KNOWING IS SEEING: CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR
IN THE FICTION OF KATE CHOPIN

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Suzanne Disheroon Green, B.A., M.A.

Denton, Texas

May, 1997
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"Knowing is Seeing: Conceptual Metaphor in the Fiction of Kate Chopin" examines the metaphoric structures that underlie Chopin's major novel, *The Awakening*, as well as those underlying selected short stories. Drawing on the modern theory of metaphor described by Mark Turner, George Lakoff, and Mark Johnson, I argue that conceptual metaphors are the structural elements that underlie our experiences, thoughts, and words, and that their presence is revealed through our everyday language. Since these conceptual structures are representative of human thought and language, they are also present in literary texts, and specifically in Chopin's texts. Conceptual metaphors and the linguistic forms that result from them are so basic a part of our thinking that we automatically construct our utterances by means of them. Accordingly, conceptual metaphor mirrors human thought processes, as demonstrated by the way we describe our experiences.

Conceptual metaphors become especially apparent at turning points in Chopin's narratives, occurring in clusters around these turning points, and it is from these structural elements that we derive meaning in the text. An example of the way in which conceptual metaphor structures Chopin's narratives may be found in her masterpiece, *The Awakening*. The title of the novel itself is a manifestation of the conceptual metaphor *Seeing is*
Knowing. We see common occurrences of this conceptual metaphor in expressions such as “She was blind to the truth” or “He refused to see the light.” At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist, Edna, is emotionally asleep. As she begins to awaken, metaphorically to open her eyes, she begins to attain a level of knowledge that she has not possessed before. The knowledge applies both to her inner self and to the world around her.

Chopin’s narratives are based on numerous conceptual structures, including Life is a Journey, The Past is a Pursuer, and container metaphors. The presence of these conceptual metaphors is apparent on both a semantic and syntactic level.
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INTRODUCTION:

COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS AND THE LITERARY TEXT

Cognitive science is silently storming the gates of the academy. The modern study of human cognition has not only filtered out of artificial intelligence research facilities to find a positive reception in disciplines as diverse as literature, psychology, physiology and linguistics, but has posed questions concerning the way literature is read and interpreted that scholars can not ignore. Rather than presenting methodologies whose tenets are understood only by specialists in narrowly defined disciplines, cognitive science offers insights into the workings of the human mind that invite scholars of the humanities to reexamine and perhaps even reinvent their respective disciplines in light of the growing body of evidence. The ongoing study of human cognition leads to the question of how human thought processes are reflected in linguistic utterances and, by extension, in literary texts. Accordingly, linguists and other scientists have begun to examine the role of metaphor—specifically cognitive or conceptual metaphor—as a mental construct which underlies the most basic aspects of human thought. Conceptual metaphors offer a window into the workings of the human mind, as they structure both general thought processes and the specific linguistic utterances that result from those thought processes.

If conceptual metaphors do, in fact, reflect the workings of the human mind, they also offer an alternative to the critical maze that continues to grow around canonical literary texts. In the past few decades, literary theory has received scathing criticism for
its ever narrowing, and some have argued, irrelevant areas of study. Literary critic turned cognitive scientist Mark Turner sums up the growing list of critiques of modern critical schools of thought, saying that although contemporary theorists are “an uncanny marvel of self-sustaining institutional and human ingenuity” (Turner 3), the world of critical theory suffers because it is:

ungrounded and fragmented. By contrast, its objects—language and literature—are deeply grounded... Contemporary critical theory fails to connect with the full human world to the extent that it treats objects in literature that can be seen only by means of the theory: in that case, if the theory vanishes, its objects vanish.

The neglect of contemporary critical theory to analyze literature as the expression of everyday capacities and to help us understand those capacities cuts it off from the full human world, making it a special world, simpler than the human world, smaller and marginal, exhilarating as a magic kingdom contained within its own walls, often viewed derisively as an exclusive Disney World for literary critics. (Turner 4)

The members of this “elite Disney World” have begun to defect, and to draw attention to the blemishes of the system which generates their very livelihood. The attacks that the English profession regularly receives may indicate that it is time to take a closer look at that system and to discover the reasons for its loss of effectiveness and respect both within, and perhaps more importantly, outside of the academic community.

Cognitive science offers an approach to the study of language and literature that
allows discussion of its discourse and its style, while basing its theories on a systematic method which combines language and literature studies into one discipline. Since language causes and effects the interpretations and usages of literature, and vice versa, arguments based on recent cognitive research may be judged based on empirical evidence about observable, measurable functions of the human mind — the way in which the mind processes information, makes meaning out of words, and interacts with the outside world as a result of the images and concepts that it processes internally.

This study will extend the current research to examine the ways in which human thought processes are reflected in works of fiction in the form of conceptual metaphors. George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Mark Turner, and other notable scholars have convincingly argued that conceptual metaphors structure the way we think. We conceptualize emotions, interpersonal relationships, and argumentation, to name a few indicative examples, in a consistent fashion, and these concepts are reflected by the everyday language that we use to express our thoughts. Conceptual metaphor goes beyond mere language, however. Our thought processes are not limited by the words that we utter or write down; rather, language is a manifestation of the conceptual structure of human cognition.

This study will additionally pose the question of what relevance the study of human cognition has to the study of literature. If the theory of conceptual metaphor (CM) is correct, then as readers, we would expect to see consistent occurrences of CMs in a wide variety of literary texts, ranging from poetry to prose to drama. We would expect CMs to not only support the basic themes of the text, but to define them. In the case of
Kate Chopin's fiction, I will argue that CMs converge at critical points in her narratives, and that the presence of these CMs is indicated by the language of the text. The semantic and syntactic forms that appear in Chopin's fiction indicate the consistent influence of CMs on the language and meaning of the text.

Chapter 1 of this study will examine the historical and current research, paying special attention to studies in the feminist and ethnographic tradition. The revival of interest in Chopin's work over the past few decades is due in large part to the efforts and critical attention of feminist scholars. Their work has given a great writer back to the world. Prior to the rebirth of interest in Chopin's work, much of her fiction had passed out of print and been forgotten, and accordingly, a discussion of the existing body of critical works will form the backbone of this study.

The next three chapters of this study deal with Chopin's masterpiece, *The Awakening*. Before delving into the specific conceptual metaphors that structure this novel, I will offer a thematic interpretation of the novel. Chapter 2 will discuss the literal journey of the protagonist, Edna Pontellier, in the context of Joseph Campbell's description of the hero's journey. The reason that the model of the hero's journey seems reasonable to us as readers is because of the conceptual structures that underlie the novel itself — the recurrent CMs and the cognitive apparatus that they represent. Before delving into the workings of these conceptual structures in chapters 3 and 4, however, I will outline the ways in which Edna's journey fits into the monomyth as Campbell describes it. She experiences each of the rites of passage, moving from the initial separation and departure stage, through the "belly of the whale" or the darkness of the
soul, and endures the trials and resulting victories of initiation. Finally, she returns to her society, yet is unable to reintegrate successfully. She then chooses death rather than reintegration into a life that would force her to disregard the needs of her “essential self.”

Chapters 3 and 4 will examine the function of three conceptual metaphors in *The Awakening*: the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM, the KNOWING IS SEEING CM, as well as container metaphors. Each of these conceptual structures are manifested through the language of the text, and lead us to conclusions about the thematic contents of the novel as well.

Edna's life journey is not only enacted literally. We see many signs that she undertakes an emotional journey that leads her toward self-fulfillment. This emotional journey, which centers around her awakening perceptions of the world around her, is evoked through the recurrence of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM. Edna's awakenings, or insights, are largely based on the KNOWING IS SEEING CM. In her experiences, knowledge is equated with light and sight, while darkness, blindness and the absence of understanding are equated with not knowing. Edna's insights are largely centered around a sequence of realizations that lead her to the conclusion that she cannot exist within the confines of the socially-prescribed woman's role. Rather than submitting to containment by these strictures, Edna chooses to remove herself from the environment altogether.

Chapter 5 examines the conceptual structures found in Chopin's short fiction. Drawing on stories from both of the collections published during Chopin's lifetime, *Bayou Folk* and *A Night in Acadie*, I discuss the relevance of conceptual metaphors in the context of these pieces. Numerous CMs are at work in the short fiction, although the SEEING IS KNOWING and container CMs are especially prevalent.
This study represents a small piece of a large and complex puzzle. It does not claim to offer a definitive discussion of the function of CMs in Chopin's fiction. The pieces of the puzzle presented here offer some limited insight into the pieces of Chopin's fiction that it addresses. Many pieces remain a mystery that will most likely require a lifetime of study to clarify. Consequently, the concluding remarks of this document will suggest avenues for further study that may lead to a more complete understanding of the ways that CMs enlighten our reading of Chopin's texts.
CHAPTER 1: SURVEY OF CRITICAL WORKS

WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

Before delving into the relevance of conceptual metaphor to Chopin’s fiction, a look at the existing scholarship surrounding her fiction is in order, since it lays the groundwork for this discussion. A preliminary examination of secondary criticism reveals a large body of work, much of which has appeared within the past two decades. However, scholars have been studying Chopin’s work seriously since its resurrection in the late 1960’s, and a number of groundbreaking essays written in the late 60’s and early 70’s have helped readers grapple with Chopin’s fiction.

Kate Chopin wrote prolifically and was widely published late in the nineteenth century, but with the publication of her controversial novel *The Awakening* in 1899, her popularity as a writer declined. Numerous reports of *The Awakening* being banned during her lifetime have circulated since the novel’s publication, but these reports amount to little more than folktales—Chopin may have been snubbed by some acquaintances after the appearance of the novel, but her novel was not removed from the shelves of local libraries. Her work did fall from public favor, passing out of print for decades. In 1969, Per Seyersted published what continues to serve as the authoritative edition of Chopin’s complete works, which includes the text of her two surviving novels, *At Fault* and *The
*Awakening*, all of the short fiction that was known at that time, several essays, and a modest collection of poems. Not included in the volume of complete works is a third novel that Chopin is known to have written between *At Fault* and *The Awakening*, titled *Young Dr. Gosse*. She attempted to place the manuscript with numerous magazine and book publishers over several years, and although "a friend called it her 'very strongest work,'" she ultimately destroyed the manuscript because everyone rejected it" (Toth, *KC* 189).

Since the appearance of Seyersted’s *Complete Works (CW)*, numerous editions of Chopin’s work have appeared, the most notable being Emily Toth’s compilation of what would have been Chopin’s third volume of short fiction, *A Vocation and a Voice (VV)*. Although many of the stories that were to appear in *VV* appeared in the *CW*, the appearance of Toth’s compilation in 1991 marked the first time that these stories had seen print as a unit, organized as their author intended. At the time that *The Awakening* appeared, Chopin held a contract for the publication of *VV*, which was ultimately canceled after the controversial reception of *The Awakening*. Subsequent to *CW*, scholars discovered several additional short stories that had not been published previously. Several of these appear in *A Kate Chopin Miscellany*, edited by Seyersted and Toth. Others have appeared in Thomas Bonner’s *A Kate Chopin Companion*, which also includes Chopin’s translations of Guy de Maupassant’s short fiction from French and an encyclopedic list of Chopin’s major and recurring characters and settings.

**Chopin’s Biographers**

Contemporary criticism of Chopin’s work generally falls into one of three
categories: feminist studies, ethnographic studies, and an "other" group which encompasses cultural and historical studies, as well as a handful of works from other critical stances. By far the largest body of critical studies of Chopin's work comes from the feminist school of thought. The initial wave of criticism which occurred after the appearance of *CW* consisted predominantly of close readings of her "important" texts and biographical studies. In fact, one of the few things that scholars have to thank Daniel Rankin, the Catholic priest who authored the first biography of Kate Chopin, for is the simple fact that his volume served to bring Chopin's work more critical attention than it had received between the early 1900's, when the majority of her work passed out of print, and 1932 when Rankin's biography appeared. Submitted originally as his doctoral thesis a full 30 years before the appearance of Seyersted's *CW*, Rankin's *Kate Chopin and her Creole Stories* has been criticized by modern scholars because of his questionable bibliographic methods; such discussions led to the critical disregard that the volume has endured in the years following its release. Rankin's volume is no longer considered reliable, in part because he failed to document much of the biographical data that he cited about Chopin. He is also believed to have misrepresented portions of the biographical data to create an image of the writer as a good woman who believed in traditional values. Chopin's second biographer, Per Seyersted, comments on Rankin's seemingly careless approach to research, saying that Rankin's biography was "sparingly annotated" and further remarking that much of his data was "beyond checking" as the notes were "accidentally lost" (Seyersted 10-11). Although Seyersted's volume has been largely superseded by Emily Toth's meticulous biography of Chopin, many of the critical analyses
appearing in Seyersted’s biography are quite useful, especially to the uninitiated reader.

Emily Toth’s authoritative biography, *Kate Chopin: A Life of the Author of The Awakening (KC)*, is much more scathing in its criticism of Rankin than is Seyersted’s volume. Toth reports that when Rankin gathered information about Chopin’s life both in New Orleans and St. Louis, the priest “did some very selective interviewing, mostly with men. He claimed there were no women among the St. Louis acquaintances that Kate Chopin’s children suggested he meet. Often Rankin did not indicate his sources, and later said that his notes had been accidentally lost” (Toth, *KC* 402). Toth’s assessment of Rankin’s biography is supported by the reactions of Chopin’s family: Kate Chopin’s daughter, Leila Chopin Hattersley, called Rankin’s book a “whitewash and a milquetoast,” and Rankin himself “that horrible man” (Toth, *KC* 403). Other members of the Chopin family called Rankin “a nice person but a ‘fat liar’” (Toth, *KC* 403). Rankin’s credibility is further damaged by his claim that he had “talked with a man who had loved [Chopin],” yet as Toth points out, if Rankin had interviewed people in 1930, he “could not have spoken to many men of her generation.” Some twenty-five years after Chopin’s death, most of her friends were deceased. Toth argues that the reports from Rankin’s “informants” were recordings of what “other, younger informants told him about her admirers—fragmentary recollections to which he added his own musings” (Toth, *KC* 218). Finally, Toth lays a large portion of the responsibility for the now-deeply entrenched rumor that *The Awakening* was banned at Rankin’s doorstep. He says in his biography that *The Awakening* was “taken from circulation by order of the librarian of the St. Louis Mercantile Library” (173) but offers “no source and no proof” for these allegations (Toth,
KC 367). Rankin is further reputed to have hidden many of Chopin's papers in a YMCA locker, papers which were not located until his death. Based upon his questionable research methods, as well as the collection of Chopin's papers which he attempted to hide, Toth has publicly referred to Rankin as “that evil priest” (Toth, “Tenure”) and scholars disregard his biography.

In addition to the biographies, numerous essays analyzing Chopin's work appeared rapidly after it began to be reprinted. Important early studies of Chopin's work include Donald Ringe's essay titled “Cane River World: Kate Chopin's At Fault and Related Stories” in the 1975 volume of Studies in American Fiction. Ringe looks at At Fault and selected pieces of short fiction in terms of their presentation of the social and historical world of northwestern Louisiana. He argues that rather than presenting this region as one that has developed into a twentieth-century state of mind, Chopin shows the Cane River region of Louisiana as a throw-back to the post-Civil War/Reconstruction era.

Patricia Hopkins Lattin extends Ringe's argument, saying that Chopin's recurring characters foreshadow the fictional Yoknapatawpha County of William Faulkner. She creates an imaginary community on the Cane River, and often tells stories of the Santien, Laballiere and Duplan families. Although Chopin returns to other characters as well, most are referred to only in passing and are not fully developed. Lattin further argues that even the undeveloped, recurring characters provide insight into Chopin's stories that would be unavailable were they not present. Joyce Coyne Dyer's "Gouvernail, Kate Chopin's Sensitive Bachelor" also examines recurring characters in the short fiction and The Awakening, concentrating on Gouvernail. She takes what readers learn about Gouvernail
in short stories such as "A Respectable Woman" and uses this information to explain Gouvernail's seemingly random appearance in a critical scene in *The Awakening*. Dyer points out that the Swinburne lines which Gouvernail quotes at Edna Pontellier's dinner party make sense only in the context of his prior appearances in Chopin's earlier work.

Larzer Ziff compares Chopin's narrative technique to that of Guy de Maupassant, whom she greatly admired. He postulates that Edna's emotional turmoil might be similar to that felt by Chopin, yet since he bases much of his argument on Rankin's biography, his argument is somewhat compromised. The essay is not fully discredited, however, as it appeared in 1966, three years before the Seyersted biography, which began to set straight some of the biographical inaccuracies of Rankin's study.

Recent criticism of Chopin's work falls into three categories. The largest body of criticism comes from the feminist tradition, addressing the socially-prescribed roles that Chopin's characters were expected to fill and the oppression that they experience because of the patriarchal system that dictated the terms of those roles. Feminist studies have also addressed the choices—or lack of them— which face Chopin's protagonists as they search for their inner selves and for fulfillment, both sexual and emotional. A significant body of criticism addresses racial issues in Chopin's fiction, and makes up the second category of work. The third category consists of cultural and historical views of Chopin's fiction, and also encompasses analyses from numerous modern critical approaches—psychoanalytic, cultural and pedagogical.

Feminist Studies of Chopin's Fiction

In the earliest stages of Chopin's revival, which marks its beginning with the
reissuing of *The Awakening* in 1961, feminist readings of her texts were in the forefront of Chopin studies. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues that “in song and story, woman’s role is to wait: her life is static; ahistorical, the course it enact is the antithesis of Bildung (de Beauvoir 271). However, de Beauvoir’s “mininarrative” describing the plight of women provides a progression in which “sleep and quiescence in female narratives represent a progressive withdrawal into the symbolic landscapes of the innermost self. As such, they make possible a form of development, albeit one-dimensional (Hirsch 23). Scholars have avidly addressed the idea of the bildungsroman, or the novel of development or formation, arguing that

development is a relative concept colored by many interrelated factors, including class, history, and gender. Theories of development tend to emphasize certain factors at the expense of others. Literature, especially the novel, offers the complexity of form necessary to represent the interrelationships shaping individual growth. The desire to translate these interrelationships into a coherent narrative has produced a distinctive genre, the Bildungsroman, or novel of formation. (Abel 4)

Although the Bildungsroman originally addressed male protagonists (Abel 5), it has proved a useful tool for understanding texts whose protagonists are female. However, to experience a successful Bildung “requires the existence of a social context that will facilitate the unfolding of inner capacities, leading the young person from ignorance and innocence to wisdom and maturity” (Abel 6). The unfortunate plight for many female protagonists, including those created by Kate Chopin, is that they do not exist in a social
context that allows this unfolding that Abel describes.

Susan Rosowski looks at the female “novel of awakening,” contrasting it with male *Bildungsroman* apprenticeship novels. She defines the “awakening” novel in terms of numerous 19th-and-20th century novels from both sides of the Atlantic, including *The Awakening* in her analysis. Rosowski argues that prior to her study, the “definitions and examples that follow the [examination of the *Bildungsroman*] are notably masculine, omitting developments of this theme in literature by and about women” (Rosowski 49). She suggests that the *Bildungsroman* has been used in literature in two distinctly different ways: the “novel of apprenticeship” which largely applies to male protagonists, and the “novel of awakening” which is more relevant to female characters. She argues that these two types of *Bildungsroman* novels share common traits: they recount the “attempts of a sensitive protagonist to learn the nature of the world, discover its meaning and pattern and acquire a philosophy of life” (Rosowski 49). The end result of awakening for female protagonists is that they have in fact awakened “to limitations” (Rosowski 49). Edna Pontellier experiences this “reality of limitation” and finds it unacceptable. She then “completes the process of awakening by placing her romantic dreams for escape in the context of time and change” and she makes a “final attempt to escape” (Rosowski 54). In a similar, though more recent, essay, Thomas Matchie argues that the *bildungsroman* novel was especially important to nineteenth century literature because of the severe testing of social mores with which they engaged. He argues that Edna awakens to the possibility of equality between people of opposite genders, and revolts against a society that sanctions sex but allows people to be treated as property. In this sense, Edna is
“courageous” as her suicide acts as an affirmation of the importance of being oneself, and as evidence that one isn’t alive if they are not free. Marianne Hirsch examines the conventions of the androcentric bildungsroman in *The Awakening*, among other novels, as an alternative to the tradition of “female bildung.” She explains that childhood and death are closely interrelated because the beginning and ending of life are nearly identical. The female experience follows the pattern of *künstlerroman*, or spiritual development, up to the point of withdrawal into an inner life. To find satisfaction, women must find unconventional, individual fulfillment, largely because of their fragmented and discontinuous development, rather than the “solution” that male heroes find that “saves them from the heroine’s death, the solution of art which is virtually unavailable to the young woman in the nineteenth-century novel” (Hirsch 28). Accordingly, for Edna Pontellier, “death becomes an escape from female plot and the only possible culmination of woman’s spiritual development” (Hirsch 44). Linda Huf discusses the *künstlerroman* as well, saying that Chopin’s novel is “a tale of a young woman who struggles to realize herself—and her artistic ability. Of course, as a *künstlerroman*, it reveals something of the author’s own struggle and, what is more important, something of the struggle of all women artists” (69).

Some additional influential studies of Chopin’s fiction include essays by Cynthia Griffin Wolfe, Joyce Coyne Dyer, and Kathleen Lant. Wolfe’s essay examines “Désirée’s Baby” in terms of its somewhat “scattered” critical responses, calling the piece one of Chopin’s most “vivid and direct” (42). Dyer analyzes the nature of female awakenings in Chopin’s short fiction and in *The Awakening*, but since she sees Chopin as sensitive to
male perspectives, she argues that Chopin’s true subject is not limited to an examination of the female nature, but to human nature. Lant’s essay “The Siren of Grande Isle” takes exception to Dyer’s point of view, saying that measuring Edna’s development based on her relationships with Léonce, Alcée and Robert is “male centered” and represents a “failure to read the novel as Chopin has written it” (Lant 168). She argues instead that Edna’s awakenings are centered around the female characters in the novel—Adele’s femininity, Mademoiselle Reisz’s sensuality as illustrated through her music, and Edna’s ultimate awakening to a sense of herself. The female characters of the novel represent “various possible selves to Edna” (Lant 173). Ultimately, Adele sends Edna to her death when she realizes that she will never be able to reconcile the “inner life which questions” with the “outward existence which conforms.” Adèle is identified with the classical sirens, as she both lures and imperils Edna, a human counterpart to the seductive sea that beckons to Edna’s soul, inviting her to swim. She first awakens Edna near the sea, enticing her to speak of her childhood, and to recognize the missing elements in her life. Adele’s lying-in seals Edna’s fate, reminding her that while she may be able to escape from societal expectations, she can not escape the fact that she is a biological mother with all of the accompanying responsibilities. Her remaining choice is to reject her biological ties by also renouncing her physical self, thus leading to her swim into the Gulf.

Before her biography of Chopin appeared, Emily Toth contributed several essays dealing with women’s issues in Chopin’s fiction, including “Kate Chopin’s The Awakening as Feminist Criticism.” Toth also founded the Kate Chopin Newsletter in 1976, which published numerous short pieces of textual analysis, biographical data and miscellany. The
Newsletter was later renamed Regionalism and the Female Imagination, and while it no longer focused exclusively on studies related to Chopin, the journal continued to offer numerous pieces on the writer.

Scholars have discussed extensively the role of *eros* and female sexuality in Chopin’s fiction. For example, Wendy Martin, in her introduction to *New Essays on The Awakening*, describes Chopin’s tendency to “explore the tension between emotional and erotic inclination and traditional social mores” and her “unabashed explorations of eros and its consequences” (4). Karen Day has argued that Chopin’s stories of female sexuality “can be read as fictionally exemplifying the French feminist theory of female sexuality as the Other in patriarchal discourse” and argues for the creation of a “space for female sexuality and desire” (108) which Chopin’s fiction begins to create.

Perhaps the most important of the essays addressing erotic desire in Chopin’s fiction is Sandra Gilbert’s essay “The Second Coming of Aphrodite: Kate Chopin’s Fantasy of Desire.” Originally printed in the *Kenyon Review*, this seminal essay has been reprinted in numerous venues, including Harold Bloom’s *Kate Chopin: Modern Critical Views*. Most recently, this essay appears in volume 2 of Gilbert and Gubar’s *No Man’s Land* series, which examines the development of the female tradition in literature. Gilbert bases the argument of the “Aphrodite” essay on the premise that the major women writers of the late nineteenth century, whose works chronicled the emergence of “New Women,” either “suffer from or repudiate the erotic, the relationship between late nineteenth-century feminism and female desire” (Gilbert 84). While in reality, feminist suffragists were hesitant to embrace sisters such as Victoria Woodhull who argued for and actively
pursued free love, women writers of this era began “not only to excuse or justify but to celebrate the transgressive sexuality of the ‘fallen woman’” (Gilbert 84). Gilbert argues that Kate Chopin extended this thinking, making “such a woman paradoxically ... a resonant symbol of the same need for drastic social change. Ultimately, Aphrodite, the goddess of love ... became Chopin’s ideal” (Gilbert 84). The forbidden passion that Aphrodite comes to represent in Chopin’s fiction was a major theme in her work, and led to the shocked reviews of *The Awakening* when it first appeared. Gilbert argues that Chopin’s work was maligned—“universally excoriated or deprecated”—because “unlike many of her female contemporaries, Chopin was aligned with a particularly sensational, largely male-dominated fin-de-siècle rhetoric, a rhetoric which explored, and often defended, what society defined as ‘damnation’” (Gilbert 86).

Joyce Dyer further explicates Chopin’s reliance on classical mythology, exploring the function of Greek goddesses as archetypes in *The Awakening*. Arguing that Edna Pontellier is “Diana/Artemis, Eve, Venus/Aphrodite, and Ariadne,” she shows that the character is “surrounded by symbols and settings” taken from the classical tradition, and that “no scene remains untouched by the emblems and significances” of this tradition (Dyer 56). Each of these archetypes represents a different aspect of Edna’s “sexual rebirth” (Dyer 72). Although Edna grows as a result of this rebirth, it does not provide the solution to her dissatisfaction with her lifestyle. Allusions to Diana, and her traditional association with fertility and childbirth, as well as Aphrodite and her association with passion, “hint that Edna will eventually have to admit that female biology can liberate, but that its reproductive aspect can enslave” (Dyer 72). She further argues that in the
nineteenth century, women sought "maternal dignity" rather than "human dignity." Edna's search for an identity extends beyond that of the "motherwoman" role to which she is assigned, and ultimately "forces [her] into the sea. She sees no way for a mother to keep the freedom of her soul—no way, that is, except to dissolve her attachment to her children" (Dyer 101).

Andrew Delbanco's essay "The Half-Life of Edna Pontellier" discusses the function of the men in Chopin's novels, describing them as "a recognizable sort in turn-of-the-century American fiction" (92). Chopin makes a major theme of "male attenuation," the fall of a "once haughty privileged class on the edge of extinction, nominally led by men who were in a condition too shriveled to lead" (93). Delbanco makes an interesting argument, especially given Léonce Pontellier's overall ineffectualness as a husband. Although Léonce offers the appearance of the perfect husband, in reality he is petty, peevish, and can exercise little real control over his wife. He fumes and complains that Edna casts off her "at home" days, and takes steps to cover up her socially unacceptable move to the pigeon house, but ultimately he is powerless to stop Edna from taking such drastic steps. Delbanco postulates that Léonce's powerlessness is in part a result of "rebellions of his own. He is, quietly and without anything like his wife's risk of shame, disowning his own culture" (Delbanco 93). Delbanco further argues that Edna's sexuality is largely autoerotic: she meets her husband "at breakfast," rather than in the boudoir; she frightens Robert Lebrun when he glimpses her sexuality, and "even Arobin, though less hesitant to test her desire [than either Léonce or Robert], is more a voyeur than lover" (96).
In addition to these book-length studies, there is an abundance of essays in the feminist tradition, including work by scholars such as Elizabeth Ammons, Elaine Apthorp, and Phyllis Barrett. Barrett takes a seemingly anti-feminist approach, arguing that female characters mirror the well-defined "Adamic" American male hero. However, Barrett's argument in the end reconfirms the empowerment of female characters, as these "Adamic" characters are not presented as wives and mothers, but are characterized, much like their male counterparts, as self-centered, vital, and irresponsible. Barrett then compares Edna's experience with those of Hester Prynne and Isabel Archer, pointing out that the consequences are what differ among these characters. While Hester and Isabel triumph, Edna's only option is death. Ammons extends this argument, saying that one of Edna's major awakenings is the acknowledgment of the simple fact that she is not a motherwoman, but rather that she has artistic tendencies and needs erotic love. Apthorp, in her essay dealing with *The Awakening* and Willa Cather's *Lucy Gayheart*, suggests that the reason women's awakenings are not accepted is that the linguistic forms necessary to explain their dilemmas do not exist. The strength of both novels is their capacity to suggest what Cather termed "the presence of the thing not named." The result of this presence is that Edna struggles to express ideas that have no nomenclature and no models. Citing the work of Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan, Apthorp concludes by calling for an alternative model of creativity between the mainstream and the Other which is both receptive and interactive—a model that will be difficult to achieve because of the patriarchal constructs that dominate the standard models of language and creativity.

Miriam Shillingsburg argues that women's writing from the end of the nineteenth
century not only tells modern readers about the feelings of a large segment of the population of the nineteenth century but also that a change in those feelings became apparent in the latter half of the century. She describes Edna Pontellier, as well as the characters of Caroline Lee Hentz and Grace Elizabeth King, as bucking both convention and their places in society. While Hentz and King write more traditional romances, in which marriage is the reward for demonstrating acceptable values, Chopin questions the basic assumptions which underlie marital relationships. Martha Cutter’s essay extends this discussion, arguing that in Chopin’s early fiction, women who attempt to overtly voice desires and experience are dismissed as meaningless or insane, as illustrated by stories such as “Mrs. Mobry’s Reason” or “Wiser than a God.” In her later fiction, however, Chopin’s female characters develop covert voices which allow them to undermine patriarchal structures from within their own paradigms. Each of these critics argues that women needed a space in which to find and define themselves. That space might be linguistic, emotional, or paradigmatic, but it must exist².

The feminist school has traditionally disagreed over the interpretation of Chopin’s texts, however. For example, Gina Burchard has argued that Chopin would not have considered herself a feminist because the bulk of her work deals with human relationships in a generalized way. She further argues that Chopin explores then subverts female nonconformity, concluding that Edna’s suicide is unjustified. Whatever the particulars of the disagreement, however, feminist scholars have contributed a large and useful body of work to Chopin studies.
Race and Region in Chopin’s Fiction

The second major category of secondary criticism deals with racial issues in Chopin’s fiction. Two book-length studies have appeared in the last decade: *Gender, Race and Region in the Writings of George Washington Cable, Ruth McEnery Stuart, and Kate Chopin* by Helen Taylor and *Women on the Color Line* by Anna Shannon Elfenbein. Taylor and Elfenbein take opposing viewpoints on the subject of Chopin’s view of racial issues. Taylor describes Chopin’s significance as stemming from her “particular use of Local Color techniques, and of regional and historical themes and allusions that challenged European male and English and American female fictional definitions of femininity and female sexuality” (139). Taylor also argues that the forward-thinking Chopin was a racist, and that her fiction reflects her thinking. She describes Chopin’s attraction to Louisiana as the setting for her fiction as “derived from its function as an imaginary “Other” that did not require Kate Chopin to accept a version of the South different from that of her family and class” (143). She further attributes a “bitter suspicion of emancipation” to Chopin, because her brother was killed while serving in the Confederate army. While Taylor offers evidence to support the notion that Chopin’s family held stereotypical and discriminatory views—her husband was a member of the White League, for example—it seems problematic to argue that because Chopin was a Southern woman, and because during this era Southern women were generally racists, that therefore Chopin herself must have been a racist as well. Taylor sees Chopin as “unequivocally racist” (Lundie 126). Chopin in fact troubles her contemporaries’ idea that one’s place is defined by one’s race in stories such as “Beyond the Bayou” and “Désirée’s Baby.” Catherine Lundie examines Taylor’s
argument, and in finding that Chopin often offers a “complex exploration of race and ethnicity” (126), she concludes that Chopin “had enlightened views on the subject of race” (129).

Conversely, Elfenbein describes Chopin’s racial attitudes in a more flattering light, describing her, in essence, as a writer who was somewhat ahead of her time in even attempting to deal with racial issues. She begins with a thorough discussion of the plight of the “tragic octoroon”—the woman of mixed racial ancestry—in society, and more specifically, in literary texts. While acknowledging that “dark women characters are frequently peripheral or ambiguously identified in [Chopin’s] fiction,” Elfenbein points out that a close study of Chopin’s women of color heightens our “appreciate of Chopin’s achievement as a sexual realist” (117). She argues that Chopin depicts

the destructive symbiosis of power and powerlessness, measuring the distance between romantic views of marriage and motherhood and the reality of the sexual lives of women on both sides of the color line. Those attempting to solve the riddle posed by the white women Chopin portrays, however, have neglected to examine this symbiosis and with it the dark women characters through whom she first tested and transgressed the Victorian proprieties in her fiction. (Elfenbein 117)

Emily Toth supports Elfenbein’s position, stating that Chopin’s “most skillful use of blacks in fiction” offers a “critique of Southern social mores through the conventional figure of the tragic octoroon” (Toth, Outward 120). Chopin’s black characters are “usually carefully drawn and realistic” (Elfenbein 118) and in many cases the writer “clearly
anticipates the dawning racial awareness of white women of her generation" (119).

In *The Myth of New Orleans in Literature*, Violet Harrington Bryan argues that an "implied and sometimes explicit dialogue" (44) existed among Kate Chopin, Grace King, and Alice Dunbar Nelson, a dialogue which at times extended to include Charles Chestnut and George Washington Cable. According to Bryan, Chopin and her contemporaries re-created the New Orleans environment—Creoles, miscegenation, racial stereotypes, dialects, culture conflicts between races and immigrant ethnic groups. In many of their stories, King, Chopin and Dunbar-Nelson also used the city to confront women's social issues: the restrictions of gender roles, especially as these influenced marriage and divorce, career, social networking and motherhood. (44)

Bryan further argues that Chopin was aware of "the period's racial climate" (53). New Orleans becomes the "site of social change" in Chopin's fiction, both for her female characters, and her characters of color.

In addition to these discussions in book-length studies, numerous essays have appeared dealing with Chopin's treatment of race. Elaine Showalter, for example, argues that although Edna awakens sexually and emotionally, she "never awakens . . . to the dimensions of her social world . . . never sees how the labor of the mulatto and black women around her makes her narcissistic existence possible" (145). In part because of the "servitude of others" (Delbanco 100), Edna enjoys a freedom of movement, a release from responsibility for the day-to-day needs of her children. Elizabeth Amnions points out that the presence of women-of-color in the fiction of this era allows their white counterparts
the luxury of actions such as suicide. Because the women-of-color are present, dissatisfied white women could feel assured that their children would be cared for even if they themselves were not present to assist in the process. Accordingly, Ammons argues that no awakening would have occurred had there been no women-of-color to take up the slack.

Ellen Cantarow furthers Ammons's argument, essentially calling for rebellion against societal norms and stereotypes. She argues that *The Awakening* describes Edna's imprisonment by upper-middle-class values which were the norm during Chopin's lifetime, and describes the possibilities of freedom, which, although available to a white woman, would not be available to a woman of color. One of the ways of achieving freedom is through productive, remunerative work; the other possibilities rely on a course of rebellion and isolation, before ultimately leading to self-fulfillment. The limited options available to women of color, both in reality and in fiction, perpetuated this over-reliance on women of color as undervalued child care providers.

Janet Goodwyn stops short of calling Chopin a racist in her 1994 essay, yet argues that the writer privileges things European over their Creole counterparts. Chopin's culture, and thus her fiction, is informed and biased by its roots in European arts and thought processes. Chopin places greater value on "the higher things derived from Europe" (3), by definition making any individual or group which is not privy to the aesthetics of European cultures natural outsiders. She concludes that Chopin's Creole stories are "stilted," using "self-conscious language which is typical of Chopin when not quite at ease with her material" (8).
Cultural Criticism and Modern Critical Theories

The final major category of Chopin criticism encompasses cultural studies which specifically look at Chopin’s work in light of the cultural and historical events which took place around her, and studies based on various critical methodologies. While it might be argued that many of these studies overlap with feminist studies, I argue that these essays constitute a third sub-category of Chopin criticism, because they address larger social issues which influenced Chopin’s writing, such as religious attitudes—including discussions of her views on Darwin and his theories, Christianity, and the Catholic church.

Bert Bender, in two essays, describes Chopin as a follower of Darwin, arguing that Chopin thought of Darwin as something of a mentor. However, while she accepted the major theses of *The Origin of the Species*, she rejected his argument on the subject of sexual selection. According to Bender, Chopin vehemently disagreed with Darwin’s argument that women were by nature passive in sexual encounters and inferior to men in that arena. He argues that *The Awakening* is a study of Darwin’s theory of sexual selection which attempts to disprove Darwin’s views on female sexuality. He further suggests that Chopin’s fiction grows into a “darkening meditation” on Darwinian thought.

In his study of Catholic influences on American culture, Paul Giles describes Chopin as a Catholic apostate. She was influenced by the dichotomy of a Catholicism which was a large part of the native culture of nineteenth century Creoles and one which provided a theological problem for the modernist author. Pope Pius X declared modernism, a movement of which Chopin was nominally a part, the heresy of all heresies, yet this proclamation did not stop Chopin, a Catholic herself, from playing with
modernism and pitting it against the conventions of Catholicism. Giles argues that she creates a modernist ego and a Catholic id by equating religion with other forms of oppression that enlightened individuals should reject. Catholics of the modernist period were placed between two opposing tensions: the papal order to adhere to the standards of the church and the pressure to escape the restrictions of those standards. Thomas Bonner also discusses the Catholic influence in Chopin's fiction, arguing that despite her flaunting of religious tradition and her explorations of the dark side of the human character, she often relies on "Christian love" as the answer to life's problems.

Another major theme in Chopin criticism is the debate over her status as a canonical writer. Many have addressed her reputation as a local colorist whose work amounts to little more than charming stories about life on the Louisiana bayou. While some argue that a glimpse of Southern life is the primary contribution of Chopin's fiction, many have refuted this argument, pointing to her prose style, her use of universal themes, and the humanity of her characters—readers generally relate to Chopin's characters because they can identify with their experiences. John May's classic essay "Local Color in The Awakening" points out that focusing exclusively on Edna's sexual awakening causes readers to miss the larger point of the novel. While Chopin does address the universal theme of the human need to be free, she does so in the context of the "local color" elements which are generally dismissed as unimportant. May attempts to redefine the local color novel as a genre which should not be dismissed out of hand because it only reflects life in a specific region. Rather, he argues that these novels offer universal themes and realistic expressions of human experience in which the setting is integral to the thematic
development, rather than incidental. Elmo Howell’s essay “Kate Chopin and the Creole Country” argues that Chopin was not a local colorist at all. She devoted much of her fiction to describing life in Creole Louisiana, but although locale is important in understanding her meanings, her subject matter is human nature, not Creole nature.

Thomas Bonner, in his essay “Kate Chopin: Tradition and the Moment,” compares Chopin with her literary contemporaries, pointing out that Grace King and Ruth McEnery Stuart were “guardians of the French civilizations—Creole and Acadian” (Bonner 141). Chopin, on the other hand “perceived that a decisive change already had occurred and that more changes were to come” (Bonner 141). While Chopin places her fiction in the “social milieu of post-Civil War French Louisiana,” she illustrates that the “bonds of caste had been broken and that a freer society was in the process of formation” (Bonner 141). Like Howell, Bonner acknowledges Chopin’s deep attachment to Louisiana life and culture, but argues that her work should not be judged solely as a product of that culture. Dorys Grover cites Chopin as one of four major Louisiana writers of her time, long with George Washington Cable, Lafcadio Hearn, and Grace King. These four writers each took advantage of the public taste for exotic stories about the South, and Creole society specifically. Grover concludes that Chopin never overcomes this public perception of literary sectionalism, even though her themes are universal in the Southern setting, addressing issues such as the need for freedom and the false base upon which Southern culture was built.

Critics have found the tools of psychology useful in analyzing Chopin’s fiction as well. Marina Roscher takes a psychoanalytic approach to Edna’s suicide, arguing that,
Despite the explanations offered by other critics, Edna takes her own life because she is immature. Citing Edna's early loss of her mother, her lack of close female companions and her resulting solitary nature as major contributing factors to her demise, Roscher associates this tendency to solitude with the generally accepted truism that the solitary primate is an abnormal primate. She couples this information with R. D. Laing's argument that losing one's mother at the wrong stage of development often thwarts the adequate development of a sense of self. Roscher analyzes Edna as possessing an incompletely developed animus, which prevents the integration of her personality and blinds her to reasonable alternatives and mature relationships. Ultimately, her immaturity drives her into the sea. Roscher concludes with the argument that the ending of The Awakening is not ambiguous, but merely complicated in that it contains multiple and hidden meanings, meanings larger than the author's conscious purpose. Sam Girgus also applies R.D. Laing's research, suggesting that the plight of the modern woman, as described by Chopin, is that she is forcibly estranged from those around her by the social roles imposed on her. He concludes that Edna suffers from a divided personality, which causes her to lead a dual life, and ultimately withdraw from society and life itself.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese addresses this withdrawal in her essay "Kate Chopin's Awakening," arguing that Edna's suicide acts as the organizing principle for the novel. The Awakening contains two narrative voices—one that is institutional and another that is personal, with the two narrative voices representing Edna's internal experience and the Creole social structure, respectively. Edna's subjective experience is contrasted with social institutions, and the strengths and weaknesses of each are revealed. Fox-Genovese
further argues that by fully accepting a feminist reading of Chopin’s text, her readers would have to reject Creole society as patriarchal and oppressive, yet a psychoanalytic reading would necessitate viewing Edna as a failure. Combining these two schools of thought creates an approach which allows Chopin to illustrate the negative aspects of Creole society for women without rejecting the entire system.

Along with these three major categories of critical studies are a large selection of pedagogical essays, many of which appear in Bernard Koloski’s *Approaches to Teaching* volume. Koloski’s collection of essays, authored by noted scholars, offers down-to-earth, hands-on discussions of how to go about teaching Chopin’s major texts to students levels ranging from high school to Ph.D. candidates.

In addition to the ocean of free-standing critical works, several edited volumes of studies of Chopin’s work have appeared in the past decade or so. These volumes, which include Harold Bloom’s 1987 *Kate Chopin: Modern Critical Views* and Iqbal Kaur’s 1995 *Kate Chopin’s The Awakening: Critical Essays*, do not offer new essays. Bloom’s volume is useful in that it assembles many of the most important early essays addressing Chopin’s work, such as Gilbert/Gubar’s “Aphrodite” essay and Wolfe’s “Thanatos and Eros.” Kaur’s volume includes many new essays, as well as the fourth reprinting of Margit Stange’s essay, yet scholars are quite leery of the volume because of the plethora of typographical and grammatical errors that it contains, as well as the thin bibliographies of the individual essays and the lack of textual documentation to support broad generalizations. Stange’s essay provides the one moderately useful spot in an otherwise dismal volume. She bases her argument on the sexual meaning of the term “self-
ownership” as used by nineteenth-century American feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The essay focuses on the symbolism of ownership and wealth in *The Awakening*, arguing that the only way for Edna to exercise self-ownership, given the structure of society, was to become a free agent in the sexual marketplace and to withhold herself from motherhood. Chopin’s novel suggests that what a woman owns in owning herself is her sexual exchange value and the resulting freedom to either withhold or give herself sexually. In this context, Adele Ratignolle serves as an example of how a woman can be both sensual and motherly simultaneously, thus highlighting Edna’s inability to reconcile those roles in the context of Creole society.

Finally, Bernard Koloski’s new volume, forthcoming from Twayne Publishers in late 1996, is purported to offer critical analysis of Chopin’s short fiction. Koloski’s volume is the first book-length study devoted exclusively to Chopin’s fiction, and the first book-length study of Chopin to appear in nearly five years.

We have before us, then, an array of critical works dealing with Chopin’s fiction. The remaining chapters of this dissertation fit into one of the spaces that remain to be addressed in Chopin studies—the linguistic elements which structure her texts. I will argue not only that conceptual structures exist in Chopin’s fiction, but that an understanding of conceptual metaphor and its function in literary texts builds a scaffold upon which to base readings of other critical theories. By understanding the function of the language in a literary text, we by definition build a solid foundation for dealing with other critical issues in the text. Through linguistic analysis we, in essence, study the building blocks of the text in order to then discover how those blocks are put together to form a structure.
A distinct gap exists in the realm of linguistic criticism: only two essays dealing with linguistic elements have appeared. While the studies conducted on Chopin's work thus far have aided much in the understanding of her texts, an analysis of the conceptual structures, and resulting linguistic manifestations of those structures, would be a valuable addition to the existing body of work. Not only will a linguistic analysis provide a basis for understanding the structures that underlie the language of Chopin's texts, but such a language-based approach will provide a basis upon to build future critical discussion of Chopin's fiction.
NOTES

1 Daniel Rankin, Chopin's first biographer, is today accused of giving credibility to the folktale that *The Awakening* was banned in St. Louis. Although the book received mixed reviews during Chopin's lifetime—it was often praised for the excellence of the writing, but reviled for Edna Pontellier's lack of morality—the reports of the book being banned are fallacies. Chopin is also reputed to have been "heartbroken" and to have stopped writing altogether because of the critical reception of her novel. Emily Toth, in *KC*, offers copious evidence to disprove both these myths.

2 Other feminist studies include Valentine and Palmer's "The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Feminism in Kate Chopin's 'A Pair of Silk Stockings," which discusses the influence of feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Margaret Fuller and Susan B. Anthony on Chopin's writing. Helen Emmitt's essay argues that women's drowning in literature represents the Narcissus myth, but since women have no comparable mirror in society, drowning is different for them. Patricia Lattin argues that *The Awakening* illustrates a departure from the nineteenth century realism and transcendentalism by following the theme of a search for self. Kathryn Lee Seidel argues that Edna's relationship with Mademoiselle Reisz is homoerotic, while Bonnie St. Andrews expands Gilbert's argument that Edna is a human embodiment of the Greek goddess Aphrodite. Elaine Showalter's essay in *Sister's Choice* describes the "new thematic ground" that Chopin's novel breaks. Finally, Carol Manning's *The Female Tradition in Southern Literature* offers an overview of Chopin's literary contributions.
CHAPTER 2:

THE MONOMYTHIC CYCLE OF *THE AWAKENING*: THE HERO'S JOURNEY AS THEMATIC ELEMENT

One of the aspects of *The Awakening* that causes modern readers consider it Chopin's masterpiece is the unity of the novel. Despite the ambiguity of the ending, we see a thematic continuity that is absent from many of the shorter pieces, in spite of the recurring characters which lend some cohesion on a surface level. The novel is linguistically artistic, demonstrating a masterful use of English prose. The characters of *The Awakening* are in many ways Chopin's best developed, and those with whom we most readily identify. This claim is in part validated by the large body of secondary criticism surrounding Chopin's work. While important short stories such as "Beyond the Bayou," "The Story of an Hour," "Désirée’s Baby," and "Lilacs" have received a large amount of critical attention, by far the greatest amount of criticism has been devoted to *The Awakening*.

This unity occurs because of the conceptual structures of the novel. These conceptual structures are not only manifested in the language of the text. They also lead us to intuitively accept some readings of the text as reasonable, and to find others unlikely or even incorrect. Accordingly, the conceptual metaphors (CMs) in *The Awakening*, which will be more fully discussed in the next chapters, provide a foundation for the discussion
of the thematic elements in the novel. Another reason for the resulting unity of form and content in *The Awakening* is not only that Chopin learned to be a better writer, but that through the process of writing fiction, she examined important social issues with increasing openness.

By the late 1890's, when she wrote *The Awakening*, Chopin's life experiences had caused her to develop from a wealthy young woman steeped in traditional nineteenth-century values to an intellectual who questioned the most basic presuppositions of moral values, gender roles, and human relationships, both platonic and erotic. In her biography of Chopin, Emily Toth describes the writer's early life as fairly typical for the era during which she lived: Chopin went to a parochial school, where she learned “French and composition and sewing” (59). She married young, and bore her husband six children before he died when she was thirty-two (Toth 20). Chopin showed numerous outward signs of conformity in her youth, writing in her diary in 1869 that it was “idle for [women] to chatter about their rights” (Toth 90), but even at this early age, as she “mostly did what was expected of her,” she also “sometimes despised herself for it” (Toth 90).

The vestiges of conventionality were largely gone early in her marriage. Chopin is described as a “restless wife who seemed to be at the center of village flirting and gossip” (Toth 158) in part because “young men flocked about her” and in part because she was not “domestic” (Toth 154). She is reputed to have “smoked Cuban cigarettes, promenaded in her extravagantly fashionable clothes, lifted her skirts too high when she crossed the street” and “took an interest in another [married] man” after her husband’s death (Toth 20). Following her husband’s early demise and her move back to St. Louis to
be with her mother, Chopin abandoned the Catholic church, made friends with
"iconoclasts, among them bohemian newspaper editors ... and society swells" (Toth 20).
Despite the conventional path of her early life, Chopin chose to lead a very non-traditional
lifestyle, especially for an upperclass woman, and this lifestyle came to be indicative of her
philosophy of life.

All biographical evidence aside, the best evidence of Chopin's developing,
unconventional views on women and their socially-defined roles is to be found in her
fiction. Her earlier fiction, of which the best example is *At Fault*, represented women in
traditional roles, and doing the right thing, as defined by social convention. As Chopin
developed as a writer, working out her personal philosophy all the while, she progressed
from writing "love poems, children's stories, and local-color sketches" to "examining
independent women and not-so-happy marriages—and soon ... realistic portrayals of
passionate, discontented women" (Toth 20). Her crowning achievement, *The Awakening*,
delved "into the soul of a woman who yearned for passionate connection and deep
solitude ... a soul very much like her own" (Toth 21). Chopin's fiction portrays her views
on the lot of women—their dissatisfactions, their denied passions, their restrictions at the
hands of an unenlightened society—as well as her own.

Accordingly, as Chopin experienced more of life, the social issues addressed in her
fiction began to be more fully developed. As her thinking became more unconventional,
her fiction also became more sophisticated and provocative. To see the progression, we
need only look at the difference in the female characters in *At Fault* and *The Awakening*.
In *At Fault*, Thérèse Lafirme refuses to marry David Hosmer because he has divorced his
wife, Fanny, who Chopin portrays unsympathetically. She is the "suffering wife whose husband no longer loved her, and who was no match for a glamorous widow" (Toth 185). Although Chopin's characterization encourages the reader to sympathize with Thérèse, she does not reward Thérèse with the man she loves until the pair can unite guiltlessly. Accordingly, Thérèse and David are not married until David's first wife drowns, and is safely, and morally, out of the way. Edna Pontellier, on the other hand, is a married woman who falls in love with a man who is not her husband, and has an affair with a third man. However, Edna, a character with whom the reader is clearly intended to sympathize, is not censured by society for her moral fall. Her husband covers up her shocking decision to leave his home, and the closest thing to a reproof that she receives for her affair is Adèle Ratignolle's gentle refusal to visit Edna at the pigeon house. Edna is still welcome in Adèle's home, however, as illustrated by Edna's presence at the birth of Adèle's child. The shift in Chopin's attitude toward women's roles, and perhaps toward the value of 'right' and 'wrong,' are illustrated through her fiction.

Joseph Campbell's theory of the monomythic quest, as described in *The Hero With the Thousand Faces*, provides an effective means of describing the thematic structure of *The Awakening*. Chopin describes, both thematically and metaphorically, the life journey and search for fulfillment of the protagonist, Edna Pontellier. However, we understand Edna's journey as a replica of Campbell's monomyth because of the conceptual structures upon which the novel is based. However, if we disregard the conceptual metaphors which provide the structure of Chopin's novel, reading *The Awakening* based on Campbell's theory becomes nothing more than an example of a theory in search of data, a critical
practice which scholars such as Mark Turner have railed against. In this chapter, I will argue that Edna Pontellier embarks on both a literal and an emotional journey, in which she first attempts to identify the cause of her feelings of "oppression" (Chopin, *Aw*) and then to find a solution for her ennui. Campbell's description of the hero's journey describes the literal sequence of events which Edna experiences, illustrating that she experiences all aspects of life in the same way as a man. However, this discussion of the thematic importance of Edna's literal journey is possible because of the underlying conceptual structures—specifically the repeated occurrences of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor (CM), the SEEING IS KNOWING CM and container metaphors—that are present throughout the novel. The LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM provides the conceptual framework upon which to build an understanding of Edna's literal journey toward personal fulfillment. Accordingly, this chapter will address the manifestations of Campbell's theory in *The Awakening* on a thematic level, and Chapter 3 will discuss the conceptual structures which allow the application of Campbell's theoretical framework to this text.

Edna's emotional journey carries her through each of the three stages that Campbell describes: the separation/departure, the initiation and trials, and the return. The linear journey of Chopin's hero is supported not only by Edna's overt and subconscious actions, but by the way in which Chopin breaks the novel into sections through the use of narrative cues. The novel consists of four segments, with an epiphany highlighting the end of each section. Edna's actions may be explained by Campbell's monomyth, and the effect is that the "the old vessel [is] filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual
poet, but ultimately making cultural change possible" (Shurbutt 14). By challenging the roles that she was expected to fill—diverging from the path that respectable women followed—Edna's experience explores a way of life which differs significantly from any that women have heretofore been allowed. Ultimately, when Edna's journey ends, she possesses a partial knowledge of her "essential self" and what she must do to maintain that self. She completes an emotional journey, blazing a new trail in the process, and at the close of the novel, has come to the literal and figurative end of her life's quest. Chopin models Edna's experience such that her overall journey is sequential: she passes through each stage defined by Campbell's monomythic cycle on the way to her destination—peace and fulfillment for her essential self.

Campbell's description of the monomyth is based in classical mythology. He breaks the hero's journey down into three major passages: a period of separation and departure, a period of initiation which is marked by trials and victories, and a final period in which the hero attempts to reintegrate himself into society. Traditionally, heroes experience varying degrees of success in the reintegration process, ranging from a complete annihilation of "all recollection of, interest in, or hope for, the sorrows of the world" to the difficulties of "making known the way of illumination to people" (Campbell 36-37). Carol Christ sums Campbell's argument up, stating that "Campbell . . . charted the journey of the hero in many cultures. Typically the hero leaves home, defines himself through tests and trials, and returns with a clearer understanding of himself and his place in the world" (Christ 9). After passing through the stages of separation and initiation, Edna Pontellier is ultimately cast in the role of a hero who is alienated from any community because ties to the
community would deny her the right to be true to her essential self.

The placement of Edna within Campbell's model of the hero's journey is based in part on Haj Ross's work with structural prosody. I have adopted his definition of structural sectioning:

A system of poetic devices [which] segment a poem into regularly occurring sections which occupy roughly equal temporal intervals. There is a hierarchy of such sections: the largest are stanzas, the next smaller are lines, and the smallest are feet. The sections of a poem are thus reminiscent of the measures into which a melody is divided into musical notation. (Ross 2)

Ross' description of poetic sectioning may be used to determine the internal structure of a novel as well, with the hierarchy breaking down into chapters, paragraphs, sentences and words. Many of the musical, and accordingly poetic, elements which Ross describes in poetry are also present in the novel form.

*The Awakening* is an incredibly rich text, as is illustrated by the variety of ways in which it may be broken into cohesive sections, which, as subsets of the entire text, lend meaning to the work as a whole. The separation and departure phase is delineated in the first two sections of the novel, which consist of chapters 1-9, with an epiphany occurring in chapters 9-10 that serves to end section 1; section 2 consists of chapters 11-20, with another epiphany in chapters 19-20, which also serves as a structural marker for the end of a section. The initiation phase takes place in section 3, which consists of chapters 21-30 and concludes with the pivotal chapters 29-30. Finally, the final section is made up of chapters 31-39. One of the chapters which has signaled epiphanies in the first three
sections is absent in the final section, structurally underscoring the ambiguity that we find in the ending of the novel.

**Separation and Departure**

Campbell describes the first phase of the hero’s journey as the separation and departure stage. Structurally, *The Awakening* tells of Edna’s separation and departure from the expectations of Creole society in the first two sections of the novel, the sections made up of chapters 1-10 and 11-20. Chapters 1-9 illustrate her call to action, and her initial reluctance to accept that call. The epiphany in chapters 9-10, in the form of Mademoiselle Reisz’s musical influence, offers Edna the supernatural help that heroes often need, according to Campbell, to begin their journeys. Chapters 11-20 describe Edna as she crosses the threshold and begins her journey, with the turning point in chapter 20, in the form of Edna’s conscious decision to find Mademoiselle Reisz in New Orleans. She then passes into the “realm of night” (Campbell 91) or the “belly of the whale” (Campbell 90), thus embarking on the next stage of her journey.

The separation phase of the monomyth begins with a call to action and evidence of the hero’s unrest and dissatisfaction with the status quo. *The Awakening* opens with a symbolic call to Edna. The reader is confronted with images of captivity from the first sentence of the novel and these images are associated with Edna. The first lines of *The Awakening* describe a caged bird, parroting French phrases that translate as “go away, go away, for God’s sake” (Chopin, *Aw* 3), and the bird’s dissatisfaction with being caged takes on a metonymic quality. His confinement not only symbolizes Edna’s dissatisfaction with her life, but issues a symbolic call to action which highlights her latent unrest. Edna
appears on the scene almost immediately after the bird’s “maddening persistence” (Chopin, *Aw* 3) drives her husband away muttering about its noise disturbing his reading.

After hearing Léonce, Edna’s husband, grumble about the lack of consideration of those around him, our attention is directed to Edna, who is returning from the beach with Robert Lebrun. Edna’s demeanor belies the anxiety that is beginning to haunt her, the “shadowy anguish” that cause her to “abandon herself to tears” (Chopin, *Aw* 14). Her docile behavior towards her husband is an implicit denial of that anxiety. When she reclaims her rings from her husband, which she has given him to hold for her while she swims:

she silently reached out to [Léonce], and he, understanding, took the rings from his vest pocket and dropped them into her open palm. She slipped them upon her fingers; then clasping her knees, she looked across at Robert and began to laugh. The rings sparkled upon her fingers. (Chopin, *Aw* 4)

Edna returns her wedding rings to her fingers, a symbol of her inescapable obligation to her husband. Although we soon learn that she is dissatisfied with her relationship with Léonce, she returns the rings to her fingers—the golden bonds that tie her to her traditional husband. She looks at Robert, her soon-to-be love-interest, and laughs as the rings, which symbolize the basis of her unrest, glitter in the sun.

At the beginning of the novel, Edna is vaguely dissatisfied with her role as wife and mother, but she is not yet moved to take any action to change that role. She attempts to fulfill the traditional “mother-woman” role (Chopin, *Aw* 9), but is largely unsuccessful. Her husband berates her for neglecting the children, and her children are unusually
independent and detached from their mother. When other children rush to their mothers—after scraping a knee or falling down—Edna’s sons were “more likely to pick [themselves] up, wipe the water out of [their] eyes and the sand out of [their] mouth, and go on playing” (Chopin, Aw 9). Her friends at Grande Isle call her capricious. They find her alternately detached, and easily embarrassed and are concerned lest she take Robert’s flirtations seriously. Edna is different from her peers and her difference shows in many small ways: she is embarrassed to publicly read a spicy book that everyone around her openly discusses; she can not “keep the mounting color back from her cheeks” when confronted with their “entire absence of prudery” (Chopin, Aw 10); she prefers to live “her own small life all within herself” (Chopin, Aw 14) rather than becoming a part of the “large family” of Creoles (Chopin, Aw 10). Edna is never “thoroughly at home in the society of Creoles” (Chopin, Aw 10), and by the end of the first two sections of the novel, which constitute the separation and departure phase of her journey, her difference is obvious to all of her acquaintances, rather than just a vague dissatisfaction within herself.

Edna’s inability to meet traditional expectations is symbolized by her inability to learn how to swim. She has a lifelong fear of water, and although she tries overcome it while she is at Grande Isle, she is unsuccessful for most of the summer. She is drawn by the seductive, sensuous nature of the sea, continually “whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander” (Chopin, Aw 14), but her fear persists. The womb-like nature of the sea and Edna’s initial avoidance of it is indicative of her parallel avoidance of the call to action and the folly of attempting to flee from her appointed path. Her avoidance of the call is further illustrated by her initial disinterest in Robert’s attentions. Upon
learning of his flirtations with Adèle and others Grande Isle visitors, she is “glad he had not assumed a similar role toward herself. It would have been unacceptable and annoying” (Chopin, Aw 12). She repulses Robert’s advances, such as resting his head on her arm, and in so doing, also repulses the growing dissatisfaction within herself.

As Edna begins to step beyond the confines of traditional roles to start on her adventure, she receives unexpected assistance from Mademoiselle Reisz’s other-worldly piano music, which forces her to cross the first threshold of her adventure. According to Campbell, supernatural assistance is a common event for “one who has undertaken his proper adventure” (36). Before the summer at Grande Isle, Edna has never experienced either passion or self-fulfillment: "perhaps it was the first time she was ready . . . but the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul" (Chopin, Aw 26). Edna does not marry Léonce Pontellier out of love, and her emotional attachments prior to marriage were to men who were unattainable. Under the influence of Mlle. Reisz’s enchanting music on bewitching a summer evening at Grande Isle, however, Edna experiences the “passions themselves” for the first time in her life (Chopin, Aw 26). She has been accustomed to imagining unusual scenes and people while listening to music, but instead of seeing mental images as she sits on the terrace listening to Mlle. Reisz play, she responds to the music so violently and passionately that she can not speak—she experiences the passion rather than fantasizing about it as she has before. The music causes an emotional awakening in Edna that culminates in her effortlessly learning how to swim. Mlle. Reisz’s music is more than a source of insight for Edna, however. During this scene, Edna is symbolically positioned between two worlds—the traditional role, signified
by the family gathering in the room behind her, and the other world to which she is called, signified by the Gulf with its “soft effulgence in the east” at which she gazes while listening to Mlle. Reisz play (Chopin, Aw 25). The scene closes with further references to “that mystic hour...under that mystic moon,” underscoring the mysterious quality of Edna’s experience. At the end of the scene, we again see the metonomy of confinement in the form of the parrot, who is once again shrieking “go away, for God’s sake” (Chopin, Aw 23). The bird is finally “consigned to regions of darkness” (Chopin, Aw 24), which parallels Edna crossing the first threshold and passing into the realm of night. She must wander further into the darkness that follows her glowing epiphany by the sea before she can find the self-fulfillment that she seeks.

Edna’s epiphany in chapter 9 sets up the end of the first section of the novel that we find in chapter 10. In chapters 1-9, she has repeatedly ignored the calls to action that she receives. She has cried helplessly, rather than reacting, when her husband berates her for neglecting their children (Chopin, Aw 7), and has begun to realize her “position in the universe as a human being” (Chopin, Aw 14), yet she does nothing to change her position in her family. In addition to the symbolic call of the parrot in chapter 1, she is called repeatedly to question and ultimately forsake the conventional woman’s role for which she is ill-suited. The argument that she has with Léonce in chapter 3 over her supposed neglect of her children, the fact that she is “forced to admit that there was [no husband] better than Léonce, the author’s commentary about the chaotic and almost destructive nature of the “beginning of a world” in chapter 6—all of these events underscore the fact that Edna is being pulled away from the traditional life that she halfheartedly leads and
toward something different. Accordingly, she embarks on the journey that will allow her to pursue the satisfaction of her “essential self.” After this sequence of events, culminating in Edna’s reaction to Mlle. Reisz’s playing, the section ends with a physical manifestation of her crossing of the threshold of her journey: she learns how to swim. At this point, section 1 ends with Edna standing on the threshold of her new adventure.

**The Belly of the Whale**

After Edna crosses the first threshold of adventure through her epiphany in chapter 9 and learning to swim in chapter 10, she thrashes in the darkness for some time, but we begin to see changes in her behavior that indicate progress on her journey. Edna’s passage into the realm of darkness is a “transit into a sphere of rebirth” symbolized by the “worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale” (Campbell 90). Campbell’s belly of the whale metaphor is synonymous with the womb-like nature of the sea. The passage into darkness creates a scenario in which the hero “goes inward, to be born again” (Campbell 91). Accordingly, as Edna swims for the first time, she is momentarily terrified, fearing that she has swum too far from the shore. When she communicates her feelings to her husband, he downplays her fears, saying “you were not so very far, my dear; I was watching you” (Chopin, *Aw* 28). She is seized by a desire to be alone after her swim, and returns to her cottage, accompanied by Robert. She sits in darkness, pensive, and watches Robert “pass in and out of the strips of moonlight” (Chopin, *Aw* 30). Part of Edna’s journey through the darkness involves coming to terms with her feelings for Robert. He both tantalizes Edna and distances himself from her when he teases her about the Spirit of
the Gulf coming to claim her:

. . . with its own penetrating vision the spirit seeks some one mortal worthy to hold
him company . . . his search has always hitherto been fruitless . . . But tonight he
found Mrs. Pontellier . . . Perhaps she will never again suffer a poor, unworthy
earthling to walk in the shadow of her divine presence. (Chopin, Aw 29)

Robert flirts with Edna, and her pent-up passion is directed towards him: “no multitude of
words could have been more significant than those moments of silence, or more pregnant
with the first-felt throbings of desire” (Chopin, Aw 30). This first admission of her desire
for Robert directly contradicts her earlier reticence, which indicated that she was avoiding
her journey. Her new interest in him is another sign that she has passed over the threshold
and into the realm of night.

This passage into darkness is symbolized by the fact that Edna learns how to swim at
night, under a “mystic moon” (Chopin, Aw 26), when ordinarily her habit was to swim
during the day. She also consciously experiences passion for Robert for the first time at
night. Both of these events signal turning points in Edna’s journey. The turns that she
makes at these junctures lead her first into darkness, as signified by her growing unrest and
malaise. After her experience while Mlle. Reisz plays, Edna looks inward, and begins to
withdraw from the society of her friends, and certainly from that of her family. Léonce’s
hold on Edna weakens increasingly as she travels through the realm of night. She no
longer cries or loses her appetite when her husband berates her as she does early in the
novel when he returns from his club and calls her a bad mother. Instead, she either ignores
Léonce or, realizing that her “will had blazed up, stubborn and resistant” (Chopin, Aw 31)
tells him to leave her alone. This trend begins on the night of her first swim. As she lies in
the hammock after watching Robert's departure, she tells Léonce, in response to his
demands that she come into the house immediately, “I mean to stay out here. I don’t wish
to go in, and I don’t intend to. Don’t speak to me like that again; I shall not answer you”
(Chopin, Aω 31). She realizes that something inside of her has changes, and it is something
that gives her the strength to stand up for herself.

Edna tries numerous avenues as she attempts to create a life that will fulfill her
“essential self.” She dabbles with art, hoping that it will provide the answer to her
unsatisfied self. She instead finds it more difficult to co-exist with her husband, and to
conform to societal standards. Léonce continues to berate her for her failings as a wife,
but instead of becoming upset, she now reacts indifferently. For example, when her
husband complains about terrible soup and scorched fish, Edna responds unconcernedly
that he “used to think the cook was a treasure” (Chopin, Aω 50). When Léonce chastises
her harshly for not keeping one of her “at home” days, attempting to bully her into
submission, she responds by “completely abandon[ing] her Tuesdays at home and...not
return[ing] the visits of those who had called upon her” (Chopin, Aω 54). Edna’s road of
trials illustrates that she is moving farther away from her role as a wife/mother and closer
to the attainment of her self. She begins to discover that if she wants to be true to her
essential self, she must completely relinquish her ties to the traditional wife/mother role.
We see these attempts at defining herself in chapters 11-20, which make up the second
structural section of the novel.

Similar to section 1, in the final chapter of the section, Edna has an experience that
propels her on to the next stage in her journey. After the "passage of the magical threshold," says Campbell, "is a transit into a sphere of rebirth . . . The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died" (Campbell 90). In chapter 20, Edna makes the conscious decision to seek out Mlle. Reisz. The change in her is becoming visible to those around her, as evidenced by Victor's comment after she leaves the Lebrun home in search of Mlle. Reisz that in "some way she doesn't seem like the same woman" (Chopin, *Aw* 59). As far as her husband and friends are concerned, the old Edna may as well have died. The change that they perceive in her is so profound that they question her sanity, but by the time Léonce consults the family physician about her behavior (Chopin, *Aw* 63-64), he is too late. Edna has entered the darkness of her soul in an attempt to find her essential self, and this choice—signified by her attempts to find Mlle. Reisz—demonstrate her transformative descent into the darkness of the whale's belly. Thus, chapter 20 serves as a second structural marker, signaling the end of the second section, and the beginning of Edna's initiation phase.

**Trials and Victories of Initiation**

After the hero has embarked on his journey, he experiences a series of trials that are intended to strengthen him and lead him, ideally, to complete enlightenment. The "hero moves in a landscape...of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials" (Campbell 97). The initiation consists of both trials and victories, and the high points include interaction with a goddess, a coming to terms with the father, temptation away from the proper path and an apotheosis, in which the hero is divinized or
empowered above mere mortals. Structurally, Edna's initiation takes place in chapters 21-30, and she experiences what Campbell calls the "Ultimate Boon," or the attainment of her prize, in chapter 30, yet another pivotal point in the novel.

Coupled with Edna's trials—the unexplainable restlessness, the inability to concentrate on her "art," care for her children properly or satisfy her husband—are her repeated encounters with Mlle. Reisz and her music, which parallels the male hero's meeting with the goddess. Mlle. Reisz serves the same function as the goddess in Campbell's monomyth because of the mystical effect her music has on Edna. These influential meetings with a supernatural being, for the male hero, result in a blissful feeling like that of childhood regained. For Edna, the meetings with Mlle. Reisz bring about a clarity of mind that she is unable to attain anywhere else. She realizes things about herself while she is with Mlle. Reisz that she cannot understand when she is alone, and says as much to Alcée Arobin at one point (Chopin, Aw 79). The first time she seeks Mlle. Reisz after both women have returned to New Orleans from the shore, Edna reads a letter that Mlle. Reisz has received from Robert, and ends up "sobbing, just as she had wept one midnight at Grand Isle when strange, new voices awoke in her"—the night her passions were awakened as Mlle. Reisz played the piano (Chopin, Aw 62). On a subsequent visit, she openly admits that she is in love with Robert (Chopin, Aw 77). Prior to this visit, she has only admitted her feelings to herself. On her last visit to Mlle. Reisz's, she encounters Robert himself in Mlle. Reisz's apartment, and although the musician herself is absent, her spiritual presence is strong throughout the scene.

The mysticism associated with goddesses is present in the conversations between
Edna and Mlle. Reisz. Mlle. Reisz often speaks opaquely, refusing to make understanding easy for Edna, and talking to her about the courage that one who would defy tradition in search of self must have. She tells Edna that she must have strong wings: “the bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings. It is a sad spectacle to see the weaklings bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth” (Chopin, Aw 79). She further cautions her to take care in the dark: “Don’t stumble,” she tells Edna as the young woman leaves her apartment in an emotional state. She then lights a candle for Edna (Chopin, Aw 62). Mlle. Reisz’s mystic light illuminates Edna’s way, literally and figuratively.

Edna is next confronted with temptation, and the agony that accompanies the realization that a cherished hope will not come to fruition. While the male hero is often sexually tempted by a beautiful woman or goddess, Edna is tempted on two fronts. Adèle Ratignolle, identified throughout the novel as the “mother-woman” (Chopin, Aw 9), alternately cajoles and coerces Edna to reclaim the traditional wife/mother role. Adèle’s interference is minimal at the beginning of the novel; she merely tries to get Edna to talk to her about her feelings. As the novel progresses, Adèle applies more pressure to Edna, warning Robert that Edna might fall in love with him, arguing with Edna over what a mother owes her children, and ultimately blackmailing Edna emotionally. After the birth of Adèle’s fourth child, and as she may be dying, she pleads with Edna, who is clearly abandoning a traditional lifestyle, to “think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them” (Chopin, Aw 104). Edna does experience occasional pangs of regret at the distance she places between herself and her children, but ultimately they are not
enough of an influence on Edna to cause her to alter her course. We see Adèle's attempt at emotional extortion in the last section of the novel, after Edna has returned from her spiritual journey and has given up any inclination to return to the restrictive, traditional lifestyle. Because Adèle's attempts to woo Edna back to traditionalism are not successful, she fills the role of the temptress in Campbell's model. She exerts her influence over Edna to lead her away from the correct path of her quest—the path that leads to self-fulfillment.

Edna's other temptation takes the form of Alcée Arobin, New Orleans' most infamous playboy. Alcée's attentions to Edna symbolize a relationship whose only basis is sex. Edna dallies with Alcée, eventually consummating an affair with him (Chopin, *A* 80), but quickly finds that his temptation to indulge in physical pleasure for its own sake is no more satisfying than the traditional role of wife and mother. Edna comes to this conclusion, and Alcée disappears from the narrative just as Robert returns to New Orleans. Robert is another temptation to failure for Edna, but the temptation he offers is more like Adèle's than Alcée's. He tries engage in an affair with Edna, but is unable to consummate it. He hides behind a cloak of propriety, implying in his vague goodbye note that he loves her too much to dishonor her. He also makes the same fatal mistake as Léonce in attempting to possess Edna, an idea which she laughs at scornfully: "If [Léonce] were to say 'Here, Robert, take her and be happy; she is yours,' I should laugh at you both" (Chopin, *A* 102). The result of Edna's temptations is that she gains further insight into what she needs in order to achieve an acceptable way of life that allows her to be true to herself. The insight that she gains tells her that neither the role of a traditional wife nor of a sexual playmate will fulfill her essential self.
The next stage of Campbell’s monomyth is the only stage at which Edna makes a minor deviation from the classical hero’s journey. After passing through the series of temptations, the male hero must then come to terms with his father and the “ogre aspect” which frightens the hero as a child (Campbell 129-31). Since Campbell’s model seems to base this familial confrontation on gender, we might expect Edna to resolve her relationship with her mother. However, her mother is notably absent from the narrative, having been “coerced . . . into her grave” by her father (Chopin, Aw 68). The closest living female relative that Edna has is an older sister, with whom she has never formed a relationship, and who exerts a negligible influence in Edna’s life. Edna is therefore left with her father and her ambivalent feelings about him. While she finds him “companionable” (Chopin, Aw 65) for a few days, over longer periods of time, they do not co-exist harmoniously, as she is “not very warmly or deeply attached to him” (Chopin, Aw 65). Although we see Edna with her father, and at the appropriate stage of her journey according to Campbell’s argument, we do not see her come to any understanding with him. Instead, she horrifies him with her patent disregard for family values by refusing to attend her sister’s wedding, and tells shocking stories about women who sail away with lovers and are never heard from again (Chopin, Aw 67-68). Rather than achieving family unity, as the male hero often does, Edna in fact creates further discord in her already distant relationship with her father. What she accomplishes at this stage is the reconciliation of her ideals of right and wrong with the expectations of society. Rather than seeking atonement at the feet of her father and her husband, Edna chooses not to reconcile with them, and instead to pursue a course of her own which will allow her to be
true to herself.

In Campbell’s description of the hero’s journey, apotheosis refers to the hero becoming a divine being (150). Edna’s apotheosis takes the form of empowerment rather than becoming god-like, although in chapter 9, she is deemed “worthy of being exalted for a few hours into realms of semi-celestials” (Chopin, *Aw* 29) and in the last chapter of the novel, she is described as looking like “Venus rising from the foam” (Chopin, *Aw* 106). She is empowered above the other women of her community, making decisions about her life without consulting her husband or her father. After Edna widens the gap between herself and her father and husband, and the patriarchal system that they represent, she positions herself to make a move toward self-fulfillment. She is further empowered by her insights after she consummates her affair with Alcée. She is not sorry for the dalliance. She feels no “shame nor remorse” but experiences a “pang of regret because it was not the kiss of love which had inflamed her” (Chopin, *Aw* 80). Yet, she feels reproached for her affair, externally by Léonce in the form of his possessions which surround her, and internally by Robert. In the end, she achieves “understanding. She felt as if a mist had been lifted from her eyes, enabling her to look upon and comprehend the significance of life” (Chopin, *Aw* 80).

Edna’s empowered apotheosis enables her to confidently move from her husband’s home. She is driven to the pigeon house by a “thousand muffled voices” which “bade her begone” (Chopin, *Aw* 80). She throws an elaborate dinner party as a going away gesture, and does not care what effect her behavior will have on her husband or his business. She sends her children to stay with their grandparents, thus completely relieving herself of
responsibility. Through her actions, viewed by society as rash and selfish, Edna takes control of her life and is rewarded with the power to make her own decisions.

Thus empowered, Edna is now prepared for the “Ultimate Boon” (Campbell 37). Although the hero typically wins the boon, often he has to steal it when the holder of his prize refuses to relinquish it as promised (Campbell 173). Edna’s boon is self-realization and the attainment of a conception of her essential self. In making the decision to lead her own life, Edna steals her boon. No member of the traditional societal framework willingly allows her to conduct her life as she must if she is going to be true to herself, so she must take it without the consent of her husband or the patriarchal society that he represents. Therefore, she literally and symbolically rejects Léonce and Adèle’s traditionalism, Alcée’s overt, no-strings-attached sexuality, and Robert’s faulty attempts at love outside of the traditional framework of marriage.

By the end of the Initiation phase of Edna’s journey, she has made her decision. She has separated herself from traditionalism, and, upon her return, she is prepared to attempt the construction of her new life. Based on the choices she makes regarding husband and children, she has two alternatives. Reverting to traditionalism is not an option that is acceptable to Edna, and therefore, in the final stage of her journey, she must act on those alternatives. She must either return to her society and convince them to see her as a new and different person or she must forsake that society all together. Edna's initiation takes place in the third section of the novel, culminating in chapter 30 with her elaborate dinner party and subsequent removal to the pigeon house. She physically leaves her husband's home, yet this exit is also an entrance to a new way of life for Edna. She has returned,
symbolically, from her journey.

**Return and Reintegration**

With the attainment of the ultimate boon, the hero's journey is complete. The final stage of the journey describes the hero's return to his original society, and his attempt to reintegrate himself in that society as an awakened person. The hero may be successfully reassimilated into his society, or he may be forever ostracized because his change has rendered him morally incomprehensible to the members of his community (Campbell 193). Edna finds herself in this marginalized situation. The final section of the novel describes her attempts to redefine her life, and takes place in chapters 31-39. It is significant that the structural marker that ends each of the first three sections—the tenth chapter of each section—is absent from this final section. I argue that Chopin intentionally cuts the novel short, structurally underscoring the ambiguity of the novel's ending. The absence of a chapter 40 suggests several things: that Edna can not find success in the world as she knows it; that the story is incomplete; that we will never know categorically whether Edna was successful or unsuccessful, or whether her suicide was planned or not. The novel is a perfectly balanced structure until the final, missing chapter, and then, like the narrative itself, it is cut short and we are left with many questions.

The consequences of enlightenment diverge at the hero's return, and Edna follows the only path that will allow her to be true to her essential self. One risk that a hero takes in embarking on a journey is that he will come back from his quest so changed that he will no longer have any interest in fitting in with the world he left behind or in imparting his new knowledge to those around him (Campbell 37). Edna no longer fits into turn-of-the-
Edna Pontellier's journey closely parallels the hero's monomythic journey outlined by Joseph Campbell and the narrative structure of the novel supports such an interpretation.
of Chopin's novel. Regardless of the journey we define for Edna, her quest is unsatisfying to the reader. She searches for self-fulfillment, comes to some understanding of it, but is unable to assume the isolated status that being true to herself would require. She travels far enough in her journey to settle for nothing less than freedom from the constructs of a traditional society, but not far enough to deal with the consequences accompanying that freedom, and hence ends her journey in a union with the sea.
NOTES

1 Turner devotes much of his 1991 volume, *Reading Minds*, to a discussion of the failings both of the English profession and the academy in general. He describes the English profession as:

ungrounded and fragmented. By contrast, its objects—language and literature—are deeply grounded. . . . Contemporary critical theory fails to connect with the full human world to the extent that it treats objects in literature that can be seen only by means of the theory: in that case, if the theory vanishes, its objects vanish.

The neglect of contemporary critical theory to analyze literature as the expression of everyday capacities and to help us understand those capacities cuts it off from the full human world, making it a special world, simpler than the human world, smaller and marginal, exhilarating as a magic kingdom contained within its own walls, often viewed derisively as an exclusive Disney World for literary critics. (4)

Clearly, Turner believes that a major overhaul of the English profession is necessary if the discipline is to survive impending budget cuts and the whims of public opinion.

2 As Campbell applies his theories to male protagonists almost exclusively, references to his discussions will be couched in terms of masculine pronouns.

3 I argue that Robert's inability to function as a lover is not based in his conventionality, but rather that he is a homosexual character who is desperately trying to hide his sexual identity. Although he responds to Edna on an emotional level, and tries to reciprocate her physical advances toward the end of the novel, his innate sexuality does not allow him to engage in a physically intimate relationship with Edna. Rather than
addressing the issue, which would have been horrifying to typical Victorians, Chopin extricates Robert from his relationship with Edna before it reaches the point at which he must either perform or reveal himself. For a further discussion of this point, please see the essay titled "Mr. Pontellier's Cigar: Emasculation and Effeminacy in the Men of The Awakening."
CHAPTER 3:

THE LIFE IS A JOURNEY CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR IN THE AWAKENING, OR,
HOW EDNA ESCAPED

In chapter two, I argue that Edna’s literal journey may be described in terms of Campbell’s model of the hero’s journey. We view Campbell’s monomythic cycle as a possible interpretation of The Awakening because of the conceptual structures upon which the novel is based. One of the major structural elements in Chopin’s text is the conceptual metaphor (CM) LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Since Campbell’s monomyth is also structured by the idea of a life journey, we do not intuitively reject his thesis as a paradigm with which to describe Edna’s journey, because the structure it suggests does not conflict with the underlying conceptual structures of the novel. In addition to the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM, other CMs underlie Chopin’s text: a series of container metaphors, and the KNOWING IS SEEING/KNOWING IS SEEING CM. This chapter will discuss the implications of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM, and chapter four will deal with container metaphors and the KNOWING IS SEEING structure.

Recent discoveries by cognitive scientists have led to what George Lakoff has called a “contemporary theory of metaphor,” which reformulates Aristotle’s definition of poetic metaphor. Aristotle describes metaphor as “the application of the name of a thing to something else, working either from (a) genus to species, or (b) from species to genus, or (c) from species to species, or (d) by proportion” (Aristotle 108-9). Gerald Else, in his
explanatory notes on Aristotle’s text, comments that Aristotle’s theory “is based on the
notion of the regular or standard word, which can then be . . . transferred” (Else 108). It
is this description of one object in terms of another that Aristotle defines as metaphor. In
the classical view, poetic language is “ordinary language heightened, altered, or decorated
in order to raise it above the ordinary and make a ‘poetic’ impression on the hearer” (Else
108). Lakoff points out the Aristotelian tradition constructs metaphor as “a matter of
language, not thought” (Lakoff, “Theory” 202). In other words, the metaphoric nature of
a given statement comes from the language in which the statement is expressed rather than
the mental processes which produce the statement. Arguing that the classical theory of
metaphor, as defined by Aristotle, has been “taken so much for granted over the centuries
that many people [don’t] realize that it was just a theory,” Lakoff questions the
generalizations governing “linguistic expressions referred to classically as ‘poetic
metaphors,’” which we have until recently accepted as factual (Lakoff, “Theory” 202-3).
He explains the need for a redefinition of classical metaphor, based on the fact that the
classical theory does not hold up under scrutiny:

When this question [concerning the nature of metaphor] is answered
rigorously, the classical theory turns out to be false. The generalizations
governing poetic metaphorical expressions are not in language, but in
thought: they are general mappings across conceptual domains. Moreover,
these general principles which take the form of conceptual mappings, apply
not just to novel poetic expressions, but to much of ordinary everyday
language . . . The locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the
way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another. The general
type of metaphor is given by characterizing such cross-domain mappings.
And in the process, everyday abstract concepts like time, states, change,
causation, and purpose also turn out to be metaphorical. (Lakoff,
"Theory" 203)

Metaphor, then, consists of more than “heightened” or poetic language. Rather, poetic
language and poetic metaphor are a subset of the larger group of everyday metaphors
which are “characterized by a huge system of thousands of cross-domain mappings”
(Lakoff, “Theory” 203). The basis of conceptual metaphor, then, in the context of a
cognitive model of human thought, is the premise that “everyday language is thoroughly
suffused with metaphor” and that it “plays a major role in characterizing the structure of
abstract concepts, permitting us to understand the logic of abstract concepts in terms of
the logic of more concrete concepts. Metaphor is secondarily reflected in language, where
metaphorical linguistic expressions reflect metaphorical thought” (Lakoff, Linguistics
418). A conceptual metaphor consists of sets of mental domains and the information that
the mind moves between those domains. These domains consist of “a target, a source,
and a mapping between them” in which the “target conceptual domain is the domain to be
understood metaphorically. The source conceptual domain is the domain in terms of which
the target is to be understood metaphorically” (Turner, Minds 268). In other words, we
comprehend the source domain, in part, because of what is contained in the target domain.

Figure 1 shows the path between the source and target domains:
The difference between poetic and conceptual metaphor is that "conventional metaphoric expressions draw their vocabulary from the source, but are taken to refer to the target" (Turner, *Minds* 268). For example, we conceptualize the domain of "mind" in terms of a "machine" in statements such as "She really cranked out the work," or "The wheels in his head are always turning." We interpret these statements metaphorically because we do not literally turn a handle to produce work or have gears in our heads that spin when we think. Rather, we map the source, "mind," onto a target, "machine," and because of the common properties of each domain, we understand the metaphoric structure, basing much of our daily language on this structure and many others like it. Poetic metaphor, a subgroup of CM, "exploits and enriches the everyday metaphors available to any competent speaker of the language" (Jackendoff 320). We might say something like "You are the apple of my eye," which raises everyday language to a more poetic level. Outside of the context of expressing high regard for someone, however, the phrase carries no meaning, and can not be generalized to other situations. We would not, for example, say that "Pizza is the apple of my eye," or "Shakespeare's sonnets are the apple of my eye." The expression, although meaningful in context, loses that meaning when removed from that context.
Michael Reddy’s seminal essay “The Conduit Metaphor” lays the foundation for the contemporary theory “that metaphor is primarily conceptual, conventional, and part of the ordinary system of thought and language” and dispels “once and for all the traditional view that metaphor is primarily in the realm of poetic or ‘figurative’ language” (Lakoff, “Theory”, 203-4). Reddy describes a “conduit metaphor,” which is a model of the human communication process and the ways in which it can break down. The logic of the conduit metaphor is based on a major and minor framework. The major framework consists of four categories, each of which is based upon a core expression, which implies, respectively, that:

(1) language functions like a conduit, transferring thoughts bodily from one person to another; (2) in writing and speaking, people insert their thoughts or feelings in the words; (3) words accomplish the transfer by containing the thoughts or feelings and conveying them to others; and (4) in listening or reading, people extract the thoughts and feelings once again from the words. (Reddy 170)

We might make statements such as “You’ll have to try to get your real attitudes across to her,” “It is very difficult to put those thoughts into words,” “His words carry little in the way of recognizable meaning,” or “Her analysis really lays bare the ideas in the chapter.” Each of these examples is based on a core expression, such as trying to “get [an idea, feeling, thought] across” or “put [idea, feeling, thought] into [a form that can be communicated]” (Reddy 170). Based on these and many other examples, Reddy concludes that “the major framework sees ideas as existing within human heads, or at
least, within words uttered by humans” (Reddy 170). He then describes the minor framework of the conduit metaphor, which consists of three categories:

1. thoughts and feelings are ejected by speaking or writing into an external “idea space”; (2) thoughts and feelings are reified in this external space, so that they exist independent of any need for living human beings to think or feel them; (3) these reified thoughts and feelings may, or may not, find their way back onto the heads of living humans. (Reddy 170-71)

Examples from the core expressions of the minor framework include “Put those thoughts down on paper before you lose them,” “Mary poured out all of her sorrow,” or “You have to absorb Aristotle’s ideas a little at a time” (Reddy 171). Reddy’s major and minor frameworks in the conduit metaphor helped pave the way for studies of mental conceptual domains, or mental spaces. His “core expressions” and the different sentences that result from them in the context of human communication led to the discovery of the system of conceptual mental structures. Conceptual structures, the conceptual mapping that occurs among them, and the resulting everyday expressions that grow out of them were discovered as a result of Reddy’s discussion of the conduit metaphor.

Based on Reddy’s conduit metaphor, as well as groundbreaking work by Lakoff, Johnson, Turner, and others, critics have come to accept the contemporary definition of metaphor. For example, the *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, published in 1992 by Oxford University Press, defines metaphor in terms of the contemporary theory, rather than in Aristotelian terms. Critics such as Donald Freeman, Margaret Freeman, Kemp Williams, and Anne Williams have applied the contemporary theory of metaphor to literary
works as well. With the exception of these and a handful of other scholars, systematic
studies of the function of CM in specific literary texts have not yet been undertaken.
Lakoff has pointed out five traditionally false assumptions about metaphor, which have
caused theorists to view poetic metaphor as a literary anomaly, rather than as a function of
human thought. These assumptions provide the basis for the long-standing perception that
metaphor is a purely poetic device:

> All everyday conventional language is literal, and none is metaphorical.
> All subject matter can be comprehended literally, without metaphor.
> Only literal language can be contingently true or false.
> All definitions given in the lexicon of a language are literal, not metaphorical.
> The concepts used in the grammar of a language are all literal; none are metaphorical.

(Lakoff, “Theory” 204)

Lakoff’s argument challenges the “traditional division between literal and figurative
language, with metaphor as a kind of figurative language” (Lakoff, “Theory” 204). Ray
Jackendoff, in a review of More Than Cool Reason, sums up the basis for CM, pointing
out that it is “a conceptual or cognitive organization expressed by the linguistic object. As
a consequence, many different expressions may evoke (or invoke) the same metaphor”
(Jackendoff 320).

Perhaps the easiest way to differentiate between poetic metaphor and conceptual
metaphor is by comparing conceptual metaphor to a poetic construction such as the classic
Petrarchan conceit.² We are familiar with metaphors such as “her lips were cherries” or
“her eyes were glistening pools in the moonlight.” While these metaphors are meaningful
in their context—we understand that the woman in question has very red lips and shining eyes—we cannot generalize these ideas to other situations. We would not, for example, speak of spit in terms of moonlit pools, nor of bloodshot eyes in terms of cherries. These metaphoric constructions are productive only within the narrow confines of a poem dealing with beauty, specifically with particular attributes of a woman’s beauty. Conceptual metaphors, on the other hand, may be generalized to a variety of situations, and may evoke numerous linguistic utterances. A conceptual metaphor such as **GOOD IS UP; BAD IS DOWN** generates such sentences as “Getting that good grade really made me high,” “He had his head in the clouds after he received the news,” or “She has been down in the dumps since she lost her job.” Each of these constructions is based on an underlying concept that may be expressed linguistically in a potentially limitless number of ways.

The arguments of Lakoff, Turner, Johnson and others do not attempt to do away with the “literal,” for as Lakoff notes, “concepts that are not comprehended via conceptual metaphor might be called ‘literal’” (Lakoff, “Theory” 205). For example, statements such as “the sky is blue” or “the dog slept outside” are not metaphoric, but are simple declarative statements describing physical reality. However, “as soon as one gets away from concrete physical experience and starts talking about abstractions or emotions, metaphorical understanding is the norm” (Lakoff, “Theory” 205). So, while statements such as “My life headed down the wrong path,” or “Our relationship took a wrong turn,” are metaphoric because they deal with abstract concepts, statements such as “We ate spaghetti for dinner,” are interpreted literally because of their concrete attributes.

Conceptual categories are an integral part of metaphoric mappings and their resulting
linguistic expressions. These conceptual categories provide the source and target domains that allow the human mind to process CMs and their linguistic constructions. The traditional view of mental categorization “is tied to the classical theory that categories are defined in terms of common properties of their members” (Lakoff, *Women* xiv). Items may be in the same category “if and only if they have certain properties in common. Those properties are necessary and sufficient conditions for defining the category” (Lakoff, *Women* xiv). So, while we might group items like “mind” and “machine” together, we would not group “war” and “cars” in like manner. Wars and cars do not share enough similar characteristics to be classified in the same category. Advances in cognitive science have revealed that conceptual categories are not based solely on commonalities shared by their components. Instead, these categories and their contents are based on numerous (aspects) of human thought:

Thought is *embodied*, that is the structures used to put together our conceptual systems grow out of bodily experience and make sense in terms of it; moreover, the core of our conceptual systems is directly grounded in perception, body movement and experience of a physical and social character. Thought is *imaginative*, in that those concepts which are not directly grounded in experience employ metaphor, metonymy and mental imagery—all of which go beyond the literal mirroring, or representation, of external reality. It is this imaginative capacity that allows for “abstract” thought and takes the mind beyond what we can see and feel. The imaginative capacity is also embodied—indirectly—since the metaphors,
metonymies, and images are based on experience, often bodily experience.

(Lakoff, *Women* xiv)

Conceptual metaphor, then, is based on two assumptions. First, that “most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff, *Metaphors* 4) and also that the human mind understands one domain of experience in terms of another (Lakoff, “Theory” 206). For example, we tend to conceptualize the idea of “argument” in terms of “war” (Lakoff, *Metaphors* 4). A wide array of everyday expressions are based on these ideas, such as:

- Your claims are indefensible.
- He attacked every weak point in my argument.
- I demolished his argument.
- I’ve never won an argument with him.
- If you use that strategy, he’ll wipe you out.
- He shot down all of my arguments. (Lakoff, *Metaphors* 4)

Each of these examples is based on concepts which we associate with wars and battles: a battlefield position may be difficult to defend; soldiers attack, wipe out opposing armies, and shoot down other soldiers. Generals strategize, demolish the opponent, try to win at all costs. We intuitively conceptualize items in the cognitive domain of “argument” with items from the cognitive domain of “war.” Lakoff and Johnson point out that

[W]e don’t just talk about argument in terms of war . . . Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war.

Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle, and the structure
of an argument —attack, defense, counterattack, etc.— reflects this. It is in this sense that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is one that we live by in this culture; it structures the actions we perform in arguing. (Lakoff, *Metaphors* 4)

Out of the ARGUMENT IS WAR CM comes our “ordinary way of having an argument and talking about one” (Lakoff, *Metaphors* 5).

We see similar mappings in CMs such as TIME IS MONEY and IDEAS ARE FOOD. We conceptualize “time” in terms of the domain of “money,” and examples of the interrelation of these domains may be found in ordinary expressions such as:

- You’re wasting my time.
- This gadget will save you hours.
- I don’t have the time to give you.
- How do you spend your time?
- I’ve invested a lot of time in her.
- You need to budget your time.
- He’s living on borrowed time.

While we can not literally borrow time from someone, or spend time as we might spend money at a department store, we “act as if time is a valuable commodity—a limited resource” and “conceive of time that way” (Lakoff, *Metaphors* 8). We often conceive of “ideas” in terms of “food,” as in expressions like:

- What he said left a bad taste in my mouth.
- All this news report has in it are raw facts, half-baked ideas, and warmed-over
theories.

- There are too many facts here for me to digest.
- I just can’t swallow that claim. (Lakoff, Metaphors 46)

While we do not literally bake ideas, digest information or swallow data, we do conceptualize ideas in such terms. Each of these ordinary expressions represent a linguistic manifestation of the larger CMs that “structure our everyday concepts” and are “reflect[ed] in our literal language” (Lakoff, Metaphors 46).

One of the important characteristics of conceptual metaphors is that they are linguistically productive. We can derive multiple meaningful examples from their embodiment in a variety of situations, rather than in a narrowly defined space, as is the case with poetic metaphor. Returning for a moment to the Petrarchan conceit, we have already seen that poetic metaphors such as “eyes like moonlit pools” or “eyes like the sun” do not generate multiple, novel linguistic expressions, nor can we derive a larger, underlying metaphor or concept upon which they are based. However, numerous novel, meaningful utterances can be generated from CMs such as UP IS GOOD; DOWN IS BAD, LIFE IS A JOURNEY or a multitude of other CMs. We recognize the presence of three critical CMs in The Awakening because of the many linguistic examples derived from the underlying conceptual structures. Clusters of CMs occur each time that Edna experiences an emotional epiphany, illuminating not only the primary conceptual structures of the novel, but also the major sections of the text. The sections into which the text breaks down are indicative of the stages of Edna’s awakening, or the crossroads along the path of her journey. Rather than experiencing one overwhelming bolt of insight at the end of the
novel, Edna's awakenings occur slowly, and are precipitated by a series of events. She awaken to the existence of passion as a physical phenomenon rather than a mental daydream. She rejects the traditional role for which she has been trained, and that she is expected to fulfill. She ultimately chooses containment in the sea rather than confinement by a system that she did not choose. The conceptual structure of the novel reflects this sequence of awakenings in Edna.

The first, and perhaps the most productive, of the CMs represented in the language of The Awakening is the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM. We intuitively think of "life" in terms of the domain "traveling." like a journey, life begins and ends, and involves paths which we move along, traverse, follow, wander down. The journey changes directions periodically: we choose different paths, making choices as to which path to follow when we come to a fork in the road. Syntactic paths which occur at turning points in Edna's journey also evoke the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM. Accordingly, we perceive Edna's emotional development metaphorically, in the context of a journey because of our unconscious conceptual system, part of which is the perception of life as a journey.

The LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is mapped through cognitive domains in a variety of ways. Intuitively, we map the idea of "life" into the domain of "journey" because the two domains are inherently related; they share common characteristics which allow us to understand one in terms of the other. Our understanding of "life" in terms of a "journey" results in a variety of linguistic expressions. Examples of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM include everyday expressions such as:

- He is just starting out in life.
• I want to get somewhere in life.
• He has lost his direction.
• His life took a wrong turn.
• She came to the crossroads and had to make a decision.

As demonstrated by the examples above, syntactic paths are an inherent element of linguistic manifestations of the LIFE IS JOURNEY CM. These paths, either implicitly or explicitly, exhibit a source, or starting point, and goal, or desired destination, and often include trajectories, or departures from the path leading to the goal. Ross has described paths as “macro-constituents which specify the route through spaces of various sorts which is traversed by the theme of a sentence” (Ross 273). In a syntactic structure, themes are “the constituents which move, prototypically through three-dimensional space.” They begin “with at most one Source” and end “with at most one Goal, though either or both of these can also be elided in context . . . Trajectories, which specify the points through which the Theme passes en route from Source to Goal, are usually iterable and optional” (Ross 273). Ross additionally notes that paths may extend to include the “dimension of time” (274). Not only do paths cue readers to the presence of an underlying conceptual structure derived from the CMs manifested in the language of the text, but these paths serve to further point out the protagonist’s movement from point to point along the path—movement that is often metaphoric in nature.

The language in chapter six of The Awakening reveals the specific conceptual metaphors that structure the narrative from this point forward. Until the end of chapter five, Chopin’s narrative style is journalistic: she relates events as they happen, in much the
same style that we might expect from a newspaper reporter. Chapter six is marked by
several notable characteristics: a drastic and sudden change in the narrative style, the
occurrence of the single authorial intrusion in the novel, and the appearance of a sizable
cluster of CMs. In chapter six, Chopin's narrative style changes. She begins to speak
philosophically rather than reporting events, generalizing about human nature and making
use of marked syntax rather than relying on the bare-bones facts and descriptions and
relatively simple declarative statements that are characteristic of the previous five chapters.
The narrator also intrudes into the story in chapter six. This authorial intrusion is an
anomaly in the text, and serves to mark further this chapter. Chopin tells us that

Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a
human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world
within and about her. This may seem like a ponderous weight of wisdom
to descend upon the soul of a young woman of twenty-eight—perhaps
more wisdom than the Holy Ghost is usually pleased to vouchsafe to any
woman. (Chopin, Aw 14)

In the segment beginning with "This may seem . . .", the writer is addressing the reader
directly, rather than reporting what is going on in Edna's mind or around her. The
construction gives the impression that the writer has stopped talking about Edna, turned
to the readers and addressed them directly. The author's intervention gives the reader
background information that they would otherwise be without, as it would not be obvious
solely on the basis of Edna's thinking. Chapter six also evokes a cluster of conceptual
metaphors which provide the underlying structure of the remainder of Chopin's narrative:
container metaphors, the KNOWING IS SEEING CM, as well as the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM.

Structurally, we can visualize chapter six as a figurative bookend, marking the beginning of the meat of the story, with chapter 39 functioning as its counterpart at the other end. The chapters between these bookends break into three sections, and the divisions between these sections are marked by numerous manifestations of the recurring CMs of containment, as well as KNOWING IS SEEING and LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Chapter six evokes the three CMs that structure the narrative of Chopin's novel, and the manifestations of these CMs are seen at regularly recurring intervals throughout the remainder of the novel. Specifically, we see clusters of them in the chapters that represent section breaks. The pattern of CM clusters that emerges emphasizes Edna's epiphanies on a structural level. Figure 2 illustrates the structural divisions of the novel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Structural Function</th>
<th>Key Events Marking Section Breaks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5:</td>
<td>Beg. of Section 1</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:</td>
<td>Marker 1, (opening bookend)</td>
<td>Edna's choice of tradition or the sea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10:</td>
<td>Section 1, (section breaks at 9-10)</td>
<td>Mlle. Reisz's piano playing. Edna's awakening to passion, and sudden ability to swim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20:</td>
<td>Section 2, (section breaks at 19-20)</td>
<td>Edna seeks out Mlle. Reisz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30:</td>
<td>Section 3, (section breaks at 29-30)</td>
<td>Edna's dinner party to celebrate leaving her old life behind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-38:</td>
<td>Section 4, (section break absent)</td>
<td>Edna chooses death rather than an unfulfilled, restricted life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39:</td>
<td>Marker 2, (closing bookend)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Structural Divisions of The Awakening
This structure is supported by clusters of CMs which occur in the chapters 9-10, 19-20, 29-30, and 30, and indicate the section breaks. Each section describes a leg of Edna’s journey toward self-fulfillment and understanding, with the transitional chapters, which are identified by the clusters of CMs, marking the metaphoric forks in a particular road and Edna’s resulting choice of a new direction. Often, structural markers are further supported by the syntactic paths associated with Edna’s journey.

The structural markers described in Figure 2 create an asymmetrical pattern that reflects the progression of the narrative. Two fully symmetrical sections, consisting of chapters 11-20 and 21-30, occur in the center of the novel. Each of these sections begins after an emotional awakening, and ends with the occurrence of another awakening, each of which are marked by clusters of CMs. Chapter 11, the first chapter of section 2, begins illustrating the changes in Edna’s behavior that are the result of her experience in the sea: she goes on romantic excursions with Robert, becoming depressed when he leaves Grande Isle. She experiences an awakening in chapters 19 and 20, when she seeks out Mlle. Reisz, who effected her first passionate insights. Section 3 begins by showing the increasingly unconventional nature of Edna’s behavior: she refuses to keep her "at home" days, preferring to wander through the streets of New Orleans and she lets “the family go to the devil” while she pursues her art (Chopin, Aw 55). By the end of Section 3, Edna leaves her husband. These symmetrical sections are bracketed by two of Edna’s most significant bursts of insight: the aftermath of learning to swim, in chapter 10, and her triumphant exit from her husband’s home in chapter 30. The first section consists of chapters 1-5, which reveal the nature of Edna’s path prior to her arrival at Grande Isle,
chapter six, which explicates both the choices that Edna must make and the changes that will occur in Edna's path as a result of those choices, and the last part of the section, chapters 7-10. Her first awakenings occur on the heels of these choices, in chapter 9 and 10, which shoe Edna's passion evoked by Mlle. Reisz's music and the resulting swim in the sea. In section 1, Edna is casting about, searching for a path that will offer some relief from her ennui. Section 1 is a fractured section because Edna has up until this point been "casting about" for a path that will both adhere to societal constraints and allow Edna to satisfy her needs. It is not until she gives up her attempts to follow the path of least resistance—the path paved for her by societal expectation—that we see that change mirrored in the structure of the novel. The final section is more nearly symmetrical than the first, but ends without the final chapter which would complete the symmetry. The "ghost" chapter 40 does not exist, and its absence breaks what would otherwise would be a symmetrical final section. The ending to this novel must be asymmetrical, however, as Edna cuts her life journey short through her suicide. Her journey ends as she leaves the shore "behind her" (Chopin, *Aw* 109), seemingly in search of a state of nothingness that will bring freedom from her restrictive life. The absent chapter 40 symbolically represents this nothingness. The final section contains an asymmetrical match for chapter 6 in chapter 36. Both sections 1 and 4 contain pivotal information in their sixth chapters. In section 4, we find Edna openly confessing her love for Robert, and in the process, evoking the KNOWING IS SEEING and LIFE IS A JOURNEY CMs. The structural asymmetry of *The Awakening* mirrors the path of Edna's JOURNEY, and offers an additional piece of evidence to support the presence of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM in Chopin's novel.
We see the first example of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM in the first sentence of chapter six—the opening bookend chapter—which also constitutes the whole of the first paragraph of the chapter. Edna is faced with a decision: she stands at a metaphoric crossroads, as the decision that she makes will affect the options that are available to her later on in the novel. Edna cannot explain, even to herself, her reaction to Robert's simple invitation: "Edna Pontellier could not have told why, wishing to go to the beach with Robert, she should in the first place have declined, and in the second place have followed in obedience to one of the two contradictory impulses which impelled her" (Chopin, Aw 14). Robert Lebrun, her constant companion and eventual love interest, invites her to go the beach for a swim—a seemingly innocuous request—yet we know from chapter five that she can not make up her mind whether she wishes to go or not. Her reaction to his request cues the reader that her decision as to whether she will accompany him or not has farther-reaching implications than those associated with an innocent walk to the beach: "her glance wandered from his face away toward the gulf whose sonorous murmur reached her like a loving but imperative entreaty" (Chopin, Aw 13). Edna contemplates the event much more than it seems to warrant, responding to Robert's invitation "with a tone of indecision" (Chopin, Aw 13). She initially declines a swim with Robert, all the while staring longingly at the seductive Gulf, as if she really wants to be there. She then changes her mind, and goes with Robert "away . . . toward the beach" (Chopin, Aw 14).

Each of these statements contains a syntactic path, and also demonstrates the repetition technique which Chopin commonly uses to point out important events in the narrative. Two of the most obvious points of repetition may be found in chapters 6 and
39. The passage from chapter 6, which describes the sea is repeated almost identically in chapter 39:

The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation.

The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace. (Chopin, Aw 14)

Two minor differences exist between the two passages. In chapter 39, the phrase “for a spell” is omitted. Chopin also inserts almost four paragraphs between “contemplation” and “the voice of the sea speaks to the soul.” These paragraphs serve to explicate the type of contemplation that has occurred in Edna since the first time the “voice of the sea” spoke to her.³

Another example of Chopin's repetition of key passages may be found in chapter 33, when Edna encounters Robert for the first time after returning to New Orleans. She asks the young man what he has been “seeing and doing and feeling out there in Mexico,” to which he replies:

I've been seeing the waves and the white beach of Grand Isle; the quite, grassy street of the Chênière, the old fort at Grande terre. I've been working like a machine, and feeling like a lost soul. There was nothing interesting. (Chopin, Aw 95).

Edna parrots the young man's words back to him moments later, when presented with the same question. She elaborates his remarks only slightly, speaking of the “sunny old fort,”
and saying that she has been “working with little more comprehension than a machine and still feeling like a lost soul” (Chopin, *Aw* 95). While a thorough discussion of Chopin's use of repetition is beyond the scope of this dissertation, a discussion is being undertaken in other venues. The important point here is that Chopin uses repetition at the end of chapter 5 to mark the passage as important. The path set forth by both of the “away . . . toward the beach” sentences indicates that first Edna, by way of the glance which is metonymically associated with her, and then Edna and Robert together, leave point A, the porch on which they have been sitting, and travel to point B, the beach, which is their desired destination. The preposition “toward” in both phrases indicates movement in a specific direction, and “away,” by definition, indicates a distancing of oneself from an object. In Edna’s case, this movement away from one point is accompanied by the intent of drawing closer to another. According to Ross' discussion of syntactic paths, Edna’s glance, which is an extension of herself, operates as the theme, or the object which moves along the path, in “Her glance wandered from his face away toward the Gulf” (Chopin, *Aw* 13). The theme begins at the source and must move from that source to a goal, or the intended end of the path. Edna’s glance begins at the source of the path, which in this case is Robert’s face. She mentally wanders “toward the Gulf” with the longing look at the beach, or her goal. Edna’s wandering in the first occurrence is not literal. Her mind does not leave her body and walk to the beach. Rather, it is metaphoric, and as such, indicative of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM. She feels drawn down the path toward the beach, which we later learn is her destiny—the end of her road. Only after she is metaphorically drawn down the path does she literally rise to walk “away . . . toward the beach” (Chopin, *Aw*
14). Her choice of a metaphoric path accompanies her following of a literal path, a path which is indicated not only by the metaphoric nature of the statement, but by its syntactic structure.

Until this moment, Edna has followed the traditional path. She is the wife of an upper-middle class businessman, and as such she is responsible for supervising the family servants and the children’s quadroon nurse, and for maintaining the trappings of civility with her neighbors and acquaintances. Based on her prescribed role, the appropriate response to Robert’s invitation would be to decline. However, we know from the end of chapter five that Edna has already mentally gone to the beach. Edna demonstrates the striking division between her emotions, illustrated by the way the sea sings to her, and her sense of responsibility, indicated by her physical reluctance to accompany Robert. Even as she is declining Robert’s invitation, she stares longingly at the Gulf, and even as she initially refuses to accompany him physically, she rapidly changes her mind. In the next passage, Chopin repeats the key words of the previous statement, a strategy she often employs to mark significant events in the text. The first occurrence, “Her glance wandered from his face away toward the Gulf” is strikingly similar to “They . . . walked away together toward the beach” (Chopin, Aw 13-14). On top of the repetition, the sentences are a bit marked by the fact that the combination of “away” and “toward” is somewhat unusual in English. After her mental foray down the path to the beach, Edna physically accompanies Robert: the two walk “away together toward the beach” (Chopin, Aw 14). The elements of the path, including theme (Edna), goal (the beach) and motion on the path (toward) are intact in this partial repetition of the “Edna’s glance” sentence.
This brief passage makes clear, both literally and metaphorically, Edna's perception that she leads a "dual life—that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions" (Chopin, Aw 14). Chopin has defined the path of the internal, metaphoric journey that Edna's life will follow. She will dally with Robert, allowing him to be a major diversion on her journey. For a while, he will appear to be the correct goal, as demonstrated in chapter 36, but at the end of the novel, as she swims out to sea, Edna realizes that Robert has been nothing but a trajectory, albeit a lengthy one. He is the proverbial wild goose chase which diverts her from the goal she wants to achieve. Again, the repeated path elements in "away . . . toward the beach" underscore this perception, and also foreshadow Edna’s simultaneous containment by and freedom in the sea. As she chooses her direction at the first turning point of her journey, she is inexplicably drawn toward the sea with its "sonorous murmur" which reaches for her "like a loving but imperative entreaty" (Chopin, Aw 13). The murmur of the sea becomes the sound of freedom which will continue to seduce and beckon Edna throughout the novel.

Chapter six begins after Edna has chosen her metaphoric path, a path which will lead her away from a conventional lifestyle and toward one in which she will seek fulfillment as a human being. In this, the shortest chapter of the novel, we see clusters of linguistic manifestations of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM which support the idea that Edna has embarked on a journey which marks the beginning of her movement away from the restriction implicit in the role of a woman of her social status. Chopin's language in chapter six extends this metaphoric journey, indicating not only that Edna has embarked on a journey, but that she has chosen to embark on that journey, without yet fully
comprehending its consequences. Edna’s confusion is apparent in this previously cited passage:

    Edna Pontellier could not have told why, wishing to go to the beach with
    Robert, she should in the first place have declined, and in the second place
    have followed in obedience to one of the two contradictory impulses which
    impelled her. (Chopin, *Aw* 14)

Faced with two choices, Edna is ambivalent, waffling for moments between the two. Chopin reiterates this scene, whose outcome was decided in chapter five, giving us a glimpse into Edna’s mind. The structure of this sentence is suggestive of a “Y” in the road, at which point the traveler must choose a direction and leave one branch of the path behind. Edna “followed in obedience to one of the two contradictory impulses which impelled her.” Unable to choose both paths, yet pulled in both directions, Edna can only choose one path. Much like the decision one is faced with at literal crossroads, she must choose, and hope that her choice is correct. It is the “contradictory” nature of the impulses which suggest the crossroad scenario. Since she can not follow two contradictory impulses at once—can not both stay home and go to the beach, can not seek self-fulfillment and fulfill her obligations as a nineteenth-century wife—she must choose the path that she will follow. The paths that she must choose between are metaphoric, finally, because each represents an abstract concept. While we may literally read this passage as a clear-cut choice between taking a walk or not, Chopin’s language in chapter five make it apparent that Edna is choosing between conventionality and self-fulfillment when she chooses whether to walk or remain at home. Edna’s choice of Robert and the beach, a
choice which leads her to “follow in obedience” to her initial impulse, marks the beginning of her journey. Edna has started down a path “toward the beach” after making a conscious decision to “obey” the “impulse” to “follow.” The concepts of “following an impulse” and going “toward” an object each imply a journey. It is additionally significant that Edna chooses the beach, as she not only tends returns to the sea at the moments of her most profound awakenings, but also ultimately chooses to be contained in the sea rather than by the Victorian mores under which she increasingly chafes.

We see further evidence of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM in the next two paragraphs of chapter 6. As Edna follows one of her impulses, we are told that she perceives a light that is beginning to dawn, a “light which showing the way, forbids it [emphasis added]” (Chopin, Aw 14). This light “moved her to dreams, to thoughtfulness, to the shadowy anguish which had overcome her the midnight when she had abandoned herself to tears” (Chopin, Aw 14). Edna’s movement toward dreams is metaphoric rather than literal, as we can not physically move our bodies toward something as intangible as a dream. She has seen “the way”—the illuminated path that she is inclined to follow. The forbidding nature of the path contributes to her unrest, for following it is a fearful choice with an unknown terminus. Edna has already set her feet to the path, as demonstrated by the scene in which she abandons herself to tears, demonstrating another instance of following her path.

Dreaming itself was forbidden fruit for women in the late 1800’s because it led to “overstimulated fancies and unwholesome desires” (Napheys 132). Contemporary books on female sexuality cautioned mothers to assure that their daughters avoided “whatever
stimulates the emotions,” as it would lead to “an unnaturally early sexual life” (Napheys 29). Female development was described as having “three great positions . . . the maiden, the wife, and the mother” (Napheys I). The women who surround Edna—Adèle Ratignolle in particular—epitomize the role of the “mother-woman” (Chopin, Aw 9) as described by Napheys. The role of such a woman was to tend to the daily domestic chores, whether those chores included household maintenance and caring for children or supervising the servants who performed these tasks. Edna’s movement toward dreams and thoughtfulness is indicative of both her divergence from the traditional woman’s path, and her inclination to follow a separate one. In the same passage, Edna is “overcome” just as one might be overtaken by another, stronger traveler on a roadway, and is “moved,” indicating progress along the path. The thoughtful dreaminess that Edna is moved to in chapter six, along with its inherent abstraction, and its constituent elements consisting of paths and journeys, are indicative of the metaphoric nature of her journey.

At this early stage of Edna’s search for self-fulfillment, we have a sense that she is a passive traveler on this journey. The journey is almost forced on her by an outside entity, rather than being sought out or welcomed, as indicated by the lack of agency in the statements referring to Edna in this chapter. Her journey is semantically constructed as being imposed upon her: she is “impelled,” “moved” and “overcome,” all of which indicate movement, but these verbs denote a variety of movement that requires external agency to accomplish it. Edna is not moving herself, or overcoming herself. These events are acted out upon her and she is the passive recipient of both the actions and their consequences. At this point in her experience, she is carried along on her journey.
We are next confronted by the image of the sea, the source of Edna's awakenings. Chopin describes the sea as "seductive" and "inviting," an "enfolding," embracing force that gently draws Edna in with its whispers and murmurs. She is induced to "wander for a spell"—again invoking the Life is a Journey CM. Edna's journey does not have a specific destination at this juncture, however, the wandering promises to lead to the loss of a soul in "mazes of inward contemplation" (Chopin, Aw 14). The goal of Edna's path is the freedom associated with self-fulfillment, and contemplation, in whose mazes the soul may become lost, is the path upon which it is based. As one wanders down an uncharted path, it may literally assume characteristics of a maze, becoming confusing and difficult to navigate, and having an unclear destination. This passage has metaphoric implications as well, however, due to the abstract nature of its concepts. We can wander in a maze, but can not wander inside of ourselves in any literal sense. The "mazes of inward contemplation" are metaphorical mazes, indicative of a life journey which has lost its direction, which will require deep consideration to redirect itself onto the correct path.

The language in chapter six demonstrates the underlying conceptual structure of Life is a Journey which is present throughout the remainder of the novel.

In chapter seven, we find Edna again walking to the beach, this time accompanied by Adèle Ratignolle. Although in this instance the path is a literal one, we find a clear reference to a path here: the women are walking down a "long, sandy path upon which a sporadic and tangled growth that bordered it on either side made frequent and unexpected inroads" (Chopin, Aw 15). Edna is not only following a path "to the beach," but the destination is once again the sea. Chopin tells us that the distance to the beach is "no
inconsiderable one,” again indicating a journey. The road is also not a perfect one, rather the tangled weeds at its edges tend to encroach on the road surface itself.

When the women arrive at the beach, we glimpse Edna’s life journey prior to her arrival at Grande Isle. As the women settle themselves, we are cued again to the presence of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM: “Edna Pontellier, casting her eyes about, had finally kept them at rest upon the sea” (Chopin, Aw 16). Again, we find a syntactic path, in which Edna’s eyes, already metonymically associated with her, are the theme. The sea is the goal, and the source is elided. The absent source in this statement may be attributed to the lack of direction and focus denoted by “casting about.” The movement along the path in this sentence is implicit in “casting her eyes about,” although the direction of the movement is not clear. We also learn that the journey is temporarily suspended while Edna rests. Similar to the “glance at the sea” passage, Edna’s eyes tell the metaphoric story of her journey. Her eyes do not literally “rest upon the sea,” but she is drawn to it in much the same way that she is in chapter six. She contentedly gazes at the sea, allowing it to lead her to contemplate her childhood. The sea again invites Edna to wander in a contemplative maze, which represents one path to freedom. She falls into a silent reverie, and when Adèle asks what she is thinking about, Edna replies that she will have to “retrace her thoughts” (Chopin, Aw 16). We often speak of having to “retrace our steps” in the context of a journey or of following a path; for example, we may have to backtrack if we pass an exit on the freeway, or if we return to a place we have been before. While Edna can metaphorically retrace the ground that she has passed over in her thoughts, she cannot literally walk again over the same ground of her past life. As Edna reveals her musings,
we find that she has been recollecting her childhood, and we become privy to several
events in her early development which helped forge the path that she would ultimately
follow. She first describes “a summer day in Kentucky” and a “meadow that seemed as big
as the ocean to the very little girl walking through the grass, which was higher than her
waist” (Chopin, Aw 17). She goes on to describe her feelings about the experience:
“‘Likely as not it was Sunday,’ she laughed; ‘and I was running away from prayers, from
the Presbyterian service, read in a spirit of gloom by my father that chills me yet to think
of’” (Chopin, Aw 17). Not only does this passage invoke the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM, but
it also indicates the BAD IS COLD; GOOD IS WARM CM. We see this CM in expressions
such as “She was hot on the trail of that idea” or “The plan met with an icy reception. As
a child, Edna found the dark chill of her father's religion unrewarding and chose a path that
led away from its restrictions.

Edna’s earliest recollections are of a path that leads her away from a gloomy,
disheartening Protestantism. She “runs away from prayers” and “from the Presbyterian
service,” a construction once again based on a path, in which Edna serves as the theme. In
this instance, however, the source is present, in the form of the prayers and the service that
Edna wishes to escape, and the goal is absent. If we follow the logic suggested by the
syntax of Edna’s statement, she did not have any particular destination in mind when she
ran from her prayers. She only wished to get away from them. She explains to Adèle that
her avoidance of prayers and church were the result of “following a misleading impulse
without question,” or following the wrong path, harking back to the “contradictory
impulses” of chapter 6. The impulse led her away from church and its associated path,
which if followed to its conclusion, would lead to eternal life. The path associated with Judeo-Christian religions is based on the LIFE IS JOURNEY CM. While one does not literally walk a path which leads from life in this world to life in the next, the search for eternal salvation is most often expressed in terms of a metaphoric journey whose path leads to the ultimate goal of eternal life.

Edna later comes to perceive religion as an important influence in her life, stating that

‘during one period of my life religion took a firm hold upon me; after I was twelve and until—until—why, I suppose until now, thought I never thought much about it—just driven along by habit. But do you know,’ she broke off, turning her quick eyes upon Madame Ratignolle . . .

‘sometimes I feel this summer as if I were walking through the green meadow again; idly, aimlessly, unthinking and unguided.’ (Chopin, Aw 17)

As she grows up, Edna is “driven along” the appointed path, a path paved by Presbyterian doctrine during her childhood. On one level, religion gives Edna a feeling of being “guided,” presumably by something larger and more powerful than herself. However, even as she claims that religion has held her firmly, even “until now,” she also admits to thinking little about it. Further, she presently feels “unguided,” which indicates that religion is not clearing a path before her that has the potential to fulfill her needs. She goes to Adèle with her eyes, “turning” then toward her friend, in much the same way that she goes to the sea with her glance. She feels that she is “walking through the grass aimlessly” and she metonymically looks to Adèle for direction. Adèle embodies the path of the “mother-woman;” however, and therefore can offer no help to Edna.
We might accept Edna's declaration that she is religious in the absence of other evidence, but her next few words belie her claims to faith. One of the major reasons that she married Léonce Pontellier was the "violent opposition of her father and her sister Margaret to her marriage with a Catholic" (Chopin, *Aw* 18)—hardly the sentiment of a fervent religious believer. From her recounts of her earliest memories, we learn that Edna's path has led her away from the conventional path, again invoking the *LIFE IS A JOURNEY* CM. She first follows her path from its source—mindless obedience to paternal authority—to disobedience, in the form of skipping her prayers. Her early rejection of parental authority opens the door for her search for a path to freedom and self-fulfillment later in her life. We see further evidence that her path has led her away from Protestantism in her father's visit in New Orleans. While Edna is initially pleased that her father comes to stay with her, she is glad when he takes "himself off with . . . his Bible reading" (Chopin, *Aw* 68). So, while sources such as men and the sea lead to enlightenment and extensions of Edna's journey, organized religion seems to have only resulted in muddied waters that caused her to run faster to get away than she might have otherwise.

We might expect Chopin to grapple at least nominally with religious issues in this text, given the religious controversies which were going on during her lifetime. Although Chopin herself grew up in a Catholic household, she demonstrates an early disinterest in Christian religions. Toth's biography describes an essay in one of Chopin's composition books titled "Christian Art," in which Chopin praises the "superiority of modern art because it comes from Christianity" but in which she also "betrayed her lack of interest
with misspellings and incoherent sentences" (79). Within the year following her staunchly-Catholic mother’s death, Chopin abandoned church-going altogether (Toth, KC 20). Paul Giles argues that Chopin abandoned the church because she was caught between the teachings of the Catholic church and her efforts to examine life from the modernist perspective. Pope Pius X had declared modernism, a movement of which Chopin was nominally a part, the “heresy of all heresies,” but this proclamation did not stop Chopin, a Catholic herself, from “playing with modernism and pitting it against the conventions of Catholicism” (Giles 37). After her husband’s death, Chopin studied, with varying degrees of seriousness, philosophies ranging from theosophy and Eastern religions to Darwinism. She ultimately embraced, both through her fiction and her lifestyle, a modernist view of life, in which she attempted to see life as realistically as possible, rather than hiding behind the façade of stifling propriety and societal expectations.

Chopin’s personal ambivalence toward religion, coupled with the textual evidence supporting Edna’s disinterest in it, have striking implications in the context of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM. One of the primary differences in Edna’s journey, as opposed to the life journeys of her female contemporaries, lies in her perception of what marks the beginning and end of a life journey. Given that nineteenth-century thinking was unquestionably steeped in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and that one of the basic tenets of that tradition is the belief in an afterlife, a nineteenth-century religious believer would be most likely to conceptualize the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM in terms of a journey with several milestones. The beginning of the journey would coincide with birth, and rather than viewing death as the terminus of the journey, this tradition views the end of the journey as an afterlife, not
as death. Death was merely a stop on the path rather than the end of it. The afterlife which, at least for the “good,” would be joyfully shared with God, was the logical ending of this journey.

In a 1995 essay on Emily Dickinson’s conceptual universe, a universe which includes constructions of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM, Margaret Freeman has argued that in order to understand how Dickinson “structures her experience of the world, we need to look at the way she structures her metaphors of that world” (644). If we view the life journey as having “always the same parts”—a theme, a source, a goal—then our question becomes what, then, for this metaphor, is the goal of life’s journey? For Calvinist religion, the answer is simple: heaven. And man’s purpose in life is therefore just as simple: to get there. The Calvinist view necessarily devalues life and the things of this world in favor of an afterlife (the desired goal and purpose of life’s journey). And death, the physical termination of life’s journey, is merely seen as a gate to the afterlife. (Freeman 645)

The same argument applies to Kate Chopin and her fiction. While Chopin does not come from a Calvinist background, her childhood and married life were heavily influenced by Roman Catholicism. It was not until after her husband’s and grandmother’s deaths that she ceased practicing the Catholic religion. Similar to the Calvinist faith, Catholicism’s teachings include the promise of an afterlife and a set of standards that those who would participate in the afterlife must attempt to adhere to. Freeman argues, in the case of Dickinson, that the life journey does not end with death, but that death is something akin to a railroad station part-way down the track rather than the terminal at the end of the line.
Chopin's contemporaries would have most likely viewed life in the same way: the journey begins with birth, passes through a "gate" at the point of death, in order to reach the goal, eternal life (Freeman 646).

Edna does not view the life journey in the same way as her contemporaries. She views death as the goal, or terminus, of the life journey rather than as the gateway to an afterlife. Because she was a nominally practicing Catholic, taking her own life would prohibit Edna from participating in any positive aspects of the afterlife. Further, as Edna is preparing to enter the sea and swim to her death, Chopin describes her as "some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known" (Chopin, A 109). Rather than suggesting that her imminent death will serve as a passageway into a better plain of existence, the "new-born creature" suggests that death will bring peace and freedom from the demands of society because it is a state of nothingness. This peaceful nothingness is a result of her escape from the constraints enforced upon her by society. The "ghost" chapter 40, the absent chapter, along with Chopin's interest in and knowledge of Eastern religions, supports this nothingness-after-death idea.

Religion is not the only aspect of Edna's early life that is revealed during her conversation with Adèle. At the stage of her life when she "traversed the ocean of waving grass," again exemplifying the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM, she experiences her first glimmers of sexual awakening. As a young woman, she remembers being "overtaken" by the "climax of her fate" (Chopin, A 18). The destination of her journey seems to catch up with her when she falls in love with a tragedian who is utterly unattainable. However, the "acme of bliss, which would have been a marriage with the tragedian, was not for her in
this world” (Chopin, Aw 19). As long as she is contained by her current bodily state, she could not attain this blissful union. Her consolation prize is marriage with Léonce Pontellier. She decides to “take her place with a certain dignity in the world of reality, closing the portals forever behind her upon the realm of romance and dreams” (Chopin, Aw 19). Her choice is indicative of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM because of the syntactic path. Edna is the theme, moving from one world, that of romance, to another, that of reality. Her goal, then, is the “real” world, and the source is the romantic dream world of young girls, which she decidedly leaves “behind” her. Her motion in this sentence is clearly away from the world of dreams and toward the realistic. In the Victorian paradigm of women’s roles, Edna’s life journey would now be clearly laid out before her. Her choice of a husband, and her decision to “take her place” in the world serve as tacit acceptance of that journey. Her acceptance of this path is seemingly confirmed when her feelings for the tragedian go the way of other young men with whom she was enamored prior to her marriage: the “tragedian had gone to join the cavalry officer and the engaged young man and a few others” (Chopin, Aw 19). At the point that Edna consents to marry Léonce, her path is set and her journey is defined. Or at least her society and her husband would have her believe so.

The next major invocation of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM occurs immediately prior to the end of the first section, in chapter nine. Edna has as yet made no overt changes in her outward behavior. She is still quite conscious of outward appearances, and realizes that she must keep her private thoughts inside herself. She has long since realized the necessity of leading the “dual life—that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which
questions" (Chopin, *Aw* 14). She is, however, drawn toward a path that differs from that which society and her husband prescribe for her. Her path now is heading in an unorthodox direction, and this movement is indicated by another syntactic path. After spending part of an evening dancing with her husband and their friends, fulfilling her expected role, "she went out on the gallery and seated herself on the low window-sill, where she commanded a view of all that went on in the hall and could look out toward the Gulf. The theme of this statement is Edna. The antecedent of "she" appears in the previous clause, so there is no ambiguity about who "she" refers to: "After Mrs. Pontellier had danced twice with her husband, once with Robert, and once with Monsieur Ratignolle, who was thin and tall and swayed like a reed in the wind when he danced, she went out on the gallery..." (Chopin, *Aw* 24-25). The first goal of the path is "out on the gallery" and the second, and more enticing goal is, as in chapter five, "toward the Gulf." The sentence also contains an additional constituent, the locatives "on the low window-sill" and "in the hall" (Chopin, *Aw* 25), indicating her position between the two paths. Again, the syntactic structures and the CMs that underlie them indicate the direction of Edna’s path, and accordingly the direction of her journey. In this instance, the description of the path is a literal one, but as we will see in chapter four of this document, clusters of other prevalent CMs occur at this point.

Edna experiences an epiphany in chapter nine which leads to her sudden ability to swim, which we see in chapter ten. As she enters the water following her passionate reaction to Mademoiselle Reisz’s piano playing, a series of "motion" sentences indicate her movement along the new path that she has chosen. She is described as a "little
tottering, stumbling, clutching child, who of a sudden realizes its powers, and walks for
the first time alone" (Chopin, Aw 27). At her point of outward departure from
conventional behavior, from the conventional path, she learns to walk alone
metaphorically, a skill that she will certainly need to follow the path that is before her. As
she swims away from the rest of the group of bathers, "a feeling of exultation overtook
her" (Chopin, Aw 27): her feelings catch up with her on the path, and presumably pass her.
She is excited, and as she swims further out to sea, she attempts to absorb the "impression
of space and solitude, which the vast expanse of water, meeting and melting with the sky,
conveyed to her excited fancy" (Chopin, Aw 28). The theme of this sentence, "impression
of space and solitude," leads us to the goal, "her excited fancy," again indicating her path
toward the sea. The sea brings on a state of near euphoria, which does not end until she
looks back behind her at the land. She becomes frightened that she will not be able to
regain the shore, but we do not see any indication that she feels drawn to the shore in the
same way that she is drawn to the sea in the earlier passages. The path inherent in "once
she turned and looked toward the shore, toward the people she had left there" reflects
Edna's ambivalence about returning to shore. The sources of the statement, the shore and
the people left there, are quite clear. However, both the goal and the theme are
ambiguous. The theme is most likely Edna's "vision," which is again connected to her
metonymically, as she is the one looking toward the shore. The source is presumably the
sea that she is immersed in, but this source is elided in the syntactic structure of the
sentence. Rather than being "seduced," as she is by the sea, she must gather "her
staggering faculties" and only just "manages" to regain the land. Chopin's language does
not convey the same seductive entreaties from the land as it does when Edna stands on the
land and looks out to sea.

The outward signs of Edna’s diverging path begin to show as she returns to her
cottage with Robert. As they walk, “her thoughts were elsewhere—somewhere in advance
of her body—and she was striving to overtake them” (Chopin, Aw 29). Her thoughts, the
theme in this structure, are ahead of her body. Similar to the scene introducing chapter
six, Edna has mentally traveled farther down her path than her body. She wants to
“overtake” her thoughts, but thus far has been unable to catch up. Her emotions have
raced ahead of her body, and at this first major section break, she is poised to allow her
body, and the outward behaviors associated with it, to overtake those emotions.

Another significant cluster of CMs occurs at the next section break, in chapters
nineteen and twenty. The second section of the novel has offered numerous examples, not
only of Edna’s dissatisfaction with the path that both her husband and society expect her
to follow, but of her inability to conform to his expectations in any meaningful way. She
no longer supervises the servants effectively, leaving her children under the constant care
of the quadroon nurse, and refusing to sleep with her husband. She quarrels with her
husband on more than one occasion about her unwillingness to maintain appearances.
Chapter nineteen describes her state of mind following one of these quarrels during which
she smashes a vase and attempts to destroy her wedding ring, saying that “she was visited
by no more such outbursts, moving her to such futile expedients” (Chopin, Aw 54). Her
movement down her chosen path has thus far been futile. She has made no real progress
toward either self-fulfillment or freedom, but has merely experienced mood swings ranging
from contentedness to morbid depression. The implication is that from here on, she will move along more expediently, and make more measurable progress on her journey. She resolves “never to take another step backward” (Chopin, *Aw* 55), again indicative of progress on a journey and another example of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM. She utterly disregards her household responsibilities, much to her husband’s disgust, choosing instead to paint and to dwell in her memories of the previous summer at Grande Isle. She swings between being “very happy without knowing why,” and on such days “she liked then to wander alone into strange and unfamiliar places” (Chopin, *Aw* 56). In terms of this sentence’s path, Edna is the theme, strange and unfamiliar places are the goal, and the source is absent. On her bad days, “life appeared to her like a grotesque pandemonium and humanity like worms struggling blindly toward inevitable annihilation” (Chopin, *Aw* 56). Humanity, of which Edna is metonymically a part, is the theme in this sentence, and the theme is headed toward its unwitting goal, annihilation. She invokes the NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM here as well, indicating that absent the enlightenment garnered from pursuing her own path, life is a “grotesque pandemonium” in which she would prefer not to engage. Chopin also uses repetition to stress the importance of this passage, repeating the passage “There were days when she was very happy without knowing why,” in the next paragraph, changing only the word “happy” to “unhappy.”

Chapter twenty couches Edna’s search for Mademoiselle Reisz, the pianist whose music launched Edna’s journey toward real passion, self-fulfillment and freedom in chapter nine, in terms of a quest: she goes on a “quest for the pianist,” attempting to “hunt her up” (Chopin, *Aw* 56). Each of these metaphoric expressions invokes the LIFE IS A
JOURNEY CM. Edna follows the path to the pianist’s door, and we later see, through the clusters of container and KNOWING IS SEEING CMs, that the pianist is a significant catalyst to Edna’s progress on her journey.

Another significant cluster of CMs occurs at the next section break, chapters twenty-nine and thirty. In chapter twenty-nine, Edna is in the process of “moving onto the little house around the block” and a “feverish anxiety” motivates “every action in that direction” (Chopin, Aw 80). Again, we see manifestations of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM in the language. Journeys require movement, and proceed in specified directions. She is escaping her husband’s influence and demands, and quitting his home in favor of a smaller one that she can support herself. Perhaps because she has just engaged in an extramarital affair, we learn that “within the precincts of her home she felt like one who has entered and lingered within the portals of some forbidden temple in which a thousand muffled voices bade her begone” (Chopin, Aw 80). The path described in this passage is conventional: Edna is the theme, and her home—Léonce’s house—is the source. The path includes the locative “within the portals of some forbidden temple,” but the goal is notably absent from the sentence itself. We know from the previous statement, however, where she is going after she leaves the source. The locatives in this statement inform the reader that Edna is no longer at ease in the traditional role, on the traditional path. She feels as if she is in a foreign place, and as if she is being asked to leave.

Chapter thirty, which should show Edna in her finest hour, as it describes the party which closes the door on her life with Léonce, and the traditional journey associated with it, in fact indicates that Edna is dissatisfied with the path that she is following. In the midst
of her guests, she feels “the old ennui overtaking her,” or catching up to her on the path. She feels overpowered by a “sense of the unattainable,” as if she will has not yet found, and may never find, the right path. These indications of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM are accompanied by additional occurrences of the NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM.

Corresponding with chapter 6 in Section 1, chapter 36 reveals, through the presence of the SEEING IS KNOWING CM, that Edna has progressed along her path. She again meets Robert by accident, as he has avoided her since their chance meeting at Mlle. Reisz's apartment in chapter 33. She has decided to “be indifferent and as reserved as when she met him,” and she had “reached the determination by a laborious train of reasoning” (Chopin, Aw 100). She has consciously decided, at this point in her experience, to be through with Robert, to keep him at arm's length with her cool outward demeanor. The “train of reasoning” suggests a path, which invokes the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM. However, it becomes apparent to Edna that a “designing Providence has led him into her path” (Chopin, Aw 100), as she has run into the young man in an out-of-the-way coffee garden, the “last place in the city where she would have expected to meet any one she knew” (Chopin, Aw 100). The “path” that Robert is placed in is the one that Edna's life is presently following. Since her path is “the way” that leads to enlightenment or understanding is same one that is referred to in chapter 6, we can only assume that she has some insight to gain from seeing Robert again. We later learn that attempting to become involved with Robert, and being rejected by him brings Edna to the realization that although there is presently “no human being whom she wanted near her except Robert . . . the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her
existence, leaving her alone” (Chopin, Aw 108). Before Edna can be completely free, she must first free herself from her visions of Robert.

During the course of her conversation with Robert, she makes it clear, both literally and metaphorically, that she no longer follows the traditional woman's path. She comments that the garden in which they sit is out of the way, and a good walk from the car. However, I don't mind walking. I always feel so sorry for women who don't like to walk; they miss so much—so many rare little glimpses of life, and we women learn so little of life on the whole. (Chopin, Aw 101)

Edna speaks of walking from the car, and how she pities those who are afraid to walk. However, if she were just talking about a simple walk from her car, she would most likely not elaborate on the philosophical reasons that she likes to walk. She is referring to her metaphorical path, the path that has led her away from the traditional woman's path, which causes women to miss so much of life. She points out that women do not experience much of life first hand, and through her comment that she doesn't “mind walking,” indicates that she is no longer following the socially-prescribed path. The LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM is evoked by Edna's tacit admission that she is on a different path.

When Robert and Edna return to the pigeon house after sitting in the garden, the presence of the NOT-SEEING IS NOT-KNOWING CM indicates that Robert does not understand the path that Edna now follows. He sits “off in the shadow,” acting as if he is in a “reverie,” when in reality he is terrified by Edna's openness. She laughs at him when he speaks of longing for Léonce to set her free, telling him that he is wasting his time
dreaming of impossible things when you speak of Mr. Pontellier setting me free! I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose. If he were to say, 'Here, Robert, take her and be happy; she is yours,' I should laugh at you both. (Chopin, *Aw* 102)

Edna's path no longer allows her to be the possession of any man, even one that she believes herself to be in love with.

Edna stands at a crossroads, as she is soon summoned to Adèle's bedside. Adèle “has been taken sick” and begs Edna to attend to her (Chopin, *Aw* 102). She has a final opportunity to choose between the role of the “mother-woman” (Chopin, *Aw* 9) and the non-traditional role toward which her path is leading her. As she leaves Robert to tend Adèle, she tells Robert that she loves him, and that he “awoke [her] last summer out of a life-long, stupid dream” (Chopin, *Aw* 103). The *Sleep is a Container CM* is evoked here, indicating that Edna believes that her goal is a loving relationship with Robert. She tells him how they will be alone together and “love each other,” regardless of her marriage, her children, or social convention. Although she leaves to comfort Adèle, she freely chooses Robert and a non-traditional life with him. Although Robert's “impulse” is to stay with Edna, he ultimately fails to transcend the boundary of propriety, even to be with the woman he claims to love. Edna makes the choice to follow her non-traditional path, as indicated by her dismissal of Adèle's plea that she “think of the children” (Chopin, *Aw* 104), but returns home to find that Robert is not waiting for her. He is not the goal of her path, but has merely been a trajectory—and an unfulfilling one at that.
The final cluster of CMs occurs in chapter thirty-nine. If the sections were completely symmetrical, chapter thirty-nine would represent a section break. However, Edna’s suicide cuts short this section, ending her journey and illustrating her choice of death as a source of freedom. Chapter thirty-nine invokes the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM: her children are antagonists who would “overcome her” (Chopin, Aw 108), and she recalls traversing the Kentucky field that “had no beginning and no end” (Chopin, Aw 109). However, hints of the end of the journey, of death, are present in this chapter as well. These death images indicate that Edna views death as the terminus of the journey. For example, although she looks up and down the beach, there is “no living thing in sight.” An injured bird is “beating the air above . . . circling disabled down, down to the water” to its death (Chopin, Aw 108). She then remembers the important events of her life, another indication of impending death. She is ultimately “press[ed] upon and over-power[ed]” by death itself. Throughout this narrative, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM has been invoked through the overtaking of one object or person on the path by another. In the final scene, death overtakes Edna. She feels released prior to entering the water to embrace death and the freedom it represents by submerging herself in the seductive sea. Edna’s journey ends in death, rather than in an afterlife, as her nineteenth-century contemporaries believed.

Edna’s journey ultimately leads her to the sea, to which she is drawn throughout the novel. We might describe Edna’s entire journey in terms of a path, in which she is the theme, the sea is her goal, and traditional expectations of women, as exemplified by Léonce Pontellier and Adèle Ratignolle, are the source. The trajectories on Edna’s path are each related to men: the tragedian, Léonce, Alcée, Robert. Each time she follows a
trajectory, she ends up experiencing the restlessness that she is attempting to escape even more powerfully than she did before she headed in the wrong direction. Only when she returns to her proper path—the one that ultimately leads her to the sea—does she feel any relief from her ennui. The only lasting peace that Edna Pontellier experiences comes from when she is following the path of the JOURNEY that leads to freedom.
NOTES

1 The KNOWING IS SEEING CM and container metaphors will be discussed in chapter 4 of this document.

2 I thank my collaborator, David J. Caudle, for permission to use his explanatory comparison of the Petrarchan conceit and conceptual metaphor in this chapter.

3 A fuller discussion is offered of the implications of the repetition of key passages in *The Awakening* in "Waving at the Sea: Lifting the Veil of Poetic Iconicity," a collaborative endeavor with David J. Caudle. This paper was delivered at LASSO 25 in Las Cruces, New Mexico in October, 1995. Further discussion of Chopin's repetitive techniques is forthcoming in "Repetition and Atavistic Triads in *The Awakening*." This essay is also a collaborative endeavor with David J. Caudle.

4 For a more complete discussion of the "light dawning within her," see chapter 4 of this document.
CHAPTER 4:
METAPHORS OF CONTAINMENT AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE AWAKENING

Thus far, I have attempted to demonstrate that the idea of a journey operates on both the conceptual and the thematic level in The Awakening. However, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM and the thematic journey that is based on the structure of this CM do not comprise the sum total of the conceptual structures in Chopin’s novel and, accordingly, examining the presence of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM in The Awakening tells only part of the story. Absent the restlessness and ennui that she experiences, the journey that constitutes Edna’s life would have been conducted, and ended, very differently. Edna makes the choices that she does because she feel contained by her husband, her family, and the Creole society of which she is a part. She grows increasingly unhappy with the realization that her lot is to be nothing more than one of Léonce’s “household gods” (Chopin, Aw 48). Edna’s experience is not made up only of the milestones on the path between her birth, her awakenings, and her death. Her experience also involves escaping from containers which restrict her movement toward self-fulfillment and freedom. The conceptual structure of The Awakening is also drawn from metaphors of containment and from the KNOWING IS SEEING CM. The KNOWING IS SEEING CM extends to include what I will call the KNOWING IS SEEING structure. I argue that these metaphoric structures, together with the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CMs, are clustered around the section breaks described in chapter three.
The Awakening derives part of its underlying structure from the ontological structure of containers. People perceive the world in terms of physical containers with insides, outsides, and boundaries that separate what is on the inside of the container from what is on the outside. This ontological orientation is based on our perception of our bodies and their orientation to physical surroundings. According to Lakoff and Johnson, “each of us is a container, with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces” (Lakoff, Metaphors 29). Mark Johnson, in The Body in the Mind, expands this description, arguing that we are intimately aware of our bodies as three-dimensional containers into which we put certain things (food, water, air) and out of which other things emerge (food and water wastes, air, blood, etc.). From the beginning, we experience constant physical containment in our surroundings (those things which envelop us). We move in and out of rooms, clothes, vehicles, and numerous kinds of bounded spaces. We manipulate objects, placing them in containers (cups, boxes, cans, bags, etc.). In each of these cases there are repeatable spatial and temporal organizations. (Johnson 21)

We perceive our bodies as containers, and we also perceive our bodies as being contained by outside entities. Our “experiential basis for in-out orientation is that of spatial boundedness” and our “physical in-out orientation involves separation, differentiation, and enclosure, which implies restriction and limitation” (Johnson 22). By definition, containment involves limitations on movement and the necessity of crossing bounded
spaces in order to leave containing spaces. Further, the “body can take up the role of the ‘thing contained’ or the ‘container’” (Johnson 34), allowing us, through our physical experiences, either to be contained or to act as a vessel which contains extraneous substances. We embody the things which we experience on the basis of this perception of our bodies as objects that are capable of containing or being contained.

This ontological orientation is reflected in the metaphoric concepts that structure our daily language. Prepositions that indicate location—such as in, out, out of, into, inside, within, without—convey this information in English. For example, we may get into or out of the swimming pool; the pool has literal boundaries that we must penetrate to go from dry land to water, and later back to land. Similarly, we can dive into the ocean, get out of the ocean, play in the water, and so on. We also commonly hear metaphoric locative expressions such as:

- John came out of the closet.
- After you get a couple of drinks in her, she really comes out of her shell.
- He jumped out of his skin.
- I can’t get into Plato’s philosophy.

We may get into and out of trouble, schools, or relationships of various kinds. Locative prepositions, therefore, are one manifestation of an underlying container structure. We may also extrapolate metaphorically, treating abstract entities such as arguments, agreements, contracts or obligations as bounded entities (Johnson 35). Metaphoric examples of container structures include:

- Don’t you dare back out of our agreement.
• If you want out, bow out now, before we go any further (Johnson 35).

• Your argument doesn’t have much content.

• Your argument won’t hold water (Lakoff, Metaphors 92).

Clusters of these metaphoric container structures appear in The Awakening. Two CMs underlie the container schema in Chopin’s novel: Possession Is A Container and The Past Is A Pursuer/Captor/Object of Constraint. The Possession Is A Container CM is based upon the principle that if “x” possesses “y” then “y” is a subset, or part, of “x.” In other words, to be possessed is to be constrained by some external force exercised by the possessor. From this CM, we can generate such examples as:

• The teacher lost her hold on the class.

• I want to get my hands on her.

• He’s got her under his thumb.

• She’s under his spell.

The Past Is A Pursuer/Captor/Object of Constraint CM includes such constructions as:

• I am bound to repeat my mistakes.

• He’s trapped in his past.

• The past rules her life.

• He is enslaved by his past.

• Her past caught up with her.

In Chopin’s novel, these two CMs are interrelated. Edna is one of her husband’s
possessions and is constrained by her role as his wife. Léonce Pontellier thinks of her as an object, looking on her as a "valuable piece of personal property" (Chopin, Aw 4). Each time she attempts to leave the container which is constructed by her husband’s possession, she is pursued. She is often overtaken by her past, recaptured, and returned to the container. Because Edna is a possession, she is constrained by external forces, namely her husband’s expectations of her as a wife and mother.

As the title of the novel suggests, *The Awakening* is a story about Edna’s emotional awakening, which implies an additional CM, SLEEP IS A CONTAINER. We commonly say things like

- He was in a deep sleep, or, She emerged from a deep sleep.
- The patient came out of a coma.
- John was in a trance, or, John was entranced.
- He's been in the land of sleep too long.
- Sleep enveloped me after working all night.

Metaphorically, sleep represents an unconscious state which contains the sleeper until such time as they awaken and leave the container. At the beginning of *The Awakening*, Edna is metaphorically asleep, and is accordingly described as "self-contained," and "reserved" (Chopin, Aw 17). She is not only contained by her circumstances, but she contains herself as well. Edna comprehends very early in her life the necessity of leading a "dual life—that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions" (Chopin, Aw 14). The in-out orientation of the container is inherent in this pivotal description of Edna’s perception of life in Creole society. She must hold her questions inside of herself, within
the bounded region that she embodies. What takes place outside of that bounded region must conform to societal expectations, and the events which take place outside must also not invade her inner region. The result balancing this in-out dichotomy is that Edna is often overcome by restlessness (Chopin, *Aw* 17) but she can not articulate the reasons for her ennui. As the awareness of what she wants grows, she attempts to escape from the containers that she exists within. She emerges from her metaphoric sleep, and the longer she is awakened, the more constraining she finds the container that her life represents.

Closely related to the KNOWING IS SEEING CM is the SLEEPING IS IGNORANCE CM, as illustrated in statements such as “we should let sleeping dogs lie” or “he lives in a dream world.” SLEEPING IS IGNORANCE is a subset of the KNOWING IS SEEING/KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT CMs. Linguistic manifestations of these CMs include statements such as:

- We sleep with our eyes closed.
- He is blinded to the truth.
- She refused to see the light.
- I woke up to a new dawn.

When we are in the dark, we are ignorant or unenlightened and it is only through becoming accustomed to the light that we recognize truth. From the very title of the novel, we see various container metaphors and their underlying structures.

The plot of the novel centers around Edna’s dilemma, which is structured by a series of containers from which she can not escape without being pursued by a past that threatens to recapture her and “drag her into the soul’s slavery” (Chopin, *Aw* 108). In fact, Edna is constrained by a group of containers that are surrounded by a transcendent,
unbounded universe. Chopin foreshadows the nature of Edna's dilemma and its structure in chapter six of the novel. As she begins to follow the path toward a different way of life, Chopin describes the process through which Edna's inner self will evolve: "Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her [emphasis added]"
(Chopin, A 14). The key to understanding this passage lies in the locative prepositions that both define and describe the relationship between the concentric containers which restrain Edna. These containers, beginning with the smallest, represent Edna's inner self—the part that is within herself. The second represents the outer self that she presents to the world—her "relations to the world"—and the third represents the society of which she is a part—the world about her. These three concentric containers are surrounded by the larger universe, which transcends boundaries and cannot be contained.

The smallest of these concentric containers represents Edna's inner self. Chopin describes Edna's restlessness and the "light that was beginning to dawn dimly within her, —the light which, showing the way, forbids it" (Chopin 14). Edna is beginning to perceive the need for some sort of change in her life, yet also perceives the consequences of this change. She realizes that she is presently in the dark, but that she is beginning to see the possibilities for a different way of life. Her thought processes are structured by the

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Chopin describes her as coming out of the "midnight" that had previously overcome her into the "light that was beginning to dawn" (Chopin 14). We see further evidence of Edna's internal realization that a change in her consciousness is imminent, as this is the only occasion in which Chopin breaks the flow of the narrative by
interjecting her own voice rather than the voice of the narrator. She reports that the beginning of things, of a world especially, is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing. How few of us ever emerge from such beginning! How many souls perish in its tumult. (Chopin, *Aw* 14)

Chopin’s choice of the verb “emerge,” along with the use of the exclamation point to emphasize the sentence in which it appears, makes the textual connection between the container structures and the other CMs—her awakening from sleep, her emergence from containers, her attempts to escape her past.

Chopin speaks of the “beginning of things” in a vague manner. She uses nouns such as “things” and “world,” both of which are large and can be interpreted in a number of ways. “Things” could identify any object, and a “world” could be a microcosm or macrocosm of earth, of a society, of an individual’s life. Further, the use of a verbal gerund as the subject of the sentence itself creates vagueness. Through this vagueness of language we get a sense of Edna’s confusion: the beginning is “tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing” (Chopin, *Aw* 14) and causes her to grope for answers that are not easily found, because she is only now becoming aware of the “world within” herself. She is starting to feel the need to escape from the constraints that exist inside of her, yet when she does cross the boundary of her self-containment, she will find herself constrained by another, only slightly larger, container.

That next container represents the face that Edna presents to society, or her outer self. Edna has not only begun to “realize her position in the universe,” but to “recognize her relations as an individual to the world... about her” (Chopin, *Aw* 14). In her attempts
to resolve the conflict between her inner self and the outward face that she shows the world, she first tries to change herself. At this point, Edna attempts a variety of tasks. She tries to become an artist, not only on canvas but in the transcendent sense of the word. She has experienced momentary transcendence to a universal plain when she listens to Mademoiselle Reisz’s music, finding that the “very passions themselves were aroused within her soul” (Chopin 26). She must, however, keep the passions inside of her soul, as allowing them to pass the bounded space of her body, and her inner self by metonymic extension, would cause consternation on the part of her husband and her society that she is not yet prepared to confront. She has only begun to search for a way to escape the confinement enforced upon her inner self, and perhaps because of this she finds that for the “first time her being was tempered to take an impress of the abiding truth” (Chopin, Aw 26). This truth, this grasping for a way to relate her experiences to the world around her, grows out of her recognition of her position in the world. She has seen an intimation of eternal truth, and she is moved to reach out and attempt to make contact with it. The first thing that she does to connect with “truth” is to change her own person. She reaches out for a solution to the restlessness of the inner self through her outer self, but this approach places her in direct conflict with the larger society.

The third container represents the larger society in which she must function, the world “about her” (Chopin, Aw 14). As Edna’s behavior changes outwardly, her peers notice these changes. One family friend comments that she “doesn’t seem like the same woman,” while her husband worries that she may be “growing a little unbalanced mentally” because she “plainly . . . was not herself” (Chopin, Aw 55). These changes, however, are not
directly caused by the changes in her external self. She tells her husband, for example, that she is "not a painter. It isn't on account of painting that I let things go" (Chopin, Aw 55). She also begins to challenge and attempt to change the larger society. After a fight with her husband, she yanks off her wedding ring and stomps on it. She wants to destroy this symbol of the marriage convention that she had willingly accepted from her husband earlier in the text. Although she later admits to feeling "childish" and "foolish" (Chopin, Aw 54) over her outburst, she "began to do as she liked, and to feel as she liked" (Chopin, Aw 54). By invoking the images from childhood in her own description of her outburst, Chopin again invokes the CMs of the earlier imagery, for example SLEEPING IS IGNORANCE, making a direct textual connection with the past and foreshadowing her attempts to escape from her container. Edna comes into conflict with society when her awakened inner self begins to emerge from its containment. At this point in the story, Edna sees the futility of solving her problem by changing only her own external behavior. She loses interest in her painting and begins to attempt to change the conditions of the larger world where they come into conflict with her newly emerging inner identity. She is "casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world" (Chopin, Aw 55).

The final container is the force that inspires her awakening, manifesting itself as the "voice of the sea," the "spirit of the gulf," the "soft effulgence in the east," and so on. This force, which has caused her to "realize her position in the universe" (Chopin, Aw 14), is both her inspiration and her ultimate goal. She attempts to reach this goal by escaping from the concentric containers of self and society, however, her goal of a union with this
transcendent entity is ultimately unattainable because even though her inner self is able to
break through these boundaries, her past pursues her, and threatening to recapture her and
return her to the confinement that she experienced before her inner awakening.

The Past is Pursuer/Captor CM is introduced prior to and immediately after
Edna's inner awakening. In the last chapter of the book, Edna returns to the Gulf of
Mexico, the scene of her initial awakening, in an unconscious attempt to flee from the
trappings of her past life. The language of this passage is ripe with examples of the Past is
. . . CM. Her children become “antagonists” who would “overcome her; who had
overpowered her and sought to drag her into the soul’s slavery for the rest of her days”
(Chopin, Aw 108). The concepts of “antagonists,” being “overcome” and “dragged into
slavery” are all consistent with the Past is a captor CM. A force stronger than
Edna—her past—is seeking to force her into a role that she is not suited for and can no
longer fulfill. She also “knew a way to elude them” (Chopin, Aw 108). Again, the choice
of the word “eluding” emphasizes the Past is Pursuer/Captor CM, as someone being
forced into an unwanted position will most often try to run away from the person doing
the forcing.

Chopin uses repetition to illustrate the manner in which Edna’s past is pursuing her
after she escapes the confinement of her past life. For example, as she stands before the
sea, she casts off the “pricking garments” that she is wearing—the same garments that she
assumes “to appear before the world” (Chopin, Aw 55). She is confronted by memories of
her past, and most often these memories are phrased identically to the way in which they
appear earlier in the novel. She enters the water thinking of the same “blue-grass meadow
that she had traversed when she was a little child" (Chopin, *Aw* 109) that she had
described to Adele Ratignolle immediately after the awakening of her internal self. Edna
also again mentions that she had believed that the meadow had "no beginning and no end"
(Chopin, *Aw* 109), which illustrates a clear absence of both containers and boundaries.

Since the field is a boundless region that she crosses to escape from her father's
overbearing, gloomy Protestantism, to "run away from prayers," the field offers Edna an
uncontained space in which she can hide from her restrictive life. Edna also reports that
shortly after she runs away from her prayers, religion took a "hold" on her that it held
"until now" (Chopin, *Aw* 17). From her youth, religion becomes one of the societal
containers that she wishes to escape, although she goes through a period of time during
which she is trying to conform. Part of her conformity includes attending the Catholic
church. However, as she begins to awaken, she reports that religion leaves her feeling
"aimless" and "unguided," indicating that religion is not serving its intended purpose—to
give life direction.

Edna also remembers the night that she learned to swim, when she "swam far out, and
recalled the terror that seized her" (Chopin, *Aw* 109). On that night, her fear is described
as a "flash of terror" (Chopin, *Aw* 28). As she swims to her death, the "old terror flamed
up for an instant" (Chopin, *Aw* 109). Mademoiselle Reisz accuses Edna of having
"pretensions" in an early conversation about what is required of an artist. She tells Edna
that an artist must have a "courageous soul . . . the soul that dares and defies" (Chopin,
*Aw* 61). As Edna is swimming to her death, she again hears Mademoiselle's words in
exactly the same form that she heard them originally. Mademoiselle's taunts, and her
expectations, pursue Edna in much the same way as the expectations of her children. Each of these linguistic elements indicates the way in which the PAST IS PURSUER/CAPTOR CM structures the narrative.

In chapter 39, after Edna has swum far enough out into the ocean that it is clear to her that she will not be able to regain the land, her past starts to gain on her. She thinks of her husband and children, commenting that they need not have thought they could "possess her, body and soul." She then recalls the good-bye note from Robert, which she finds after he has abandoned her. We find a word-for-word repetition of the note: "Good-by—because I love you" (Chopin, Aw 109). She then hears the voices of her father and sister, in terms identical to those that she uses to describe them in a conversation with Adele Ratignolle in chapter seven. She hears the barking of an old dog and the spurs of an Army officer upon whom she had a childhood crush, once again related in exactly the same words that she used to report this information when she described the scenes to Adele. Finally, in the last line of the novel, even the sounds that she hears as she dies are identical to those that she describes from her childhood in Kentucky—the hum of bees fills her head. Edna's past literally pursues her to her grave. Her death is not a tragedy, however, because through her death, Edna accomplishes the goal of her JOURNEY. She escapes the containment inherent in her bodily state, and through her enclosure in the sea, becomes an unbounded, unrestricted part of the transcendent universe. She becomes free and uncontained, as she is in a state of peaceful nothingness.

The concentric containers which hold Edna are not the only manifestations of container metaphors or of the KNOWING IS SEEING CM. Clusters of CMs occur at the
structural section breaks in the novel, and also in chapter seven, which provides the history of Edna's path. The milestones on her path, which are marked by the structural section breaks, are not only indicated by invocations of the LIFE AS A JOURNEY CM or by syntactic path schemas. For example, chapter seven invokes container metaphors and the KNOWING IS SEEING CM at several points. She recalls a scene from her childhood:

I was just walking diagonally across a big field. My sun-bonnet obstructed the view. I could see only the stretch of green before me, and I felt as if I must walk on forever, without coming to the end of it. (Chopin, Aw 17)

Edna's early experience describes a metaphoric journey, to which she sees no imminent end. She journeys across the field, and observing the huge expanse in front of her, feels as if her journey will go on forever. While her walk across the endless field is example of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM because it marks an early milestone in her path, is it telling that Edna sees no light at the end of the journey because her view is obstructed. There is no "light dimly dawning within her" (Chopin, Aw 14) and the KNOWING IS SEEING CM is not invoked. In fact, the reverse of the KNOWING IS SEEING CM—NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING—is invoked in much the same way that Don Freeman describes in his paper "Cognitive Metaphor and Literary Interpretation: A Shakespearean Hologram" (4). He points out that numerous "entailments" of the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphoric structure exist: "WISDOM IS LIGHT, IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS; LIFE IS LIGHT AND DEATH IS DARKNESS" as "we must be alive to see and hence to know. The KNOWING IS SEEING generic metaphor lends structure to the blend [such that] . . . if KNOWING IS SEEING, then NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING" (Freeman 4). Edna also perceives no boundaries to the
field, fearing that she will not come to the end of it. Edna is not as sensitive to being contained in her youth as she later becomes. At this tender age, she has only taken a few tentative steps down her path, and has not experienced any sort of awakening, so we would not expect her to show signs of insight. However, she intuitively runs away from the authority that she resists her entire life, and accordingly, it acts as another manifestation of the journey.

Chopin foreshadows Edna’s final choice of containment in the sea, and its associations with the transcendent universe, in chapter seven. The “acme of bliss” that she might achieve were she able to marry the tragedian is “not for her in this world” (Chopin, Aw 19). To achieve this state of contentment, she must cross the boundaries of the containers that restrict her, and remove herself from the world that she is “in.”

Edna experiences her first epiphany in chapter nine, and in addition to the Life is a Journey CM, container metaphors and the Knowing is seeing CM are also invoked. Edna strolls out onto the gallery after participating in the familial scene, and seats herself between the two sources that would contain her: the Gulf and the hall in which the party is taking place. Numerous manifestations of Knowing is seeing alert us to the fact that something significant is going to happen: there is a “soft effulgence,” the moon is rising and its “mystic shimmer” casts a “million lights across the distant, restless water” (Chopin, Aw 25). The references to light, especially when they are associated with the sea, cue the reader that something significant is afoot.

As Mademoiselle Reisz plays the piano, Edna is overwhelmed by the intensity of her emotional reaction. Passion is aroused “within her soul,” indicating that the passion is
contained inside of her. It must pass through a bounded region to escape, and she is metaphorically assailed by the passion’s attempt to escape from within her. The passions attack her soul, “swaying it, lashing it,” in much the same way that the waves of the Gulf beat “upon her splendid body” on a daily basis. Notably, Edna is not described as being contained by the sea at this point. The sea beats “upon” her, but does not break through her physical boundary. She is not yet prepared for communion with the sea, as she is still contained by both societal expectations and her internal turmoil. Edna is also “blinded” by tears, an indication that although she has experienced an awakening, it is not a complete one. She has experienced passion, but the language of the text is still couched in terms of NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING—she is still blinded to both the cause of her reaction and its consequences.

Chapter ten again invokes container metaphors, by illustrating her first immersion in the sea. Edna has previously been unable to learn to swim. However, although she is swimming in the sea, she is described as “lifting her body to the surface of the water” (Chopin, *Aw* 27). She is not yet prepared to escape the influences which contain her and accept containment by the sea, and accordingly we see her on the water rather than in it. She reaches out “for the unlimited in which to lose herself” but ultimately returns to shore having only gathered an “impression of space and solitude” from the water rather than having experienced containment by it and the freedom which would result. In this chapter, which is significant on a structural level, we also see indications of the KNOWING IS SEEING CM, as Edna watches Robert “pass in and out of the strips of moonlight” on two separate occasions. He moves “in and out” between the regions of light and darkness, and
it is as he passes back and forth between the two that Edna begins to realize the “first-felt throbings of desire” (Chopin, Aw 30). The light leads Edna to the knowledge of her passion, and specifically of her passion for Robert.

The next structural break, found in chapters nineteen and twenty, illustrate the KNOWING IS SEEING. When describing her bad days, immediately prior to seeking out Mademoiselle Reisz, Edna views all of humanity as “worms struggling blindly toward inevitable annihilation” (Chopin, Aw 56). This passage gives the appearance of separating Edna from the rest of humanity. In this instance, she is the passive observer of life, to whom life “appears” grotesque. The worms who struggle blindly do not understand that they are restricted, and that they will ultimately die. Edna appears to have some insight into her situation, which moves her to seek out Mademoiselle Reisz, whose music initially started her on her JOURNEY. As she seeks Mademoiselle Reisz in chapter twenty, Edna is not only metaphorically contained, but literally as well. After realizing that she has lost Mademoiselle’s address, Edna visits the Lebrun’s town home, which is surrounded by a high fence which encloses their garden (Chopin, Aw 57). She sits inside of the enclosure, a structure with physical boundaries which one must pass through to enter or exit. Her search for Mademoiselle makes a statement about Edna’s willingness to be constrained by societal conventions. Rather than consenting to “stay and spend the remainder of the afternoon, and pay a visit to Mademoiselle Reisz some other day,” as would have been the polite thing to do, Edna insists on leaving the enclosed garden and calling on Mademoiselle Reisz that very afternoon. After she has passed beyond the bounded region, Victor Lebrun comments that in “some way she doesn’t seem like the same woman”
(Chopin, Aw 59). The changes in Edna that have occurred as a result of her awakenings are perceptible even to those who are not especially close to her.

While the CMs in chapter twenty-nine, at the last major section break, are largely structured around the LIFE is A JOURNEY CM, elements of the KNOWING is SEEING CM are apparent in chapter thirty. Edna throws a party to celebrate her departure from Léonce’s home. The party is filled with light, representative of her enhanced self-knowledge—the same self-knowledge that has led her to the decision to vacate her husband’s home and live alone. However, even in the midst of her triumphant exit, we realize that she is not completely fulfilled. She is escaping many of the outward influences which contain her by leaving her husband’s home, but she is still bothered by her “spiritual vision” which “overpowers her . . . with a sense of the unattainable” (Chopin, Aw 85).

Although Edna has managed to escape from many of the restrictive influences, she realizes, through this spiritual vision, that she has not achieved the level of knowledge and freedom that she desires. She ends the evening by “impetuously and blindly” shattering a glass on the table because of a song that Victor sings, a song that reminds her too poignantly of Robert. Edna is, at this point, still enamored of Robert; she has not yet been released from the spell of her attraction to him. In fact, her infatuation with Robert is the last containing vessel that she must escape before she can allow herself to be contained by the sea.

The final container that Edna must cast off is her body. In order to live the “inward life that questions” (Chopin, Aw 17) thus finding self-fulfillment, she must transcend the boundaries inherent in her physical state. As long as she is physically constrained by her
body and the expectations enforced upon her because of it, she will remain restricted. She realizes that in order to be fulfilled, she must escape this restriction, regardless of the cost. As she walks to the beach for her last swim, she mentally reviews those things which contain her: Alcée Arobin, Léonce, her sons, Robert. She now understands “clearly”—evoking the KNOWING IS SEEING CM—what she meant when she told Adele that she would “give up the unessential but she would never sacrifice herself for her children” (Chopin, Aw 108). She would perhaps die to protect her sons from physical danger, but she would rather be embraced by the sea and contained by it than to be “dragged into the soul's slavery” by her children. She opts instead for death, and the nothingness and peaceful freedom that it offers.

We also know that Edna is presently contained by despair, as “despondency had come upon here there in the wakeful night, and had never lifted” (Chopin, Aw 108). She is covered by this despondency that is “upon” her and will not “lift.” In the grip of this despair, she realizes that

There was no one thing in the world that she desired. There was no human being whom she wanted near her except Robert; and she even realized that the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone... But she knew a way to elude them.

*She was not thinking of these things when she walked down to the beach* [emphasis added]. (Chopin, Aw 108)

Edna’s realization that she must escape the physical embodiment of her restraint explains the ambiguous statement concerning what Edna is *not* thinking about in chapter thirty-
nine. Although Chopin gives a laundry list of reasons for Edna's despair, none of these are what Edna is contemplating as she approaches the sea. She has realized that she must shed her physical container, and it is this that she is thinking about as she approaches the sea. We are cued to this final awakening by the references to light—the "million lights of the sun" and Edna's act of standing "at the mercy of the sun"—which invoke the KNOWING IS SEEING CM. She figuratively sheds the outer boundaries of her body, in the form of her clothing. As she stands "beside the sea," in which she is not yet contained, she casts "the unpleasant, pricking garments from her" (Chopin, Aw 108). For the first time in her life, she stands "naked in the open air" (Chopin, Aw 108), and having discarded all of the containers that enclosed and restricted her body, she prepares to enter the sea so that she can transcend her body as well and thus achieve freedom. As she enters the sea, she is described as a "new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known" (Chopin, Aw 109). We realize that she has reached the end of her JOURNEY, and that she has gained enlightenment at its end. She chooses to shed the physical container which restricts her thoughts and in exchange to be contained by the sea's "soft, close embrace" (Chopin, Aw 108).

In addition to the previously discussed CMs, an additional conceptual structure underlies the narrative of The Awakening. The CM KNOWING IS SEEING, which we see illustrated in expressions such as:

- I'm in over my head.
- He's in hot water.
- He's just treading water.
• She can’t keep her head above water.

• I’m out of my depth and sinking under the weight of the responsibility.

• “There is a tide in the affairs of men/ Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;/ Omitted all the voyage of their life/ Is bound in shallows and in miseries”  
  
  (Julius Caesar 4.3.217)

We do not often think of bodies of water as offering knowledge or insight, but in fact, we use these expressions, and others like them, on many occasions. As the passage from Julius Caesar indicates, this CM is productive in the context of literary texts as well as in everyday language. Edna’s clear connection to the sea, and its continued association with her attainment of knowledge, and its ultimate position as the goal of her path, make the Knowing is Seeing CM relevant to The Awakening.

Edna’s Journey is structured by a variety of conceptual elements, many of which she must attempt to escape. As she attempts to escape the containers which confine her and keep her from attaining the knowledge and self-fulfillment that she seeks, she is pursued by her past. Her past follows her out to sea, where she chooses a union with the sea and a transcendent universe rather than a return to the containers that she has worked so hard to escape.
NOTES

1 Portions of this chapter are the result of a collaborative paper with David J. Caudle titled "Conceptual Metaphor in Kate Chopin's Fiction: the Container Chain" which was presented at Linguistic Society of the Southwest Annual Conference, October, 1996, and are used with his permission.
CHAPTER 5:

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR IN KATE CHOPIN’S SHORT FICTION

Although *The Awakening* is Chopin’s most important piece of fiction, many of her short stories warrant serious critical attention. Many of the conceptual structures which underlie *The Awakening* may also be found in the short fiction, and, as in the case of *The Awakening*, offer the reader insight into the meaning of the texts. In this chapter, I will examine the conceptual structures underlying selected pieces of Chopin’s fiction. I have chosen six stories that have received varying amounts of critical attention, in the hopes of illustrating that these conceptual structures are present in the body of her fiction, rather than in only a few important pieces. These stories will be presented chronologically on the basis of their publication date. I will argue that conceptual metaphors underlie the fiction regardless of its date of composition or publication, because these CMs are unconscious manifestations of human thought that are consistently and constantly present in language, whether that language is ordinary, poetic, or literary.

Much of Chopin’s early short fiction was collected in the volume *Bayou Folk*, which appeared in 1894. Emily Toth reports that “all but four of the stories had been previously published” (223) and of the four previously unpublished stories, two were “criticisms of marriage,” “In Sabine” and “Madame Célestine’s Divorce” (Toth 223). A second
collection, *A Night in Acadie*, appeared before the publication of *The Awakening* in 1899.

We see container metaphors, manifestations of the **PAST IS PURSUER/CAPTOR** CM, as well as invocations of the **KNOWING IS SEEING** and **LIFE IS A JOURNEY** CMs in many of Chopin’s short pieces. Specifically, I will examine the multiple conceptual metaphors invoked in “Beyond the Bayou” (1891), “Désirée’s Baby” (1892) “In Sabine” (1893), and “In and Out of Old Natchitoches” (1893) all of which were published in the *Bayou Folk* collection. I will also discuss “At Cheniere Caminada” (1893 ), and “Athénaise” (1895) from the *A Night in Acadie* collection and “Lilacs” (1894 ), which was not published in a collected volume until after Chopin’s death, but appeared in the *New Orleans Times-Democrat* in 1896.

"Beyond the Bayou"

“Beyond the Bayou” is one of Chopin’s best known short stories. Often anthologized, the story is memorable in large part because of the fundamental change that occurs in the story’s protagonist, La Folle. “Beyond the Bayou” draws its structure from two groups of CMs—container metaphors and the **KNOWING IS SEEING** CM. La Folle is a middle-aged former slave who was traumatized as a child when her young master fell into her cabin bleeding and near death during a skirmish of the Civil War. Witnessing her master in this state frightened La Folle “literally out of her senses,” and the result of this terror is that she refuses to leave the plot of land upon which her little cabin rests. Her whole life, to the point that the story beings, has been lived on in this space. Her cabin and the land that it rests upon are contained by the bayou that surrounds it:

the bayou curved like a crescent around the point of land on which La
Folle’s cabin stood. Between the stream and the hut lay a big abandoned field, where cattle were pastured when the bayou supplied them with water enough. Through the woods that spread back into unknown regions the woman had drawn an imaginary line, and past this circle she never stepped.

(CW 175)

The physical structure of La Folle’s cabin is that of a structure that exists inside of a container. In La Folle’s mind, the bayou acts as a protective boundary around her home. She perceives a clear division—the line that she has mentally drawn—between her space and the outside world which she finds threatening and frightening. The fact that she is contained in this space is confirmed by the fact that she never steps outside of the imaginary circle that she has drawn around her plot of land.

The KNOWING IS SEEING CM plays a critical role in the conceptual structure of “Beyond the Bayou.” Initially, this CM is manifested in the form of NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING. Because she dwells alone, and because the rest of the plantation, including the former slaves’ quarters, have “long since been removed beyond her sight and knowledge” (CW 175), La Folle has no experience outside of her small world.

Accordingly, she can not see beyond the world that she has constructed for herself. She has no insight into how life works, into how to relate to other people, into how to escape from the fear that has restricted her movements for her entire life. Even when her mistress dies, she does not “cross the bayou” but stands “upon her side of it” expressing her grief. She tells marvelous stories of “things that always happened ‘yonda, beyon’ de bayou” (CW 176) but never experiences these things herself. La Folle’s level of knowledge is
lower than that of the cows that are sometimes pastured outside of her cabin, as the cows
cross the bayou regularly. She thinks of them as her “dumb companions” and likes to “feel
that they were there, and to hear them browsing by night up to her own inclosure (sic)”
(CW 176). La Folle’s fear is so ingrained and so basic a part of her personality that she
can not overcome it. Accordingly, “of the world beyond the bayou she had long known
nothing, save what her morbid fancy conceived;” La Folle has no practical knowledge of
life outside of her little world. She is completely contained by it, and it offers her no
knowledge of what life beyond the bayou has to offer.

The turning point for La Folle comes when she is forced to cross the bayou. Chéri,
her master’s son and the apple of her eye, inadvertently shoots himself in the leg while
hunting. La Folle rescues the boy, but when she reaches the edge of the bayou and cries
for help, none is available. In order to save Chéri, La Folle has no choice but to cross the
bayou. She reaches the abandoned field, beyond which she has never ventured, and
“crossed it with her precious burden,” suffering all the while from her “fear of the world
beyond the bayou, the morbid and insane dread she had been under since childhood” (CW
177). When her shouts for help bring none, she gives a “last despairing look around her,”
and her terror at being forced out of her safe space is apparent. She is overwhelmed with
“extreme terror,” but she shuts her eyes and “ran suddenly down the shallow bank of the
bayou, and never stopped till she had climbed the opposite shore” (CW 178). When she
reaches the other side of the bayou, she “plunged into the footpath through the trees” and
heads toward the main house, to the boy’s parents. La Folle crosses the border of the
space which has contained her, and provided her with a feeling of security against her fear.
The presence of a syntactic path schema indicates the significance of La Folle’s journey across the bayou. La Folle is the theme, the object moving along the path, both literally and syntactically. Her goal is the opposite shore, and the path that leads from the shore to the house. The source of the path is the shallow bank that she runs down, the edge of her contained, safe space. The path that La Folle follows to escape from her restricted state is defined syntactically, and indicates that this crossing of borders will lead to a life-changing experience for La Folle. The importance of this release from the container is further underscored by the presence of the NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM. La Folle clamps her eyes tightly as she runs through the bayou, only opening them momentarily to make sure that she has found the right path after gaining the other side. She then “closed her eyes tightly against the sight of that unknown and terrifying world” (CW 178). Even as she is escaping from her contained state, and crossing the boundaries that have held her in that state, she is terrified to open her eyes and witness the reality of the world outside of that container. La Folle resists knowledge of that world, as illustrated by her closed eyes, and the description of the world as both unknown and terrifying. Finally, when she has delivered Chéri safely to his parents, she faints, causing the world to turn “black” and again invoking the NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM. After escaping from her contained state, La Folle is plunged into complete darkness, indicating a complete absence of understanding of what she has accomplished or of the world around her.

This absence of understanding is temporary. Although many of the people on the plantation expect her to die, La Folle “regained consciousness” (CW 178). She finds
herself at home in her own bed, but the phrasing of the sentence also suggests a regaining of the “senses” and “consciousness” that she lost during the childhood trauma. After La Folle regains consciousness, a number of manifestations of the KNOWING IS SEEING CM occur: moonlight “streams” through her window, giving “what light was needed” for La Folle to see what is going on around her (CW 179). Rather than opting for darkness and intentional ignorance, La Folle is now opening her eyes and allowing them to adjust to the light that will teach her about life outside of the container.

When she arises the next morning, La Folle is no longer afraid to cross the bayou. She walks “across the old familiar field to the bayou’s edge,” the same bayou that had caused her to “look constantly and restlessly” and to fear “the world beyond the bayou” just the day before (CW 177). On this day, she crosses the bayou “with a long steady stride as if she had done this all her life” (CW 179). As she walks toward the main house, she observes the world around her, now walking “slowly and uncertainly, like one who hardly knows how, looking about her as she went” (CW 179). The PAST IS A PURSUER CM is invoked here, as La Folle recalls that on her race down the path the previous day, “a clamor of voices” had “pursue[ed] her” but “were quiet now” (CW 179). She finds long-forgotten perfumes “assailing her senses with memories from a time far gone” (CW 179). La Folle’s life has irrevocably changed: rather than being contained by her fear, she has crossed its border and entered a larger space which allows her to learn, to gain knowledge, about the world around her.

As La Folle begins to acclimate herself to this widened horizon, she quickly comes to realize that she is still contained, only by a larger, and stronger, set of boundaries.
Although La Folle has been released from her personal fears, she is still very much restricted because of the fact that she is a black woman. She is expected to observe accepted standards. For example, in the post-bellum South, black people did not approach a white person’s house by way of the front door. They also did not arrive at the door at sunup, demanding to see the child of the plantation owner, regardless of the circumstances. Semantically, we see an indication that La Folle will attempt to cross over the borders of this racially-defined container, just as she has crossed the bayou that signified her fear. After she climbs the “many steps” that led up to the veranda of the main house, she looks back at the “perilous ascent” that she has made. Rather than closing her eyes, as she did on the previous day, she looks about her, and takes in her surroundings. She “caught sight of the river,” something she has not seen before. The sight of the river invokes the KNOWING IS SEEING CM because of the “exultation” that possesses her soul as a result of seeing it. Further, La Folle knocks on the front door of the main house shortly after sunrise, inquiring after Chéri. His mother has to “dissemble” her astonishment at seeing the black woman at her front door, and although she is not unfriendly, her tone is guarded, and she asks La Folle to return later, when it is more convenient. We see another indication that she will attempt to escape from her racial containment, as she informs Madame that she is “goin’ wait yair tell Chéri wake up” and proceeds to seat herself on the topmost step of the veranda (CW 180).

The final invocation of the KNOWING IS SEEING CM comes as La Folle waits for Chéri to awaken. A feeling of “deep content” envelops her, as she watches the sunrise. Unlike the sunrises that she has witnessed all of her life, this one rises on “the new, the beautiful
world beyond the bayou" (CW 180). La Folle sees the world in an entirely new light, and
the knowledge that she garners from this new viewpoint will undoubtedly lead her to seek
an exit from the racial containment that she has just begun to experience.

"Désirée’s Baby"

The conceptual structures underlying “Désirée’s Baby,” which was published in 1892,
make use of the inverted form of KNOWING IS SEEING. We see manifestations of NOT-
KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING throughout the story, and it is only as the consequences of his
brutal rejection of Désirée become apparent that Armand Aubigny sees the facts
surrounding his wife’s racial heritage and their marriage as they are. Often, the KNOWING
IS SEEING CM is evoked by an enlightening experience, one in which the speaker has
gained insight into a situation. In the case of Armand and Désirée, although both of them
believe that the truth about her heritage has been revealed through the color of their son’s
skin, neither is actually understands the tragic situation until it is too late. By the time
Armand learns that it is he who is definitely of mixed race, Désirée has disappeared into
the swampy bayou with her son, and presumably died there.

Because she is a foundling, Désirée’s racial heritage is never clear. She is found
“asleep in the shadow of the big stone pillar” of the Valmondé family estate. This passage
evokes the NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM. Désirée is found in the shadows of the
great white (folks”) mansion, a near-dark place that obscures clear sight. Just as she was
found in the shadows, so her racial background remains unclear throughout the story. Her
adoptive family assumes that she is white, both because of her looks—she has brown hair,
grey eyes and very white skin—and because “prevailing belief was that she had been
purposely left by a party of Texans" \textit{(CW 240)}, who were white. Her origins are never determined, however.

During her Désirée's childhood, her adopted mother comes to believe that she has been "sent to her by a beneficent Providence to be the child of her affection, seeing that she was without child of the flesh" \textit{(CW 240)}. The KNOWING IS SEEING CM is invoked here, both by the marked syntax and the semantic choice that Chopin makes. "Seeing that she was without child of the flesh" is a bit unusual both because of the absence of an article before "child" and also since "seeing" is an unusual word choice. We would expect a (subordinate conjunction) like "because" or "since" rather than the gerund "seeing," which suggests that only Providential insight brought the child to the barren and lonely Mme. Valmonde. "Seeing" invokes the KNOWING IS SEEING CM, and further implies that the "idol of Valmonde" might be less valued elsewhere, as Désirée is the child of her affection. The antecedent of "her" is inarguably Mme. Valmonde. This implication is confirmed at the end of the story, by Armand's rejection of Désirée, and her mother's willingness to accept her unconditionally. She writes to Désirée, telling her to "Come home to Valmonde; back to your mother who loves you. Come with your child" \textit{(CW 243)}. Mme. Valmonde sees Désirée for what she is—"beautiful, gentle, affectionate and sincere"—when Armand sees her first as an object of passion, and later as the source of the degradation of his family name.

Armand Aubigny falls in love with Désirée as she stands shadowed by the same pillar under which she was found. He rides by and as the young woman "stood one day against the stone pillar in whose shadow she had lain asleep," he falls madly in love with her and
his fall is described in the context of the Sleep is a Container CM. When Armand realizes that he is in love, the passion “awoke in him” in an instant. At first, Armand is not concerned with Désirée’s background: he “looked into her eyes and did not care” (CW 241). He can hardly withstand the wait until they can be married, and grudgingly “contained himself with what patience he could” (CW 241). Realizing the potential problems with the match, the Valmondés “grew practical and wanted all things well considered: that is, the girl’s obscure origin” (CW 240-41). The Not-Knowing is Not-Seeing CM is again invoked, through the obscurity associated with Désirée’s unknown family background. The Valmondés try to avert the tragic end that could result from a marriage between the two, but Armand’s passion has been awakened, and he is unconcerned by the potential consequences of pursuing that passion ill-advisedly. The Emotion is Fire CM is also expressed in this passage, as his passion sweeps along “like a prairie fire” which will not be contained, but will burn brightly until it uses up its fuel (CW 240). Zoltán Kövecses, in his book Emotion Concepts, explains the basis for the Emotion is Fire CM:

- to illustrate the implications of this category of metaphors, let us consider in more detail the expression to be consumed by passion. The interpretation of this expression requires us to take into account the following: The person in the emotional state corresponds to the thing burning; the emotion corresponds to the heat that is applied; the increase in emotional intensity corresponds to the increase of the heat; finally, when too much heat is applied, the thing (person) becomes dysfunctional (is
Armand’s passion comes upon him so suddenly, and so intensely, that it is at risk to burn out as suddenly as it began. This passion that sweeps along like a fire, “driving headlong over all obstacles” will ultimately consume Désirée and Armand as well.

Regardless of Armand’s burning passion, Mme. Valmondé is concerned that Désirée’s background may not be what it appears. Désirée looks like a white woman, and has been raised as such. She is still, however, “nameless,” a fact which Armand claims not to care about because he can “give her one of the oldest and proudest in Louisiana” (CW 241). Monsieur Valmondé encourages caution and careful contemplation of the match because should Désirée’s namelessness become an issue, it would be the young woman who would be most profoundly affected by the consequences.

Armand himself is not the most insightful of men, as is demonstrated by the recurrence of the NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM. He is proud to a fault of his family heritage, placing a higher value on the reputation associated with his name than on the safety and well-being of his wife and child. Even his family home is “shadowed” with a “pall,” a pall whose source is Armand’s “imperious and exacting nature” (CW 242), and this nature, this close mindedness, leads to the undoing of Désirée, his child, and ultimately Armand himself. Armand loves Désirée as long as she is a credit to his family. When all that the world can see is her gentleness, her beauty, and her obvious adoration of him, Armand proudly accepts her as his wife. As soon as he perceives that she is no longer a public credit to him, that she may in fact prove an embarrassment due to a heritage that was never claimed to be determined, he rejects her cruelly. The NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-
Seeing CM is again manifested in connection with Armand. He realizes that his child’s heritage includes some black ancestors, and assumes that the fault is Desirée’s. He avoids her and when she does manage to see into his eyes, “the old love-light seemed to have gone out” (CW 242). The light through which he saw his once-beloved wife has been extinguished by his overwhelming pride in his heritage. He cannot see beyond Desirée’s supposed shortcoming and accept her because of her positive qualities. He instead must punish her because “Almighty God had dealt cruelly and unjustly with him” (CW 244). He no longer loves her “because of the unconscious injury she had brought upon his home and his name” (CW 244).

He ultimately attempts to cleanse his home and his name with a bonfire upon which he burns anything that was Desirée’s or their child’s. The fire is described as a “pyre,” and his determination to destroy everything associated with his wife and child acts becomes a cleansing ritual to remove the stain from his family name. The emotion is fire CM is also evoked, as he “dealt out to a half dozen negroes the material which kept this fire ablaze” (CW 244). Armand’s passion to protect his family name is symbolically fed by the fire, and would continue to grow if given enough fuel. Just as the “lovelight” left his eyes when he came to believe that Desirée was black, however, his emotional protectiveness of his family name is also extinguished. As he pulls the last handful of Desirée’s possessions from a drawer, a packet of “innocent little scribblings” that she had sent him during their engagement, he finds the remnant of a letter from his mother to his father. The ironic invocation of the Not-knowing is Not-seeing CM leads to Armand’s discovery of the truth behind his marriage: he is the one whose family tree includes black ancestors. In the
letter that he finds from his mother, she is telling his father that she is thankful to “the
good God for having so arranged our lives that our dear Armand will never know that his
mother, who adores him, belongs to the race that is cursed with the brand of slavery” (*CW*
245). The attempts of Armand’s parents to hide his racial heritage from him ultimately
lead to the destruction of his own family, and it is only by learning that he is the branded
one that he understands his fatal error in banishing Désirée. Only after he knows of his
parents’ deception does he gain insight into the truth of his situation.

"In Sabine"

Container metaphors provide the underlying structure of “In Sabine,” an 1893 story
about a young woman who runs away to marry an outsider, a Texan who is not from the
bayou country. ‘Tite Reine rapidly comes to regret her hasty decision. Her husband treats
her poorly, terrorizes her and threatens to leave her destitute and alone, miles away from
her family. When an old friend of the family, Gregoire Santien, stops in unexpectedly,
‘Tite Reine convinces Gregoire to help her run away from her husband. The PAST IS A
PURSUER CM is also invoked, and its manifestations describe Gregoire and ‘Tite Reine’s
flight from Bud Aiken.

At the beginning of the story, Gregoire crosses through bounded regions, or
contained spaces. He has “come out of” Natchitoches parish, and has gone “through” a
good part of Sabine parish. He is traveling rather aimlessly, which is indicated by the
syntactic path schema:

He had come out of Natchitoches parish, and had been riding a great part
of the day through the big lonesome parish of Sabine. He was not following
the regular Texas road, but, lead by his erratic fancy, was pushing toward
the Sabine River by circuitous paths through the rolling pine forests. \(CW\)
325

The theme in the passage is Gregoire, and his goal is the Sabine River, which he is headed
toward. The source is indicated in the first sentence of the paragraph—he has come out of
Natchitoches parish. The trajectories here indicate the seemingly random nature of his
travel. He is traveling "by circuitous paths" that lead "through the rolling pine forests." Gregoire travels over indirect paths toward what we discover is a flexible goal. The syntax
of the statement, and its inherent path schema, indicate both the lack of urgency and
direction of his travels, and invoke the Life is a Journey CM. Further, crossing the
physical boundary of the Sabine takes Gregoire out of Creole country and into Texas,
which is in many ways a foreign land. Louisiana contains the woman who we later learn
has broken his heart, and crossing the boundaries into another region come to represent
his flight from the painful memories of his past. Gregoire does not escape across the
Sabine, however, as circumstances intervene which define his previously directionless
journey and give a sense of urgency to his travels.

Seeking a place to eat and rest, Gregoire comes upon a broken-down house. He leads
his horse "into the small inclosure (sic) which surrounded the cabin" \(CW\) 325. The cabin
exists in an enclosed space, and one must pass the borders of this bounded region in order
to enter. Contained within this space is Bud Aiken's domain. As Gregoire approaches, he
appears "quite suddenly in the small doorway" \(CW\) 326. 'Tite Reine is at work "back in
the yard" and appears only when Bud turns to call "back through the open door." The
"inclosed (sic)" cabin contains both Bud and 'Tite Reine, but 'Tite Reine's movements are restricted within the contained space. For example, she is called from "back in the yard" and she comes from "out of the field" to cook the men lunch the next day. We do not, at any point, see 'Tite Reine in the house to do anything other than cook, clean, or tend to her husband's wants. Bud spends most of his time in the cabin, while 'Tite Reine moves from the "work" spaces—the kitchen, the field, the back yard—to Bud's space. In either space, she is contained, both by the physical boundaries around their property, and by the expectations of her husband. When she is preparing to rebel and leave the container that her husband has placed her in, she goes to the "edge of the low gallery," the porch on the front of the house. 'Tite Reine chafes under her confinement at her husband's hands, and at the first opportunity goes to the edge of the container as she attempts to devise a means of escape.

Even as 'Tite Reine plots the means to escape the container she is held in, we learn that Gregoire is fleeing from a specter in his past, which evokes the PAST IS PURSUER CM. The reason that Gregoire is traveling aimlessly when he arrives at the Aiken's home is that he is "fleeing . . . from the pain that a woman had inflicted upon him" (CW 329). His pain, and the past relationship that caused it, cause him to feel a "singular longing to cross the Sabine River and lose himself in Texas" (CW 329). Gregoire's answer to a painful past is to attempt to escape it, and in so doing he crosses from one bounded region—the one in which he has been hurt—to another. Lakoff and Johnson, in their discussion of ontological metaphors, suggest that land has "something we can perceive as a natural boundary" (Lakoff, Metaphors 29). They point out that
even where there is no natural physical boundary that can be viewed as
defining a container, we impose boundaries—marking off territory so that
it has an inside and a bounding surface—whether a wall, a fence, or an
abstract line or plane. (Lakoff, *Metaphors* 29)

Gregoire feels the need to place some distance between himself and the “overpowering
sorrow” that resulted from his relationship, and crossing the Sabine River seems to serve
as the appropriate boundary to indicate that he has achieved that distance. The distance is
literal as well as metaphoric, as he not only escapes from the bounded region of his home,
but through his travel, he is attempting to put emotional distance between himself and the
woman who hurt him. The *Past is a Captor CM*, a subset of the *Past is Pursuer CM*,
is invoked here. The only way that Gregoire can escape the past which would chase and
capture him, is to cross the bounded regions and to put space between himself and the
source of his past pain.

In the end, Gregoire is not only pursued by his past, but by ‘Tite Reine’s past as well.
‘Tite Reine pours out her troubles to him, describing the way that Bud has abused her, on
one occasion nearly strangling her to death. Gregoire feels compelled to help her, partly
because she is a (home town girl) and partly because he is physically attracted to her. After
getting Bud Aiken drunk enough to pass out, Gregoire and ‘Tite Reine escape “cross de
Sabine” (*CW* 332). When Bud awakens late the next morning, he discovers that not only
has Gregoire run off with his wife, but he has taken the “vicious-looking little Texas pony”
(*CW* 325) with him. He threatens to follow the couple, presumably to recover both his
wife and his horse, but the black sharecropper next door informs him that he is too late.
Although the PAST IS PURSUER CM is invoked through Bud’s threats to follow the couple, it is ultimately not carried out because of Bud’s lack of transportation. Gregoire and ‘Tite Reine are safe because they have crossed the Sabine, and re-entered the “container” of hometown safety. Gregoire’s return to Natchitoches does not address his initial feeling of containment, which drove him to the road to begin with, but we can only assume that with ‘Tite Reine to care for, he has, at least temporarily, put aside his need to flee from his past.

"In and Out of Old Natchitoches"

“In and Out of Old Natchitoches” draws its conceptual structure from container metaphors, specifically from the act of crossing over and between these bounded regions, and from the EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS IN CONTAINERS CM. The container structure is manifested in the title of the story, indicating the containers that the protagonists, Suzanne St. Denys Godolph and Alphonse Laballière, move between. Their movement between two bounded regions, Natchitoches and New Orleans, brings insight to both characters, and leads to the resolution of their conflict.

Suzanne is a schoolteacher with a haughty attitude who comes into conflict with the hotheaded Alphonse over whether a Mulatto child should be admitted to the local white school. At the beginning of the story, Suzanne crosses back and forth between her mother’s land and the piece of Alphonse’s land upon which the school rests by means of a trestle. As long as there is no communication between the two, she is content to pass back and forth between his land and her mother’s. Suzanne resigns when Alphonse attempts to foist the Mulatto child on her, telling the little ‘Cadian students that Alphonse has “insulted” her (CW 258) by making a scene in front of them and trying to force her to
include the non-white child. The school children threaten to make the little Mulatto child “see sight,” or gain some insight into the inappropriateness of his actions, thus invoking the KNOWING IS SEEING CM. Suzanne makes them promise not to punish the child, as he has “shown more taste and judgement than those above him” (CW 258). The Mulatto child is not the source of Suzanne’s problem; Alphonse Laballiere is. Almost immediately after he bursts into the schoolroom, Alphonse realizes that he has been “blinded by stupidity,” indicating the NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM. By the time he realizes the seriousness of his faux pas, his blunder has cost the community its schoolteacher and him the opportunity to get to know the young woman.

As long as she is in Natchitoches, Suzanne is very unforgiving of Alphonse, even though he attempts to apologize for his behavior more than once. He “cross[es] the bayou . . . and penetrat[es] into the wilds” of her mother’s property to make amends for his outrageous behavior, but finds that Suzanne has already left for New Orleans. Her removal from Natchitoches leads to some personal insight, however. Suzanne comes to realize that what she perceived as “love” was in fact infatuation, and that the hostility that she feels toward Alphonse is in fact a thinly disguised passion that is merely awaiting an opportunity to grow. She must cross the boundaries of her small hometown and move into the larger sphere of the city before she gains the insight to understand this fact, and to generalize its implications so that she can forgive Alphonse for his affront.

In the city, Suzanne becomes enamored with Hector Santien, an infamous gambler with an understandably bad reputation. While she is “in” New Orleans, contained by the physical boundaries of the city in much the same way that Lakoff and Johnson describe
ontological boundaries and their metaphoric qualities, she is unable to forget Alphonse Laballière. Her memories of him are tempestuous, as indicated by her tendency to relate stories about him frequently and with great emotional expression.

Suzanne's conversations during her early weeks in the city indicate that she has no intention of allowing Alphonse to atone for his misbehavior. However, she describes his assault on her sensibilities with "much dramatic fire" (CW 262). Despite her protestations to the contrary, and her growing infatuation with Hector, Suzanne is drawn to Alphonse, as the presence of the EMOTION IS FIRE CM indicates. It is not until she has passed "in" and "out" of New Orleans, and returned to Natchitoches that she comes to realize that she has misinterpreted her passion. While she believes that she is in love with Hector, she is in fact "not too deeply in love" with him although "imagination counts for something, and so does youth" (CW 266). Rather, she falls in love with the image of a perfect man—solicitous, handsome, and kind, never disagreeing with her and making her feel like the center of attention when he is with her—rather than with the honest passion that she perceives in Alphonse, but does not understand.

Zoltán Kövecses describes the EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS IN A CONTAINER CM (146), in which the ontological aspects of the human body act as a containing object. Calling this metaphoric structure the "most general metaphor for the domain of emotion," Kövecses offers a number of examples of this CM, such as:

- She was filled with emotion.
- Emotion welled up inside her.
- Her emotions rose.
• There is lots of passion in her. (Kövecses 146)

We may also speak of emotions both in terms of what they contain, as well as the changes that their physical structures undergo when these emotions are in a state of excitement. These conceptual structures are manifested in metaphors that denote the intensity of emotion, specifically that the container of those emotions may either enlarge from an excess of fluid or allow fluid to escape when emotions run high. Some examples include

• I feel empty.
• He got a swelled head.
• He poured out his feelings to her.
• She overflowed with emotion. (Kövecses 146-47)

The EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS IN A CONTAINER CM underlies the encounter between Suzanne and Alphonse in New Orleans. Alphonse calls on Suzanne while she is in New Orleans so that he can deliver a message from her mother. She receives him "stiffly," speaking to him in "measured, conventional tones" (CW 264). Items that can be contained are usually limited by the amount of space allowed them in the container, and can therefore be measured. Suzanne's "measured" tone accordingly evokes the EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS CM. Alphonse responds "warmly" to Suzanne's confirmation that he and her mother "have become very warm friends during [Suzanne's] absence" (CW 264), invoking the EMOTIONS ARE FIRE CM. Upon learning that Alphonse has convinced her mother to part with a "fine bit of land—a deep strip along the bayou," Suzanne's response becomes "chilling" or outwardly lacking in emotion. The conversation between the two once again degenerates into an argument, when Alphonse tells Suzanne that she should not be seen in
the streets of New Orleans with Hector. Suzanne disdainfully dismisses his remark, which causes Alphonse to lose his head (CW 264) and to blurt out his reaction "with ill-suppressed passion" (CW 264), again evoking the EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS CM as when we "press fluid down" (Kövecses 148). Suzanne's reaction is to "icily" refuse to continue the interview. The EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS CM drives this passage, with Alphonse's emotions becoming more heated and more difficult to suppress at the same time that Suzanne's become more restrained and controlled, indicating that while his container is threatening to explode, hers is emptying as a result of the conflict.

It is not until Suzanne herself experiences rejection that she begins to understand that Alphonse's repeated overreactions are in part the result of his feelings for her. When she arrives in New Orleans, she is nominally under the protection of Hector Santien. Hector is Suzanne's cousin, and roughly ten years her elder. She falls in love with Hector, but is unsuccessful in catching him, because Hector has constructed his life such that he is unattainable. He tells Maman Chavan, the keeper of the boarding house where Suzanne lodges, that he has "drawn a circle round [his] heart so—at pretty long range mind you—and there is not one who gets through it, or over it or under it" (CW 261). His heart, and accordingly his emotions, are intentionally contained inside of himself, and he goes to great pains to assure that no one will invade this inner sanctum. When Suzanne attempts to cross the barrier that he has erected and enter his self-contained space, he gently repulses her advances. Her only recourse after this interview is to return to Natchitoches. The emptiness that she feels as she "sinks" down during the interview comes to be filled with the promise of a developing passion with Alphonse.
While on the surface, Suzanne is cold and seemingly emotionless with Alphonse, we see a different view of her emotions when she questions Hector about his background because of Alphonse's warning not to be seen with the gambler in public. The scene in which her feelings become clear evokes the EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS CM. She responds "excitedly" to his indifferent response, and her emotional unrest is indicated by "a slight convulsive movement of the muscles" and "a suppressed sob" (CW 265). Her emotions are threatening to expand beyond what their container can hold, and she is struggling to regain control over them. To hide her embarrassment, she "buried her face in her palms" (CW 265). When it becomes apparent that Hector is not going to allow Suzanne into the wide circle that he has drawn around his heart, she withdraws into herself, attempting to hide the emotions that threaten to leak from their container and protect herself from further embarrassment. Hector looks as her quizzically, "as if he were laughing at her" and suggests that she return home. Suzanne readily agrees, realizing that pursuing a relationship with Hector is a failure's cause.

When Suzanne encounters Alphonse again, this time on her way back to Natchitoches, she is much more receptive to his presence. She "unhesitatingly" extends her hand to greet him, and although she can not "understand why" she is being friendly toward him, she is "too weary to strive to do so" (CW 266). The NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM underlies her lack of understanding, but its manifestation also indicates that Suzanne is now open to new knowledge, whereas previously she has not been. She returns to Natchitoches with Alphonse, after leaving town to escape him, and we are left with reason to believe that she will come to understand both her thwarted love affair with Hector and
Alphonse's passion, which continues to bubble heatedly just below the surface.

"At Chênière Caminada"

One of the most striking aspects of Chopin's "At Chênière Caminada" is its similarity to *The Awakening*. The story has received little critical attention, and what it has received has been limited to comparisons of the overt similarities in characterization and plot between this story and *The Awakening*. On the surface, the narratives do share a striking amount of common ground: Tonie and Madame Antoine appear in both narratives, along with Mlle. Duvigne, Tonie's "small boat with the red lateen-sail" (*CW* 311) and the Chênière Caminada itself. A close reading reveals, however, that the overt similarities between the two stories are not the most significant commonalities. Rather, Tonie's experience is an mirror-image reversal of Edna Pontellier's—he experiences the same awakening and ultimate disappointment that Edna does, although in an abbreviated form, and the same conceptual structures mold the narrative as those found in *The Awakening*.

The opening description of Tonie Bocaze in "At Chênière Caminada" immediately alerts the reader to Tonie's shyness and his resulting inability to interact with women:

"there was no clumsier looking fellow in church that Sunday morning... But Tonie did not really care if he were clumsy or not. He felt that he could speak intelligibly to no woman save his mother" (*CW* 309). Tonie has "no desire to inflame the hearts of any of the island maidens, [so] what difference did [his clumsiness] make" (*CW* 309). This passage which invokes the *EMOTION IS FIRE CM*, making clear that Tonie is presently disinterested in a passionate relationship, but that he in short order he may develop an interest. Almost immediately after this disclaimer, Tonie realizes that his social inadequacy
does matter, when he falls in love at first sight with coquettish debutante Claire Duvigne. His attention is drawn to her because of her musical ability, when she plays the often idle organ during Sunday mass. Tonie first notices the music itself, for it seems to him that "some heavenly being must have descended upon the Church . . . and chosen this celestial way of communicating with its people" (CW 309-10). He then sees the organist and her effect upon him is as profound as any religious conversion. He fixes "his serious eyes . . . earnestly upon the fair organist" and begins to exhibit the signs of emotional upheaval that often accompany an awakening. He stands transfixed, "gazing at the group" of which the young woman is a part, with his "serious eyes fixed upon" her (CW 310). The KNOWING IS SEEING CM is evoked here, as his gaze awakens him to the presence of this woman, and to his driving need to possess her. His awakening to passion leads him to be oblivious to the world around him: he walks around the island for an hour after church, but can recount none of the things that he has seen to his mother. His conduct degenerates to that of a lovesick youth. He is late for dinner after he sees Claire (CW 310), can not work, and has to hire someone to do his chores for him. He generally acts "the part of a fool" (CW 311). Tonie is unfamiliar with the symptoms of falling in love, and therefore does not "recognize this powerful impulse" that "possessed itself of his entire being." He obeys this undeniable force "without a struggle," although he does not yet completely understand its implications.

The path of Tonie's life is irrevocably altered by his awakening, in much the same way that Edna Pontellier's life is changed by her insights. The presence of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM is indicated by Tonie's thoughts, which are "traveling before him" as he
walks up the path from the Gulf to Mme. Lebrun's pension on Grande Isle. His "whole universe" has become the "glamorous background" for Claire, and the goal of his life journey has become finding a way to be with her.

Like Edna, Tonie becomes enlightened as a result of his communion with the sea. On one occasion, he takes Claire out alone in his boat. Her thoughts are miles away from her body, as she "let her eyes sweep dreamily along the line of the horizon where the sky and water met" (CW 314), but during the course of the trip, she realizes that Tonie is enamored with her. She catches one of his furtive "shifting glances" with which he has been observing her all summer. As she looks at him

a glimmer of the truth began to dawn faintly upon her. She remembered how she had encountered him daily in her path, with his earnest, devouring eyes always seeking her out. She recalled—but there was no need to recall anything. There are women whose perception of passion is very keen; they are the women who most inspire it. (CW 314).

This pivotal passage is not surprisingly rich with conceptual metaphors. Tonie has restructured his life so that his path literally lays at the feet of Claire Duvigne. The LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM is again invoked, as Claire perceives that he has placed himself in her path on a daily basis. The KNOWING IS SEEING CM is also present. The truth of Tonie's unrequited passion "dawns" on Claire, and Tonie's eyes are "always seeking her out" so that he can feel closer to her, as if he is a part of her life. We also know that Claire does not have to catalog mentally the events that lead her to the insight that Tonie is in love with her. Rather, she perceives it, in part because she has observed Tonie's behavior, and
in part because she inspired the passion that he is experiencing. Her realization of his feelings repeatedly evokes the knowing is seeing CM.

In addition to the knowing is seeing CM, this passage draws elements of its underlying structure from the Passions are Beasts inside a Person (Kővecses 62). Untamed animals generally stalk their prey silently, and then consume them, and the devotion that consumes Tonie falls within the conceptual framework. Claire is the “object of silent and consuming devotion” which causes his heart to beat “clamorously” (CW 314). Tonie looses his power to reason when he thinks about Claire, as well. His reason yields “to the savage instinct of his blood” (CW 314). Tonie is in a state of inner turmoil that is intensified by his time alone with Claire. He experiences animal-like passion while he is in her presence, even while she is toying with him. She stays out on the boat with him for an extra hour because “she could think of nothing more interesting to do on shore” (CW 314).

As Claire exits his boat and walks up to the pensions with the male companions who have been waiting for her, an “overmastering regret” comes upon him. He wishes that he had clasped her in his arms when they were out there alone, and sprung with her into the sea. It was what he had vaguely meant to do when the sound of the Angelus had weakened and palsied his resolution. Now she was going from him, fading away into the mist with those figures on either side of her, leaving him alone. He resolved within himself that if ever again she were out there on the sea at his mercy, she would have to perish in his arms.
Like Edna Pontellier, Tonie intuitively knows that the only solution to his dilemma is to choose containment in the sea rather than adherence to societal expectations. Claire Duvigné is the daughter of a wealthy man, who is constantly surrounded by eligible young men. Tonie, a poor, uneducated, clumsy fisherman, would never be an acceptable choice for such a young woman, even if she were inclined to return his passion. The only way that Tonie could ever hope to attain Claire is through stealing her away. By springing “into the sea,” and being thus contained by it, Tonie could achieve a union of sorts with Claire. They would both be contained in the same space, and she would further be contained “in his arms.” The container metaphor underscores what Tonie’s conscious thoughts relate, that he would prefer death with his beloved to life without her.

Claire soon returns to the New Orleans, leaving Tonie miserable and alone. Although he never has a relationship with Claire, he draws a great deal of comfort from being near her, even when she is unaware of his presence. He wanders like a blind man, because the woman that he loved is “lost to his sight,” a construction which indicates the NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM. Claire’s absence leaves Tonie in the dark. He does not know what she is doing, who she is involved with, whether she is planning to marry or to return to Grande Isle the following season. He scares his mother, speaking of “rest and peace that could only come to him with death” (CW 316). The absence of Claire, the woman that he has literally structured his life’s journey around, leaves Tonie in such emotional darkness that he can not find peace.

Just as he reaches his breaking point, Tonie discovers that Claire has died. Rather
than being destroyed by the news, he feels that he can begin “to live again” (CW 317). He is bewildered by his reaction at first, but comes to realize that Claire’s death has removed the menacing cloud from his existence. He no longer has to wonder what Claire is doing and who she is doing it with, nor does he have to pine because of her absence. He has a “new brightness in his face which had not been there before” (CW 317). He tells his mother that he is “glad” that Claire has died, and his response to her indignant horror at his insensitivity is to reflect. He wants to answer her question, but “he would have to think” in order to do so correctly. He looks “out across the water that glistened gem-like with the sun upon it, but there was nothing there to open his thought” (CW 318).

Although abundant light is present, initially it does not offer Tonie any insight. After a few moments, he musters the words to express his horrifying idea. He tells his mother that as long as Claire lived, he could “never hope for anything . . . despair was the only thing for me” (CW 318). He lived in constant fear that she would choose another man and “give herself to him” (CW 318). His passion had been awakened, as had his understanding of the way that her life would be resolved, and the way that its resolution would affect the path of his own life. He tells his mother that the thought “kept him awake.” His insight into the way his love would end literally gave him no rest. Tonie saw this light and understood its implications, but gained nothing from his insight but a torturous mental image that nearly drove him mad.

With Claire’s death, however, Tonie was freed from the insight which was slowly killing him. He feels that Claire is

where she belongs; there is no difference up there; the curé has often told
us there is no difference between men. It is with the soul that we approach each other there. Then she will know who has loved her best. That is why I am so contented. Who knows what may happen up there? (CW 318)

The KNOWING IS SEEING CM leads us to accept Tonie’s conclusion. Claire is in a safe place, a place where she will not reject Tonie out of hand because he is too poor or too clumsy. He believes that she will perceive that it was he who loved her best in her earthly life, and will therefore choose him as her eternal partner. This mystical vision gives him the peace that had escaped his grasp during the previous months. The insight which first tortured him at last allowed him to believe that he would have a chance to be one with the woman he loved in the next lifetime. The manifestation of the KNOWING IS SEEING CM in the context of Tonie’s religious faith, which we often perceive as enlightening and sight-giving, gives Tonie the comfort that he seeks.

“Athénaïse”

Athénaïse is a story about a young woman who is unwilling to grow up, in part because she has not yet awakened sexually. Like Edna Pontellier, she enters into a marriage unwittingly, not realizing that her life will change irrevocably. She illustrates an overwhelming unwillingness to define her life journey in terms appropriate to a farmer’s wife. She rebels against the strictures of marriage, running away from her husband in her effort to escape the institution that she has a “constitutional disinclination for” (CW 431). Athénaïse is not married to an unkind or abusive husband. She merely comes to realize that it is “being married that [she] detes’ an’ despise” (CW 431).

The first action that Athénaïse takes at the beginning of the story is to leave her
husband to visit her parents. She “went away in the morning to make a visit to her parents, ten miles back on rigolet de Bon Dieu” (CW 426). This sentence is based on a syntactic path schema, but the path is somewhat convoluted. While one might expect Athénaïse to go and visit her parents, as a newly married woman, she might also be reasonably expected to return to her husband. The path of this sentence, which indicates the presence of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY CM, suggests that Athénaïse is going away from her husband to rejoin her family. The theme in this sentence is Athénaïse, and her goal is her parents’ home. The source of her path is implied in this sentence, and clarified by the next: she did not return in the evening, and Cazeau, her husband, fretted not a little” (CW 426). So, she has left her husband’s home to rejoin her parents. The phrase “ten miles back” not only indicates the location of her parents home, but her ultimate goal. She does not wish to return to her parents’ home for a visit, but to remain permanently. After two months of marriage, Athénaïse has discovered that she prefers the path that she followed as a girl, one that had not yet been caught in the “trap set for the feet of unwary and unsuspecting girls” (CW 434). After two months of marriage she has, as Cazeau’s servant points out, “got de head turn’ a’ready to go ‘broad” (CW 427). Athénaïse does not want marriage and its accompanying restrictive trappings to designate the path that her life will follow. She prefers to continue to follow the path that she followed as a girl rather than assuming the responsibilities associated with marriage and growing up.

That Athénaïse disliked marriage did not come as a terrible surprise to those who knew her as a child. People often said of her that she would

know her own mind some day, which was equivalent to saying that she was
at present unacquainted with it. If she ever came to such knowledge, it
would be by no intellectual research, by no subtle analyses or tracing the
motives of actions to their source. It would come to her as the song to the
bird, the perfume and color to the flower. (CW 433)

At this early stage of her marriage, Athénaïse does not understand how life works. She
understands things intuitively and by observation, but is not a great thinker who will be
able to reason a problem to its logical conclusion. The NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM
supports Athénaïse's lack of insight. She does not "know her mind" at present and the
conditional aspect of "if she ever came to such knowledge" indicates that she may not ever
fully figure out what she wants. She is ruled largely by emotion, which causes her to react
emotionally to circumstances that she does not like. However, she instinctively realizes the
"futility of rebellion against a social and sacred institution" (CW 432) and sullenly
continues in her appointed role for a while. The KNOWING IS SEEING CM is again present,
as Athénaïse has a flash of insight into the role that she is expected to fill. She realizes that
she can fight the system, but that she will not win.

Regardless of her restless dislike of her married state, Cazeau expects Athénaïse to
live up to her responsibilities as his wife. He initially does not understand her need to "rest
only too content in the bosom of her family" (CW 426) and tries to coerce her, albeit
kindly, into fulfilling her prescribed role. His lack of understanding of her needs is made
apparent by the NOT-KNOWING IS NOT-SEEING CM. Cazeau lives in a dimly lit
environment, which is "faintly illuminated," which is so dark that even the furniture
"loom[s] dimly in the gloom" (CW 426). His solution to her dissatisfaction with their
“blunder” of a marriage is to “keep her at home,” for “the less she revisited the rigolet, the better” (CW 428). In his ignorance of Athénaïse’s needs, Cazeau chooses to restrict his wife’s movements, keeping her at home so that she can make the best of their mutual blunder. Cazeau is not a terrible man, however. He lies awake “far into the night,” entertaining his “unpleasant reflections” of how to deal with his unhappy young wife. The occurrence of the KNOWING IS SEEING CM as he comes to the decision to keep Athénaïse at home indicates that he believes he is doing the right thing. As he lies awake, the “moon was shining, and its pale effulgence reached dimly into the room” (CW 428). He literally sees light, and that light could metaphorically lead to his enlightenment, or act as an indication that he has made the right decision. However, the light that comes through his widow is dim. Although the KNOWING IS SEEING CM is invoked in this passage, it appears that Cazeau is, in fact, seeing dimly. He is honestly searching for the correct solution to his problem with Athénaïse, but he has not yet found it. He ultimately decides to go after his wife, to bring her “back to a sense of her duty” (CW 428). After a good deal of soul-searching, Cazeau still expects his wife to be with him and to live up to the traditional woman’s role. We see indications of these expectations in his remarks to Athénaïse after he brings her back from her parents’ home. When she throws the keys to the house and the pantry at their servant, telling the woman that she doesn’t want to be bothered by the details of running the house, her husband returns the keys to her, telling her that it was “not the custom on Cane river for the negro servants to carry the keys, when there was a mistress at the head of the household” (CW 437).

Athénaïse’s attempts to escape her marriage by returning to her parent’s home. Upon
her arrival, she announces that she will not return to Cazeau, no matter what. The
**argument is war** CM is evoked here. She has “held her own” in the face of the “stormy
scene” with her family over the course of several days. When Cazeau arrives, however,
she has “no weapon . . . to combat subtlety” (CW 432). As her brother stands by
“exasperated, fuming, ready to burst out” as she leaves, indicating the presence of the
**emotions are fluids and emotion is fire** CMs, she rushes out of the house, mounts
her pony and heads toward her husband’s home. Here again we see Athénaïse attempting
to forge her own path. Still resentful of the marriage contract that she is bound to honor,
she “obtain[s] a fair start of her husband . . . and for the greater part of the way she
managed to keep an appreciable gap between them” (CW 432). This statement
foreshadows the path that Athénaïse’s life journey ultimately takes. During the early
months of her marriage, Athénaïse fights to maintain the distance that she has placed
between herself and Cazeau. He attempts to handle her gently, at first making no “effort to
overtake her” and when he does catch up to her, riding beside her in silence rather than
forcing his will upon her any further than he must to maintain their contractual relationship
(CW 432-33).

Athénaïse is so unhappy with her married state that she plots with her brother to help
her escape. Montéclain, who detests Athénaïse’s husband, encourages his sister to leave
Cazeau, and helps her hide from him when she does escape. It is not until Athénaïse
realizes that she is pregnant that she is very suddenly overcome by the desire to restructure
her life journey, and follow the traditional woman’s path. It is as if the changes that her
body undergoes early in her pregnancy bring about an emotional change as well. Rather
than chafing under her marriage and feeling that it restrains her, she welcomes it. Rather than being thankful that her brother helps her escape from the husband whose passion disgusts her, she becomes irritated at her brother for keeping Cazeau’s letters from her. As she rides the train back home, she can think of nothing but her husband and how she will greet him when they meet again. Because of her unexpected pregnancy, Athénaïse understands what her husband has been telling her all along. She is compared to “Eve after losing her ignorance,” a construction which suggests the KNOWING IS SEEING CM. The CM is further suggested when Athénaïse finds the country that the train passes through a “fair sight” and a “balm to her vision and her soul” (CW 453). She greets her husband by responding “to the passion of his own” (CW 454) for the first time. Athénaïse has discovered that being a grown woman is not such a bad lot after all, and happily returns to her husband.

“Lilacs”

Adrienne Farival, in Chopin’s “Lilacs” attempts to follow dual paths. While she spends most of each year as a successful actress with an ongoing parade of men in her life, she occasionally but regularly is drawn back to the path of her childhood. Adrienne was educated in a cloistered nunnery, and the blooming of lilacs always causes her to want to return to this early safe-haven, to be contained within its walls for a few days and through its restricted and peaceful atmosphere, rejuvenate herself.

Although Adrienne is largely happy with her life, she occasionally is overcome by a “heaviness of heart . . . that she hates to recall” (CW 357). Her moods tend to set upon her in the spring, and she is reminded by the scent of lilacs of the solution to her depression.
The place that she can find peace is "within" the walls of the convent. The occurrence of
the container metaphor here is directly contrasted with the images of Paris when she
returns from her sojourn. During the largest part of the year, when she is not in the
convent, she is contained by the city and her lifestyle. Paris literally engulfs her (CW 360).

The Life is a Journey CM structures Adrienne's path. When she is seized with the
need to visit the convent, she becomes like an "enragée; nothing could have kept [her]
back" (CW 358). When the urge hits her, she must "turn and retrace [her] steps homeward
in a perfect fever of agitation" because there is "no holding [her] back" (CW 358). While
the secular path, the one which causes her to be "engulfed" by Paris is the one that she
follows most of the time, when the urge to follow the simpler path strikes Adrienne, she is
incapable of ignoring it.

Adrienne's path consists of a "balancing motion" (CW 359) and necessitates a bridge
between the two paths that only she is aware of. She realizes that if the mother superior,
whose "dignity would not permit her to so much as step outside the door of her private
apartments to welcome this old pupil" (CW 356) were to find out about her normal
lifestyle, she might not be so openly welcomed at the convent. Accordingly, Adrienne
brings her simplest clothes, and follows the convent regulations to the letter. The duality
of her journey physically symbolized by the foot-bridge that "spanned the narrow stream
which divided the convent grounds from the meadow beyond" (CW 359). On one side of
the bridge is the meadow that leads to the world, which Adrienne must cross to approach
the convent (CW 355). On the other side is the repose and peace of the convent itself. A
clear, physical division in the form of the stream and the bridge exists between the world
and the convent, indicating that the two are incompatible. Because of this literal and
metaphoric division between the two paths, Adrienne will ultimately be forced to choose
one direction, or the choice will be made for her.

Adrienne’s attempts to maintain the duality of her paths results in her being pushed
off of the one that leads her back to the convent. After visiting the convent for a fortnight
over the course of four consecutive years, Adrienne arrives to find that she is no longer
welcome. She “walks the mile or two of pleasant roadway which lead to the convent”
(CW 364), expecting her usual warm reception. She feels “calm” and “peaceful” and is
happily anticipating her stay. She stops “as she had always done, to pluck lilacs in her
path” (CW 364). When she arrives at the door of the convent, she finds it bolted against
her, and received a note that “banished her forever from this haven of peace, where he
soul was wont to come and refresh itself” (CW 365). Because she attempted to follow
dual, but incompatible paths, Adrienne is forced to leave one behind her. She must “walk
away” from the convent that she has cherished.

In much the same way as The Awakening does, Chopin’s short fiction reflects
underlying conceptual metaphors. Recognition of these metaphors enhance our
understanding of the texts, as it is these metaphors that give the narrative its structure.
Similar conceptual structures recur throughout both the long and short fiction, and create
a system of metaphors that allow the reader additional insight into the texts before them.
CONCLUSION:

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR AS A MANIFESTATION OF HUMAN THOUGHT

Throughout this study, I have examined the conceptual metaphors invoked by Kate Chopin’s fiction. Examining these structures is important for two reasons. First, the study of conceptual metaphor gives us insight into the underpinnings of the language in literary texts, the cognitive source from which the language itself is derived. In addition to offering insight into the texts themselves, the unconscious nature of these conceptual structures give us a glimpse of the author’s unconscious thought processes and the way those thought processes are reflected in their texts. Because conceptual metaphor and the ordinary utterances that result from it exist in the most basic level of human thought, the manifestations of these conceptual metaphors give us insight into the message that the author communicates through the text.

Critics have argued that conceptual metaphor is little more than a sexy repackaging of old ideas. We tend to subconsciously accept the argument that since metaphor has been around since Aristotle identified and defined it, his definition must be the correct one. Otherwise, it would not have stood the test of time. However, by troubling the notions of poetic language and its source, cognitive theorists have initiated an evolving, empirical basis for the study of language. By continuing to study the ways that language works, and more importantly, the cognitive sources of language itself, these theorists will not only enlighten our views of how the human minds creates and processes concepts, but allow us
a means of refiguring the study of literatures and languages. As Mark Turner states, conceptual metaphor and the study of cognitive structures provide a means of study that does not “imply sequence” but instead addresses the two intertwined disciplines simultaneously. The result is “studying literature as a mode of language” and approaching language “humanistically, as an aspect of what it means to be human” (Turner, Minds 4, 17). For after all, that literature is the most lasting which most realistically mirrors human experience.

Kate Chopin’s fiction certainly mirrors that experience. A writer in many ways ahead of her time, she troubles issues of great depth and importance in subtle and non-confrontational ways. The conceptual metaphors which underlie her work contribute in large part to both the subtlety and the complexity of the message. Chopin’s fiction provides a concise, systematic piece of evidence that we do live by metaphors.

This study does not claim to address even a fraction of the conceptual metaphors inherent in Chopin’s fiction. What it does attempt to do is to discover the controlling conceptual metaphors—the metaphors that draw our attention to the critical moments in Chopin’s fiction. By recognizing these turning points, we can accurately interpret the texts. We can be assured of following the right path, the path that is designated by the conceptual structures inherent in the language itself.

One path that invites further research is the nature of the miscommunications that occur between Edna and her contemporaries. Edna’s journey is complicated, and ultimately fails because of her inability to communicate what she is feeling and experiencing to those around her. She is “restless” and dissatisfied, but she can not
articulate what is causing her ennui, how it is affecting her behavior and thought processes, and what she needs in order to be restored to an undisturbed state of mind. The reason for this inability to communicate may be that she functions under a different set of rules—her thought processes are based on an conceptual system that is entirely different from that of her contemporaries. The social structure in which Edna exists conceives these basic metaphoric structures differently than Edna does, with the end result being that the members of the Creole society conceive of the universe differently than Edna. For example, the societal expectations communicated by her husband involve concepts such as **TIME IS MONEY** and **GOOD IS UP; DOWN IS BAD**. Léonce measures value in terms of the quality of what he can provide, and he sees all situations as dichotomous: in any situation, there is right and wrong, or good and bad, and he generally perceives himself on the side of the good and right. Edna’s conceptualization of life places a higher value on an understanding of herself and on satisfying her restless urges and escaping the confines of her restrictive, socially-prescribed role, as exemplified by a series of container metaphors. The ultimate problem lies in the concepts that Edna and Léonce map into the conceptual domain of “woman” and “wife.” While Léonce maps concepts relating to the care of hearth and home, Edna’s mappings involve self-realization, a feeling of contentment, passionate love, and the absolute necessity of preserving her “self.” These two mappings of “woman” are so utterly incompatible that it is a small wonder that these two individuals can not communicate with each other—neither possesses the linguistic tools to do so.

Regardless of the direction that future research leads, one point has become clear
to me throughout this study. Metaphor is central to human thought, and by extension, central to the understanding of literary texts. While we will not, and probably should not, ever arrive at the one “true” reading of any text, by reading literature in the context of the conceptual metaphors that structure it, we can gain invaluable insight into it. We can also, perhaps, come to a better understanding of the way our minds work and the way we communicate about our experiences.
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