

An Analysis of the Beauty in *The Awakening*

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Abstract

In 1899, Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* was published, marking the culmination of her ideological and artistic development. However, its controversial themes surrounding female independence and sexuality led to its banning and Chopin's subsequent exclusion from the literary community, culminating in her obscurity and death five years later. Rediscovered in the 1950s and 1960s, the novel has since become a cornerstone of feminist literature, with its protagonist Edna emerging as an icon of female empowerment, challenging traditional marriage and societal norms in pursuit of self-actualization. This paper examines the multifaceted aesthetic dimensions of *The Awakening*, focusing on three key aspects: musicality, art, and the narrative of death. By analyzing how Chopin integrates these elements into her narrative, this study reveals how the novel transcends its historical context to offer profound insights into the human condition. The results highlight Chopin's innovative use of literary techniques to convey complex emotions and existential themes, ultimately reaffirming *The Awakening's* significance as a pioneering work in feminist literature and modernist fiction. The conclusions drawn emphasize the enduring relevance of Chopin's exploration of female consciousness and the interplay between art, beauty, and mortality. Through the lenses of literary aesthetics, this study provides a structured analysis of how Chopin's work resonates deeply with contemporary audiences, inviting reflection on the timeless quest for freedom, identity, and the enduring power of art.

Keywords: Beauty; Musicality; Art; The Narrative of Death; *The Awakening*

1. Introduction

In 1899, Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* was published, reflecting the culmination of her ideological and artistic development (Chopin, 2011). However, its controversial themes surrounding female independence and sexuality led to its banning and Chopin's subsequent exclusion from the literary community, culminating in her obscurity and death five years later. Rediscovered in the 1950s and 1960s, the novel has since become a cornerstone of feminist literature, with its protagonist Edna emerging as an icon of female empowerment, challenging

traditional marriage and societal norms in pursuit of self-actualization. As Gentry (13) notes, Edna is often described as "a woman who was ahead of her time, questioning the institution of marriage, having her own sexual desires, and being completely independent of her husband."

This paper examines the multifaceted aesthetic dimensions of *The Awakening*, focusing on three key aspects: musicality, art, and the narrative of death. Drawing on the principles of literary aesthetics, this study provides a structured analysis of how Chopin integrates these elements into her narrative to convey complex emotions and existential themes. By situating the novel within the aesthetic realm, the paper explores how Chopin's use of musical motifs, artistic imagery, and death as a narrative device transcends its historical context to offer profound insights into the human condition (Bonner, 1975).

The results highlight Chopin's innovative use of literary techniques to create a rich and evocative narrative that resonates deeply with readers. The analysis reveals how the novel's aesthetic qualities not only enhance its artistic value but also serve as a powerful medium for expressing the protagonist's journey of self-discovery and liberation. The conclusions drawn emphasize the enduring relevance of Chopin's exploration of female consciousness and the interplay between art, beauty, and mortality, reaffirming *The Awakening's* significance as a pioneering work in feminist literature and modernist fiction.

2. Aesthetics as Methodology: Theoretical Framework and Research Approach

As a discipline studying the aesthetic relationship between humans and the world, aesthetics seeks to reveal how aesthetic experiences reconstruct the meaning of human existence. When Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten established "Aesthetica" in 1750, he defined it as the science of "perfection in sensory cognition"—a "perfection" that extends beyond formal harmony to encompass the spiritual awakening achieved through aesthetic practice. Immanuel Kant further endowed aesthetics with independence from utility, emphasizing "disinterested" aesthetic judgment as a bridge between individual sensibility and universal humanity. Placing *The Awakening* within this theoretical framework, Kate Chopin's narrative emerges as a precise aesthetic experiment: through musicality, art, and death narrative, she constructs a spiritual map of 19th-century women breaking free from existential constraints through aesthetic practice.

2.1. Philosophical Foundations of Aesthetic Theory: From Baumgarten to Kant

Baumgarten's "Aesthetica" provides the starting point for interpreting *The Awakening*. He argued that aesthetic experience is a cognitive process of "grasping the beauty of objects through intuition and emotion," with its highest form being the "perfection of sensory cognition." This idea materializes in Edna Pontellier's awakening as a shift from "passive perception" to "active creation": her first encounter with Mademoiselle Reisz's piano playing, which causes a "tremor in the soul," shatters the sensory blunting imposed by marriage and activates her autonomous capacity for aesthetic experience (Dyer, 1983). When she resumes painting, her canvases no longer serve as decorations to please her husband but become media for "reconstructing the world through sensory cognition"—her unfinished works and unconventional brushstrokes embody Baumgarten's notion of sensory cognition progressing from "imperfection" toward "perfection."

Kant's concept of "disinterested" aesthetic judgment grants philosophical legitimacy to Edna's artistic pursuit (Camastra, 2008). In *Critique of Judgment*, Kant posited that true aesthetic experience transcends practical purposes, embodying "purposiveness without purpose." By refusing to paint for her husband's approval or market demands and insisting on creating in the independent space of the "pigeon house," Edna rejects utilitarian aesthetic hegemony. This modest studio becomes a "third kingdom of sensory cognition": neither an appendage of the patriarchal family ("purposeless") nor a social venue, it provides a realm for subjective self-confirmation ("purposive"). When she declares, "Painting makes me feel at ease and confident," she practices Kantian aesthetic autonomy—through pure artistic creation, she achieves the existential state where "humans are ends, not means."

2.2. The Intervention of Feminist Aesthetics: The Dual Mission of Deconstruction and Reconstruction

The "angel-madwoman" binary revealed by Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* essentially represents patriarchy's monopoly on female aesthetic discourse: the "angel" is a disciplined aesthetic object, while the "madwoman" is a subject who refuses to be gazed upon. Edna's awakening is a process of transforming between these two symbols: as a "household angel," her existence is reduced to functional roles of "wife" and "mother," with even her painting reduced to a decorative "accomplishment" for ladies. Reisz's music, however, acts as a hammer shattering this mirror, allowing Edna to realize in the "fusion of soul and eternal truth" that she is the subject, not the object, of aesthetic practice. This transformation echoes Elaine Showalter's argument in *A Literature of Their Own*: the mission of women's literature is to "reconstruct the sensory cognition distorted by patriarchy through art."

Virginia Woolf's aesthetic metaphor of "a room of one's own" finds material realization in Edna's studio. This space is not merely a physical shelter but a symbol of female aesthetic autonomy: her choice of colors (eschewing her husband's preferred soft tones for bold primaries) and her use of lines (rejecting academic meticulousness for intuitive ruggedness) deconstruct male-dominated aesthetic norms (Gilbert, 2020). When the art dealer Laidlaw acknowledges her paintings, Chopin implies a key proposition: once female aesthetic creation transcends gender prejudice, it can establish a universal "intersubjective common sense"—a real-world projection of Kant's "universality of aesthetic judgment."

2.3. The Aesthetic Sublimation of Death Narrative: From Individual Tragedy to Universal Symbol

Edna's death constitutes the novel's "aesthetic paradox": as the end of life, it becomes the ultimate perfection of sensory cognition. While Schopenhauer viewed death as the "liberation of the will to live," in Chopin's narrative, this liberation is transformed into a poetic aesthetic symbol: the sea embodies Baumgarten's ideal of "nature as the paradigm of sensory perfection," the eternal flow of its waves dissolves secular moral judgments, and Edna's outstretched body becomes a living metaphor for "sensory freedom." This aesthetics of death aligns with Schiller's theory of the "play drive"—when the real world's "kingdom of force" and "kingdom of ethics" cannot accommodate her awakening, death becomes a passage to the "aesthetic kingdom."

Hegel's "master-slave dialectic" adds a deeper dialectical meaning to death: by embracing death actively, Edna refuses to be an "acknowledged object," logically dissolving the binary structure of domination and subordination. Her death is not the end of tragedy but a "negation of negation" in spiritual progression— as Kant noted, the "necessity of aesthetic judgment is exemplary necessity," her choice transcends individual experience to become an "aesthetic model" for all oppressed souls (Gentry, 2006). When the narrator merges her body with nature, it realizes Baumgarten's ultimate ideal: through the unity of sensibility and nature, achieving aesthetic transcendence of human existential dilemmas.

2. 4. Aesthetics as a Critical Weapon: Chopin's Modernist Enlightenment

The aesthetic value of *The Awakening* lies in its dual criticality:

Deconstruction of Patriarchal Aesthetic Hegemony: Through music, painting, and death narrative, Chopin demonstrates that female sensory cognition is not the "weakness" or "appendage" defined by patriarchy but contains a powerful force to break free from discipline. Reisz's piano music and Edna's paintings directly challenge the aesthetic myth that "women lack creativity."

Supplement to Enlightenment Rationality: While Kant emphasized aesthetics as a "bridge between sensibility and reason," Chopin reveals that for women deprived of rational discourse, aesthetic practice is the sole channel for reconstructing subjectivity. Edna's awakening proves that the perfection of sensory cognition itself is a form of enlightenment—teaching women how to rediscover themselves through the creation of "beauty" in a disciplined world.

As Auguste Rodin famously said, "The world is not lacking in beauty, but in the eyes to discover it." Chopin illuminates the existential shadows of 19th-century women with the light of aesthetics, showing that when society denies women political and economic voice, the aesthetic realm becomes their last fortress. Here, music is the clarion call of awakening, painting the brush of resistance, and death the declaration of freedom. This ability to elevate life experience into aesthetic form is the timeless charm of *The Awakening*—more than a feminist literary classic, it is an eternal revelation of how humans can achieve self-redemption through "beauty."

3. The Beauty of Musicality

Music itself possesses unique aesthetic value, and when musicality is integrated into literary works, its value for aesthetic research becomes even more pronounced. This integration not only enriches the expressive power of literary works but also provides a unique perspective for interdisciplinary research. In Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, Woolf incorporates musicality into the work, creating a kind of "harmony" that transcends specific musical styles through her prose, allowing readers to experience rhythms and melodies similar to those of music while reading. In E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*, the author integrates the rhythmic characteristics of ragtime music into the language and structure of the novel, showcasing unique musical aesthetic value through the rhythmic variations of the text and the melodic sense of the narrative (Gu, 2002).

Music, as an art form in time, conveys emotions and artistic conception through elements such as melody, rhythm, and harmony, offering a unique aesthetic experience. It transcends linguistic barriers, directly affecting human senses and emotions, and evoking resonance. Musicality in literary works is mainly reflected in three aspects: rhythm and rhyme, emotional expression, and structure and form. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* primarily reflects musical beauty in the latter aspect, that is, in terms of structure and form. Some literary works borrow structural forms from music, such as the multi-movement structure of symphonies or the counterpoint of fugues, to create unique narrative or lyrical structures (Jin, 2004).

Writing, in Kate Chopin's view, is to some extent the creation of an impromptu. Chopin had a strong interest in music throughout her life. She loved music and believed that it had the power to arouse the dormant passion in people's hearts, which clearly integrated her life and creation. In *The Awakening*, Chopin created an impromptu, which reflects the beauty of music in the structural skills of writing. An impromptu, as the name suggests, means improvisation or temporary patching; according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Music*, an impromptu is often "a short instrumental piece in the form of a song." This kind of music includes three parts in structure: the motif presentation, the contrasting middle section, and the varied ending. The structure of *The Awakening* reflects this beauty.

The motif of *The Awakening* is the sea refrain. According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, a motif is a short, recurring musical fragment or theme used to represent a person, object, or concept. In literature, a motif refers to a recurring image, symbol, or phrase that is associated with a specific person, object, or concept, with the purpose of influencing the structure and thematic expression of the novel. In *The Awakening*, the sea refrain is linked to the protagonist's awakening of feminine consciousness. In this recurring motif, Edna's self-awakens, and she truly grasps it, thus becoming the backbone of the novel's structure, running through the entire text.

To further develop the comparison of the novel's structure to an impromptu, a deeper textual analysis of rhythm, syntax, and phonetic patterns is necessary. For instance, the rhythmic patterns in Chopin's prose can be examined through the repetition of certain words and phrases, such as "voice," "sea," and "soul," which create a musical cadence. The syntax, particularly the use of long, flowing sentences interspersed with shorter, abrupt ones, mirrors the rhythmic variations found in musical compositions. This interplay of sentence lengths can be likened to the dynamic shifts in tempo and dynamics in music, contributing to the overall musicality of the text. Phonetically, the alliteration and assonance in key passages, such as "The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring," create a sonic texture that enhances the musical quality of the prose. These phonetic patterns not only contribute to the aesthetic experience but also reinforce the thematic elements of the novel, such as the sea's influence on Edna's awakening.

When Edna swims towards the sea for the last time, the novel's ending brings back the sea refrain. However, this time the sea refrain is varied: "The voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude. All along the white beach, up and down, there was no living thing in sight." In music, changes in tempo and emphasis alter the atmosphere and effect created by the melody. The variation of this

motif indicates that her awakening has been established. At this moment, Edna sheds her roles as mother and wife, leaving behind only her most fundamental identity—her self.

The interlude between the two appearances of the sea motif is the lengthy evolution, the middle part of this improvisation. In the first part of the novel, on Grand Isle, the call of the sea never ceases for Edna. Later, when Edna returns to the city, the sea's call becomes monotonous and wearisome. Her infatuation with Robert lingers in her heart. Despite her joy and luxury at her evening parties, where she sits like a queen at the head of a long table with many guests revolving around her, she still feels "the old ennui overtaking her. And Outside the soft, monotonous splash of a fountain could be heard; the sound penetrated into the room with the heavy odor of jessamine that came through the open windows." This is a detail that is easily overlooked. Chopin uses the unceasing splash of the fountain—a surrogate for the sea—to suggest that Edna's personality and new consciousness continue to evolve.

In conclusion, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* can be seen as a musical composition, with the sea refrain serving as a recurring motif that drives the narrative forward. The novel's structure mirrors the form of an impromptu, with the sea refrain acting as the theme, the middle section representing the protagonist's evolution, and the varied ending signifying her ultimate self-realization. Chopin's use of the sea as a motif not only adds a layer of sensuality and atmosphere to the story but also serves as a powerful catalyst for Edna's awakening. Through the interplay of these musical elements, Chopin masterfully weaves together the themes of self-discovery, societal constraints, and the liberating power of nature, showcasing a kind of unique beauty and creating a rich and evocative narrative that resonates deeply with readers.

4. The Beauty of Art

Artistic beauty is a core concept in the field of aesthetics, encompassing not only the sensory pleasures constructed by formal elements such as color, line, and rhythm, but also the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual connotations carried by the work. The swirling brushstrokes and intense hues in Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, and the stirring melodies and rhythms in Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, both transform the artists' inner worlds into soul-touching aesthetic experiences through creative combinations of form. This spiritual communication transcending the material level makes art a bridge for emotional resonance and intellectual dialogue among humans — it is not merely a feast for the eyes or ears, but a secret spiritual covenant between the creator and the viewer (Mou, 2011).

In the patriarchal historical context, art was disciplined as an "elegant ornament" for women rather than a serious pursuit. During Jane Austen's era, painting and piano playing were essentially social markers of a lady's identity: these skills served as criteria for the marriage market rather than independent artistic endeavors. Nina Baym points out that it was not until the 1870s that women writers began to confront their own identities as artists — prior to this, women's artistic practices were always overshadowed by the dual shadows of "pastime" and "transgression." In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, Mademoiselle Reisz is a symbolic figure breaking this shackle: as a reclusive pianist, she refuses to be an "artistic decoration" in social

circles, and the intense emotions and spiritual power in her music become a sharp blade piercing through patriarchal aesthetic hegemony. When Edna feels the "fusion of soul and eternal truth" in Reisz's performance, art shifts from a disciplinary tool to a catalyst for awakening (Pizer, 2001).

Edna's trajectory of awakening aligns with the prototype transformation from "angel" to "madwoman" in *The Madwoman in the Attic*. As a traditional wife and mother, she initially embodied the "perfect angel" meticulously crafted by society: meekly fulfilling her maternal duties and dissolving her own will into the needs of her husband and family. However, Reisz's artistic world acts like a prism, refracting the falsity of this state of existence — the piano melodies awaken not only emotions but also the repressed self-awareness. When Edna picks up her paintbrush again and insists on moving into the "pigeon house," she completes her transformation from "angel" to "madwoman": the former is an empty symbol under patriarchy, while the latter is a genuine existence refusing to be defined (Ringe, 1972). This transformation is full of tearing: her painting no longer pursues the "elegance" recognized by the secular world, but confronts the inner struggles head-on; her studio is no longer a place for boudoir pastimes, but a spiritual fortress against alienation.

The three stages of women's literature proposed in *A Literature of Their Own* are clearly reflected in Edna's awakening. In the first "feminine" stage, she unconsciously follows society's aesthetic discipline for women, regarding art as a tool to embellish her identity (Showalter, 1999). The second "feminist" stage of resistance begins with her aversion to her marital subordinate status — when her husband opposes her painting pursuit, she insists on constructing an independent spiritual space in her studio, which is essentially a public challenge to the notion that "art belongs to the male creative domain." The third "female" stage of self-identification is manifested in her exploration of the essence of art: painting is no longer an escape from reality, but a medium for self-understanding — just as she reconstructs the world's perspective on the canvas, she is also reconstructing the subjectivity dismembered by patriarchy through artistic practice.

Mademoiselle Reisz's role transcends individual existence; she is a concrete expression of female artistic autonomy. As a professional artist, she embodies the creed that "art requires a brave heart" throughout her life — this "bravery" is not only the refinement of skills but also the continuous refusal of gender discipline. Her piano performances are juxtaposed with Edna's emotional awakening multiple times in the text: when Robert's letters are mired in the quagmire of secular love, Reisz's music leads Edna to a broader spiritual dimension. This narrative strategy implies that compared to dependent emotional relationships, art provides a more sustainable liberating force — it teaches women how to build a self-sufficient spiritual world in solitude and how to elevate individual experiences into universally meaningful aesthetic expressions.

The artistic awakening of women in the 19th century was always accompanied by the reconstruction of living spaces. Edna's "pigeon house" is not only a physical dwelling but also a literary prelude to Woolf's "a room of one's own": this small yet independent space carries her rejection of economic dependence (attempting to support herself by selling her paintings) and escape from social discipline (breaking free from the "wife-mother" role). Here, for the first time, she observes the world from an artist's perspective: "She begins to understand life in her own way,

no longer content to be a supporting character in someone else's narrative." This shift in perspective is precisely the artistic practice emphasized in *The Madwoman in the Attic* of "women reclaiming the right to gaze" — when women are no longer the objects depicted but the subjects holding the brushes, art becomes a scalpel for deconstructing gender power relations.

From the piano in Jane Austen's works to the music in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, art has always been a mirror of women's inner worlds in women's literature. Chopin's uniqueness lies in the dual mission she assigns to art: it is both a catalyst for individual awakening and a vehicle for social criticism. Edna's paintings never truly enter the market, a detail that ironically highlights the predicament of women's artistic practice — even after awakening, they still face the exclusion of the mainstream aesthetic mechanism. But Reisz's existence offers another possibility: even without recognition, art itself is already a complete answer to the meaning of existence — just as her music resonates in an empty room, the spiritual voice of women will eventually penetrate the silence of history, leaving its own chord in time.

When Edna gazes at her unfinished painting in the studio, and when Reisz plays the last note at dusk, they together inscribe a secret covenant between women and art: in this covenant, art is not only the presentation of beauty but also the practice of freedom; not only a display of skills but also a reconstruction of identity. Through such a narrative, Chopin proves that in an era when women are bound by multiple shackles, art is the gentlest yet most resilient form of resistance — it allows women to touch their true selves through pigments and piano keys, and to affirm their existential essence in creation. This affirmation is unrelated to secular success but fundamentally shakes the patriarchal cognitive foundation: when women begin to define art and beauty in their own ways, they have already completed a silent revolution in the aesthetic field.

5. The Beauty of Death Narrative

In art, the aesthetics of death are often manifested through forms such as tragedy, sublimity, symbolism, and metaphor. Tragedy and sublimity are frequently employed to reveal the complexity of human nature and the profundity of life through death. For example, Greek tragedies use the deaths of protagonists to illustrate the inevitability of fate, evoking a sense of resonance and sublimity among the audience. This confrontation with death is precisely what Hegel emphasized. Hegel argues that "death is the means by which the spirit overcomes the one-sidedness of individuality and immediacy", representing a movement from "pure individuality to universal individuality." Through death, the individual transcends its finitude to achieve a higher form of spiritual freedom. Meanwhile, Schopenhauer also points out that "death is the cessation of the will", an inevitable part of the cycle of life. Through death, individuals can be liberated from the pain and constraints of life, attaining a state of transcendent tranquility.

Symbolism and metaphor are also common devices. In Japanese literature, for example, the culture of "mono no aware" regards death as the ultimate form of beauty, emphasizing the beauty of transience and eternal tranquility. This perspective resonates with Schopenhauer's view of death. Life and death are the themes of human existence, and literature, as a reflection of life, has always treated death as an inexhaustible subject and an endless narrative resource. J. Hillis Miller

writes, “All storytellers speak under the shadow of death. Their narratives are a way of making a pact with death, and also a means of exorcising it. Only by ceaseless storytelling can the storyteller and the audience preserve their lives. Yet, the stories told always involve death. ” (Miller, 2003) This aligns with Hegel's view that “death is an inherent characteristic of human existence”, a necessary outcome of the movement of life itself. Through writing about death, people confront the meaning of existence and use death as a medium to express their understanding of life.

In narrative literature, the structural function of death is extremely important. It is both an essential component of the artistic form and a manifestation of the author's unique skill and method. (Tas, 2011) Hegel notes that “death is the reconciliation of the spirit with itself”, a necessary link in the development of human history. Many distinguished writers have elevated their works to the status of classics through death narratives, and Kate Chopin is no exception. Heidegger once said, "Death is not an event, but a phenomenon that needs to be grasped from an existential perspective." This is in line with Hegel's view that “death is a necessary means for human beings to achieve universality”. Through writing about death, people confront the meaning of existence and use death as a medium to express their understanding of life.

In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, the shattering of a woman's pursuit of selfhood is ultimately presented through death. Edna's death narrative is, in fact, a profound interrogation of the existential problems faced by women at the time: Should she continue to live for others as a wife and mother, or should she live for herself? Edna could choose to live comfortably in the world of others, but this would come at the cost of sacrificing her own self, a way of life she was gradually trying to escape. When her children were taken away, her husband was out of town, and she moved into the "pigeon house," she experienced a complex feeling of "descending in social status but ascending in spirit." Every step she took to free herself from her obligations added to her strength and allowed her to fully develop her individuality.

Despite gradually shedding the roles imposed on her by society and achieving a sense of self, Edna also faced societal condemnation. When Edna's husband realized she was no longer as compliant as before, he clearly saw that "she was no longer the woman she was, day by day discarding her former false self." He even sought medical help, thinking she had a mental problem. Robert, who loved her deeply, was also a traditional man, unable to break free from the constraints of moral customs (Sun, 2011). He believed that only if Edna's husband granted her freedom could she truly be free. He did not want to be involved in a scandalous love affair with her. Although he loved Edna deeply, he ultimately chose to leave. Adèle, on the other hand, urged her to think about the children and be a good mother, but in Edna's eyes, the children had become "conquerors of her." In pursuit of spiritual freedom and to avoid being possessed by others, Edna chose to walk into the sea and return to herself. In fact, the narrator provided Edna with a path of self-pursuit—a path that realized her spiritual pursuit through the death of the flesh (Wang, 2011).

Hegel argues that “death is a necessary condition for human freedom”; only by confronting death can humans achieve true freedom. Edna's death, in this sense, represents her liberation from societal constraints and the fulfillment of her quest for freedom. Her death is not an act of escape but an ultimate affirmation of her existence. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, posits that “death is

the end of life but also the liberation of the will” (Woolf, 2019). Edna's death can be seen as a form of release; through it, she escapes the pain and constraints of life, achieving a state of transcendent tranquility. Her death is not only an affirmation of her selfhood but also a profound contemplation of the meaning of life.

The author's choice to conclude with Edna's return to nature through death was not out of fear or despair, but rather the best proof of maintaining "self" and the best way to grasp freedom and existence. This is in line with Hegel's view that death is a necessary means for human beings to achieve universality. Through death, Edna realized the most thorough and complete expression of her life's meaning. When contemplating life, she reflects, "The past was nothing to her; offered no lesson which she was willing to heed. The future was a mystery which she never attempted to penetrate. The present alone was significant; was hers....."(Chopin, 48) . When her sense of self was threatened, Edna decided to take control of her own destiny, using death to pursue herself.

The death narrative in *The Awakening* is undoubtedly an embodiment of the aesthetic realm. It represents a kind of spiritual beauty and the sublimation of the soul. Through the death narrative, the author liberates the characters' bodies and spirits to the greatest extent, achieving the most direct and highest level of freedom. This aligns with the views of Hegel and Schopenhauer, who both regard death not merely as the end of life but as a means of elevating the meaning of life. Through this narrative, the author enlightens the readers' souls on the deepest spiritual level, prompting them to re-examine the meaning of self and existence when confronted with the ultimate question of life and death.

6. Conclusions

In summary, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* stands as a profound exploration of the human condition and a remarkable display of literary beauty. Through the lenses of musicality, art, and death narrative, we have uncovered the rich aesthetic layers of this seminal work. Chopin skillfully integrates musical elements into the narrative structure, using the recurring motif of the sea and the form of an impromptu to reflect the inner world and journey of awakening of the protagonist, Edna. Additionally, the novel's engagement with art not only enriches its aesthetic dimension but also challenges traditional gender roles and social expectations. Edna's pursuit of self-expression and liberation through painting and music embodies the symbolic power of art as a force for spiritual freedom.

The death narrative in *The Awakening* reaches an emotional and philosophical climax. Edna's ultimate choice is not only a quest for freedom but also a rebellion against the constraints of a patriarchal society. Her death becomes a form of ultimate self-affirmation, reflecting Hegel's philosophical view of death as a necessary condition for human freedom. Through death, Edna achieves complete control over her own identity, transcending societal limitations to attain a state of spiritual liberation and freedom.

As a testament to Chopin's literary genius, *The Awakening* continues to resonate with contemporary readers with its profound emotional and aesthetic appeal. It explores timeless themes of women's quest for freedom, identity, and the enduring power of art, inviting readers to

reflect on the nature of the human spirit. The novel's pioneering status in feminist literature and modernist fiction makes it a significant milestone in literary history. Chopin's exploration of female consciousness and her profound insights into the interplay between art, beauty, and mortality not only enrich our understanding of the work but also provide a powerful perspective on the complexities of human experience.

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Conceptualization, T. Z.; methodology, T. Z.; software, T. Z.; validation, T. Z.; formal analysis, T. Z.; investigation, T. Z.; resources, T. Z.; data curation, T. Z.; writing — original draft preparation, T. Z.; writing — review and editing, T. Z.; visualization, T. Z.; supervision, T. Z.; project administration, T. Z.; funding acquisition, T. Z. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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