna. Also she forms the opposition against Madame Ratignolle. Madame Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz exist in two extreme ways, if Madame Ratignolle is the angel or the "Madonna", then Mademoiselle Reisz will be the monster. Only according to the description of their appearances one can see that their total difference and contrast. When Mademoiselle Reisz first shows up, Chopin depicts: "She was a homely woman, with a small wizened face and body and eyes that glowed. She had absolutely no taste in dress, and wore a batch of rusty black lace with a bunch of
artificial violets pinned to the side of her hair. " (33 - 34) When Edna meets her for the first time after their vacation at Grand Isle: "Her laugh consisted of a contortion of the face and all the muscles of the body. She seemed strikingly homely, standing there in the afternoon light. She still wore the shabby lace and the artificial bunch of violets on the side of her head." (83). In this novel Mademoiselle Reisz was described as rigid and lifeless as this fake violet she wears. Her appearance is a sharp contrast with Madame Ratignolle's: "there was nothing subtle or hidden about her charms; her beauty was all there, flaming and apparent" (11). This kind of sharp contrast is also a paradox: the independent and free Mademoiselle Reisz is ugly and lifeless, while the static and shadow-like Madame Ratignolle is beautiful and gorgeous. When the heroine Edna gradually realizes her awakening and pursues her independence, she, however, goes into the sea to end her life. This can show the paradoxical attitude of the author: on the one hand it is the emerging awakening awareness of "new women", on the other hand this kind of awareness is limited and curbed by the patriarchal society. Contrast exists not only in two typical women, but also in the cultures they represent—the advanced American culture and less-developed Creole culture. This comparison is similar to the one in the case of sati—the Hindu practice of burning a widow on her husband's funeral pyre. According to Spivak, "while the intervention saved some lives and may have given women a modicum of free choice, it also served to secure British power in India and to underscore the asserted difference between British 'civilization' and Indian 'barbarism'" (Leitch, 2193). This contrast is more one between advanced civilization and underdeveloped civilization. Compared with the privileged women—Edna and Mademoiselle Reisz who hold their voice and independence to some degree, therefore, the other minor and marginal female characters are only a foil to their advanced culture and their superior status.

Conclusion

The heroine—an white American middle-class woman—finally realizes her awakening in terms of both body and soul, but when at last she is faced with the conflict between self and social convention, she would rather commit suicide to safeguard her solitude and freedom rather than sacrifice her awakening self. The novel reflects the author's strong awareness of inchoate feminism, but due to the limitation of that time and society, her feminism only rests on the white American middle-class women. The other minor and marginal female characters work only as a
foil to the heroine. The awakening of Edna, therefore, is not common or universal. The “Madonna” Madame Ratignolle, functioning as a shadow and echo of the patriarchal society, has no voice and independent personality; while other women of color are also the “silent majority”, who are either silent or spoken by the privileged group. Compared with Edna, all of the color women are passive and silent, whose appearance is only to highlight the independence and awakening of Edna, for the simple reason that she belongs to the privileged white women. In patriarchal society, when speaking of man one always thinks of the male instead of human being. The same case can be found in the white society. When the white society speaks of woman, one thinks of the white woman excluding woman of color, especially the black woman. Edna, therefore, stands for the privileged group—white American middle-class, which excludes the Creole women, and women of color from other countries and especially the third world. There are different comparisons and contrasts between Edna and the Creole woman and woman of color, which shows that the awakening of Edna is not complete and the feminism of Chopin is not universal. Women of color, from other cultures and countries serve as a foil to Edna. Edna’s limited awakening reflects Chopin’s hidden superiority and racism: the “awakening” of “new woman” only belongs to white American middle-class women.

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