

Example of chopins the storm essay

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



If Kate Chopin had written today, even the appearance of Calixta's breasts in her fiction would not shock the average reader. Thanks to magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Maxim*, celebrities who get their fame from nudity, like Kim Kardashian, or near-nudity, like Kate Upton and Elle MacPherson, and the capacity of the Internet to provide a viscous layer of pornographic narrative as hard-core as you want to read, the mystery that once shrouded the sex act is now in tatters. The key to intimacy, which is emotional connection, remains a point of difficulty for many, but the road to orgasm is quite thoroughly detailed, for both men and women, by any number of helpful articles in print and online. Chopin wrote in the Victorian Era, though - the 64 years in which Queen Victoria ruled England, and her decorous morals colored public attitudes toward and display of overt sexuality. There were quite specific gender rules in those days, regarding everything from choice (or even possibility) of career to the proper length of a skirt - one can only imagine which room of the Tower of London would have been dubbed the "Lohan Suite" during that era. Regarding sexual or any sort of physical contact, there was an aura of morality that clung to the entire enterprise, and that which we find prurient today would have been putrescent then. In America, during the part of the Victorian Era when Chopin did most of her writing, the Gilded Age was in full swing - if one could call it that. This was still the time period when women were battling for the right to vote, let alone smoke in public, or initiate any sort of physical contact with a man. Into this vacuum Chopin fed her narratives, which make her near-celebration of a kind husband's death in "The Story of an Hour" and her protagonist's unthinkable abandonment of her family in *The Awakening* so controversial for that age.

These reasons explain why the steamy adultery in “ The Storm” stayed in Chopin’s drawer, not to be published until long after her death.

“ The Storm” is quite a short tale. A violent downpour has hit this part of Louisiana, and while Bobinot and his son, Bibi, are shopping in town, the rain becomes so heavy that they decide to wait it out before heading home. They are briefly worried about Calixta, Bobinot’s wife, but they figure that she will be all right. At the same time, she is bringing in Bobinot’s Sunday clothes, which had been hanging out on the porch to dry, when Alcee Laballiere rides up, asking to stay on her porch until the storm subsides. However, the rain is so intense that he must come inside, and it takes very little time for the erotic tension which had flowed between them before they both married different spouses returns. A bolt of lightning hits a chinaberry tree near the house, and the blinding flash and sounds scare Calixta right into the arms of Alcee. They come together in a brief moment of passionate intercourse, but when Bobinot and Bibi return, they do not sense anything amiss. Calixta runs right to Bibi, and Bobinot is content. When Alcee writes to his wife, later that night, he suggests that she stay in Biloxi for another month, which she is eager to do, because she has started to tire of all that “ conjugal” activity anyway.

The storm represents all of the forces of distraction that work, initially, to create relationships and then begin to work them apart, if people are not careful. These forces include lust and desire, as well as ennui – we are constantly, on some level, either looking for something new, or something old that we no longer have. When the storm hits, it is often unexpected, and one must decide what to do with the temptation at hand. While the literal

storm brings sustenance to the land (although in a somewhat violent form), the metaphorical storm of passion, while also potentially destructive, brings no permanent solace or sustenance to anyone involved. In fact, people who give in to these forces, in one form or another, generally experience destruction of some sort.

The central figure here is clearly Calixta - she is the one whom Temptation visits, and her nervous energy while Alcee sits in the chair reveals her arousal and uncertainty. This goes against the Victorian notion that women belonged at home, because there they would face no temptations; in this case, Temptation comes right to the door and asks to sit on the porch for a while. Her desire for Alcee is obvious, and it is instant. From the moment she screams and he takes her into his arms, there is a voracious, swift rush to pleasure: "her firm, elastic flesh that was knowing for the first time its birthright" appears to be experiencing pleasure of an entirely new sort. As the three kisses ensue, the passion builds through crescendo after crescendo until Alcee "possesse[s]" her, which is an odd word to use, given Chopin's view of the proper male-female relationship. If it is truly to be equal, and it is truly acceptable for women to stray, then who does the possessing? Can anyone be said to be possessing anyone, or anything, in this paradigm?

There are some thinkers who view Chopin as sort of an apologist for women, saying something like "Hey, women get tempted and stray too, just like men." However, at no point in the story, or in any of Chopin's writings, does there seem to be any sort of moral attachment to the marriage relationship. Instead, it seems to be a vehicle of convenience for women, who must put up

with the fumbling attentions of the men who are too busy providing for them to remain the sources of erotic wonder that they were, before the women had managed to convince the men to join these relationships.

Granted, it is true that the choices were indeed limited for women who wanted to remain single in Chopin's day. Without independent wealth, it was virtually impossible for a woman to make a living, as college education was extremely difficult to come by for women, and almost no occupations were open to them, except for a small few, such as teaching. Calixta is absolutely ridiculous in this instance, as would any man be if the genders in the situation were reversed. Using words like "birthright" to refer to an afternoon's dalliance, which may now extend to further attentions from Alcee, as evidenced by his suggestion that his wife stay out of town for another month, which can only lead to tragedy for Bobinot and Bibi. It's not even clear what the "birthright" here even means, except for her own right to indulge her own desires whenever she feels the need (of course, it's not clear that Esau understood what his own birthright meant, either - it was never really explained in his showdown with his brother Jacob, but that's another paper). And what sort of cage is she living in? It's not as though Bobinot, at least according to the story, is profligate, abusive, or even unkind. She does have a house with walls and a roof, and a husband who picks out delicacies for her - again, is this truly a cage?

There is a good bit that men can learn from the writings of Chopin. Sexual libertinism is dangerous for members of both genders. As John Irving wrote in a number of his novels, sex is indeed a blood sport, as its consequences can

be tragic for men and women (and boys and girls who are growing up and learning the wrong lessons). In our own time, men are often looked down upon for the ways in which their desires express themselves; what is worth remembering from this story is that if one is in a relationship to which one has pledged monogamy, then one should be faithful. However, it is also worth remembering that sex is not some sort of manipulative device: after all, if Alcee's wife had been more giving in that area, Alcee might have been up in Biloxi with her, or at least a bit more satisfied at that point in time. In any event, what happened in that home during that rainstorm, despite the vibrant imagery, was any less shameful than the wily deceit with which any adulterer sashes about in his (or her) own moral filth.