

Portrayal of the character Edna

Her foils

Setting- feminist movement, etc.

Style

Intended to help the reader understand the character of Edna

her actual beliefs

external/internal influences

Tone

Helping the style, the tone also helps the reader understand the rest of the characters

Mr. Pontlierre (Critical Essay quote)

Mademoiselle (Speech about bird with strong wings.

V. Conclusion

Edna Pontlierre experiences a theme of self-discovery throughout the entire novel of Kate Chopin's "The Awakening". Within Edna's travel through self discovery, Chopin successfully uses tone, style, and content to help the reader understand a person challenging the beliefs of a naïve society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Chopin's style and tone essentially helps the reader understand the character of Edna and what her surrounding influences are. The tone and style also helps the audience understand the rest of the characters throughout the novel. The entire content is relevant to the time frame it was written, expressing ideas of the forthcoming feminist movement and creating an awareness of what was happening to the women of the early nineteenth century. When "The Awakening" was first published, its popularity wasn't that of modern day. In fact, it was widely rejected for years. Within the context, it is considered a very liberal book from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The ideas expressed within the content concern the women's movement and an individual woman searching for who she really is. Ross C. Murfin in his critical essay "The New Historicism and the Awakening", shows how Chopin uses the entity of the hand to relate to both the entire women's issue and Edna Pontlierre's self exploration:

"Chopin uses hands to raise the issues of women, property, self-possession, and value. Women like Adele Ratignolle, represented by their perfectly pale or gloved hands, are signs mainly of their husbands wealth, and therefore of what Stange calls 'surplus value'. By insisting on supporting herself with her own hands [through art] and having control of her own property [the place she moved in to and her inheritance], Edna seeks to come into ownership of a self that is more than a mere ornament. ...She seeks to possess herself" (p 197).

Within in the content, Adele Ratignolle and Mademoiselle represent foils to Edna. Mademoiselle represents a single woman that everyone dislikes who Edna typically confides in. Adele Ratignolle contrasts Edna because she "dutifully plays the social role of 'mother-woman'". The reader learns how Edna contrasts and transcends throughout the entire novel. From her refusal to sacrifice herself for her children in the beginning of the novel to her moving into her own house towards the end of the novel, the reader is effectively aware of the realities that face the women of the early twentieth century individually and as a society.

Chopin's style in "The Awakening" is intended to help the audience understand the character of Edna and the dilemmas that she faces as a married woman and individual in the nineteenth century. For instance, the beginning of the novel reveals to the audience a scene showing what type of person Mr. Pontlierre is while

showing what type of society everyone is living in at the time. At an exclusive resort outside New Orleans, Edna arrives back from the beach meeting her husband. "You are burnt beyond all recognition" he added, looking at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage." (p 7 The Awakening). Within the context, Edna exists as an asset to her husband. She is considered a piece of property and it is this particular scene where Edna begins to question her life and continues to throughout the novel. Chopin's style of showing the audience these realities are expressed through the characters to show the relevance between Edna and the literal reality in which women lived during the early nineteen hundreds.

Tone, like style, helps the reader understand the characters and what they represent. It helps Chopin to express her concerns of the world through the characters. As in the example given in the beginning of the book when Edna is arriving back from the beach, the reader gets a first impression of Mr. Pontlierre in his tone, representing that he is a very possessive man of his wife and that this is accepted in their society. Mademoiselle's first impression to Edna, despite what Edna hears about her, is that of a wise, compassionate, friendly woman. Mademoiselle's tone supports these qualities, and it ultimately helps Edna to decide what she wants to do with her life. Mademoiselle gives advice through an analogy of a bird, showing how one must have strong wings to survive, endure, and make it through its journey. The tone of all the characters helps to express Chopin's beliefs and what the characters represent.

The tone, style, and content of Chopin's "The Awakening" not only helps the reader to understand the characters and their literary qualities, but the relevancy of these characters to problems plaguing society such as the feminist movement. Chopin's technique addresses' the problems of women as a whole while showing individual dilemmas faced by women in the 1900's. "The Awakening" is effective in conveying these ideas and has successfully used style, tone, and content to prove these ideas.