Kate Chopin. I don’t have any sympathy for you if you didn’t enjoy these stories and have even less if you don’t enjoy “The Awakening” which is a truly great novel. I was around for the rediscovery of Kate Chopin. It was in the ‘60s really when her name became prominent, when people began to talk about her, when she was more or less rediscovered in a large part due to the rise of feminist criticism or just the feminist movement in general.

She was born either in 1850 or 1851, depending on who you believe. She didn’t die until 1904 but she was only 53 or 54 years old. With a name like Katherine O’Flaherty, you know that she’s Irish. Her father came from Ireland and was in business in St. Louis and quite well-to-do. The family had money and social prestige. They were devout Roman Catholics. High place in St. Louis society, as they say. But she was a bit of a rebel. She smoked cigarettes in public and, you know, went walking by herself without another woman or without a male escort. Terrible, terrible, terrible, right?

My mother can recall how that was still scandalous on into the 20th century. When she saw, oh, “My candle burns at both ends; it will not last the night” — who wrote that? Please, please, please. The great love sonnets of — just recently published a biography of her called “Savage Beauty.” Edna St. Vincent Millet. Whooo. Proper nouns are the first to go, they say. I couldn’t get that one. Edna St. Vincent Millet. My mother saw her read and she was smoking cigarettes on the stage. Kind of like The Stones, you know. It was shocking.

Well, she shocked ’em all and she really shocked them with “The Awakening.”
She went to the St. Louis Academy of the Sacred Heart, a good education in some ways, but she mainly read a lot on her own. And not only did she read writers like Emerson, which you'll find the influence in “The Awakening,” and Hawthorne and Whitman. She had a little transcendental streak there. In fact, some people, some later critics, have identified existential tendencies in Kate Chopin’s writing which I think you can see pretty easily.

But since she spoke French and read French, she also read the modern French writers, most notably Zola who was a naturalist and who wrote about important matters that usually were not discussed in society. She also read Maupassant. She claimed to be more influenced by Maupassant and I suppose that’s probably because he was more interested in story-telling and she liked to tell a story.

She married when she was 19, Oscar Chopin, who was a Creole businessman from Louisiana, a cotton broker, and she moved down there with him in — the first nine years of their marriage, she gave birth to six kids. That’s important to consider when you think about her writing career. His business failed and they moved to a family cotton plantation in Louisiana which expanded her experience of the people of that region. From 10 years or so in New Orleans, she knew Creole society. And then from experience in the countryside, she was acquainted with not only country Creole society but also Cajun society. She also associated with and had contact with the culture of Mulattos and the black population of Louisiana. And she paid attention. She really has a great ear, as you can tell from the dialogue in this.

Her first novel — she didn’t begin writing until she was 39 years old. If any of you
planning on being a late bloomer, that’s always encouraging. You know, I like to think about Joseph Conrad not speaking English until he was in his late twenties. It no longer inspires me, but it is something to think about. Well, if you have six kids. And as they mentioned, the famous lapboard. She sat in the nursery and wrote a lot of her stories on her lap. Some critics say that might be why some of her stories are inconsequential in some ways and a little confusing sometimes. I admire that she did anything at all.

At any rate, that first novel was not much noticed. In fact, she paid for its publication herself. But it dealt with divorce and alcoholism. That early she was already not afraid to deal with subjects that people shy away from. She became known as a practitioner of local color which, of course, now we call regional writing. She was less famous, less well-known, than George Washington Cagel who was another Louisiana writer who wrote about Creole life and wrote well about Creole life, but his stuff has not stood up to the test of time the way hers has.

After her husband’s death she stayed in Louisiana a couple more years and then moved back to St. Louis, took her children to be with her family, and she wrote to life. She had some money left, but she was supporting herself. “The Storm,” as they point out, was not published until 1969. She wrote “The Storm” — which we haven’t gotten to yet, but that’s the next thing in this note. “She wrote ‘The Storm’ while she was waiting for ‘The Awakening’ to be published.” So even though you read it first, “The Awakening” was written first.

And there’s a wonderful quote about Edna Pontellier in the headnote before we leave it. She said, “I never dreamed of Mrs. Pontellier making such a mess of things
and working out her own damnation as she did. If I had had the slightest intimation of such a thing, I would have excluded her from the company.” Well, that’s the most famous quote from Kate Chopin on her work, and you can hang onto that as you read it.

How many of you went ahead and finished “The Awakening”? Anybody done that? I’ll try not to give away anything. A couple of years ago, apparently, in another class, I mentioned the ending of “The Awakening.” And there were three or four people in that class that were in the survey class who were reading it, and they were angry with me to the very end. So I won’t — I’ll try not to do that.

Well, let’s look at a couple of these stories. I’ll bet you have read “The Story of an Hour.” Did you ever come across that? Remember that? It’s real short. It only takes about 10 minutes to read it. It’s about a woman who gets the news her husband was killed in a train wreck. Is that — I believe it was a train wreck. And she goes, “Ohhhhh,” and then she goes, “Hmmmm. He won’t be around anymore.” Whatever. And then at the end of the story, somebody comes in. “Oh, it was a false alarm. He’s still alive. He’s gonna be all right.” “Ohhhhh. Good.” That’ll give you a little pause.

There’s another story, a great story called — I think this is how you pronounce it — “Athenaise,” A-t-h-e-n-a-i-s-e. It’s a woman’s name. I wish they would put in the anthologies — it’s about a young woman who is married to a strong man who’s a planter. Does this sound kind of familiar? She is beautiful and she is young and she is bored. And she tells him one day — she says, “I’m going to go to New Orleans. I’m going to leave for awhile. I just want to — I need some space. I’m confused. I need a little space.” She didn’t say this in the book, but I’ll bet you she said, “Dear, we have to
talk.” It was one of those things.

Well, he knows where she is. He knows where she’s staying. She makes a
couple of friends there. In fact, she makes one male friend, a newspaperman, but
nothing comes of it. And it’s not his fault that nothing comes of it. And in the end, her
husband says, “I will not force her to return.” Although under Louisiana law and the
conventions of the day and everything else, he probably could have. Because he
remembered when he was a small child, before the Civil War, when a slave had run
away from their plantation and had been recaptured and brought back at the end of a
rope behind a horse. And he thought, “No, I cannot do that.” I mean, it’s very
contemporary in the way we feel. You know, if you want someone to stay with you, you
have to give them their freedom. You have to give the freedom in order to — for them
to get it back.

And it’s a good story. But part of the ending, I think, is spoiled because she
suddenly realizes she wants to be with her husband and she’s really happy at the very
end. And what is odd about that, is what she finds out, is that she’s going to have a
baby. And that just really seems to me to fly in the face of some of the other attitudes
that she expressed in that story. That may be why it’s not anthologized because it
might not be quite as politically correct as some people might like it to be. But I
recommend it. Beautifully written. If you’re fond of New Orleans, it has, you know,
street scenes and that sort of thing.

“At the ‘Cadian Ball.” Of course, what kind of ball would a ‘Cadian ball be?
Cajun ball. The Acadians — the so-called Acadians which — there are many groups
that she writes about. What’s the difference between a Creole and a Cajun? People get that mixed up. Strictly speaking, yeah. Strictly speaking they’re the descendants of the original French settlers. The old families, the old Creole families. And that doesn’t matter — you know, there are Creole families in Mexico that are descendants of — or New Mexico — descendants of the original Spanish settlers.

The Cajuns have a French culture but they came via a different route. They were in Nova Scotia and they were kicked out of Canada by the British, and they wound up down in Louisiana. Of course, Longfellow wrote that great long poem “Evangaline” about that experience. They speak a pathos that is French but isn’t French. It’s a very different dialect of French. And so to get along, you would really have to know — have to know that as well as French.

This story was published in 1892. What’d you think about it? I reread this one just this morning. I hadn’t read it for a long time. And I liked it more than I’ve liked it before.

[Inaudible student response]

She’s a relative, a female relative. It’s his mother’s goddaughter and I think that she’s a cousin. But that’s okay. That’s okay. That doesn’t matter. Wouldn’t be a first cousin, I don’t think. But even if she were, you know — his grandmother is her — I mean his mother is her godmother, so she might be a second cousin. But, hey, it’s Louisiana. It’s okay. I mean, Jerry Lee Louis is from Louisiana — Faraday. Doesn’t that solve the whole problem? I believe one of his wives was his cousin. Thirteen, I believe. Yeah. At any rate, we won’t worry about that. I don’t think we need to worry
about that.

But they are — they are Creoles. They’re an old French family, French planters. And, of course, the Cajuns here — Calixta and Bobinot and so forth — they are, well, Cajuns. And Calixta has some Spanish background. Her mother’s from Cuba, Hispanic background. Of course they use that against her. I love this mixture of — this jambalaya of cultures.

Bobinot loves her. Does he love her or what? She says, “Bobinot thought of her eyes, and weakened.” He’s trying to decide whether or not to go to the ball. “The bluest, the drowsiest, most tantalizing that ever looked into a man’s; he thought of her flaxen hair that kinked worse than a mulatto’s close to her head; that broad, smiling mouth and tiptilted nose, that full figure; that voice like a rich contralto song, with cadences in it that must have been taught by Satan.” You know, Bobinot can’t put that into words like that. He’s not thinking it that way. But that’s what he would say if he could say it, and Chopin certainly can.

And then he remembers there was this rumor about her, about that she’d gone to Assumption and that she had perhaps hooked up there with this well-to-do planter. At any rate. And she has this public fight with Fronie. Don’t you like this? I’m glad they footnoted all these curses. What they footnote as — let me see. “You bitch; take that and that.” The literal translation is, “You female lion” which I think is — but I’m sure that’s the sense of the thing.

Anyway, Bobinot thinks of that and decides he won’t go to the ball. But what does he find out? Alcée is gonna go. Is that how you say it? Alcée, Alcea — Alcée,
Alsay? We’ll call him Alcée. Alcée is gonna go so Bobinot decides he’d better go.

“That was the year Alcée Laballiere put nine hundred acres in rice.” And so they have money, they have resources they can fall back on, and yet this was a terrible blow for him when the cyclone came through and destroyed that crop.

And we find a little bit more about his relationship with his cousin or with his mother’s ward, more or less. Through pure telling, it says that even though he was working everyday and came in half wet from the rice fields, there were often guests. “Young men and women who came up from the city,” from New Orleans, “which was but a few hours away, to visit his beautiful kinswoman. She was worth going a good deal farther than that to see. Dainty as a lily; hardy as a sunflower; slim, tall, graceful, like one of the reeds that grew in the marsh. Cold and kind and cruel by turn, and everything that was aggravating to Alcée.” That’s just telling, but I think it fits her plan.

And there’s just — there’s mention of the one day that he came in. Said he must’ve been crazy. He comes in and just walks right straight up to her, grabs her, “and panted a volley of hot, blistering love-words into her face.” Now, there’s an occasion where maybe it’s good we don’t know exactly what he said. Hot, blistering love-words into her face. “No man had ever spoken love to her like that.” “‘Monsieur’, she exclaimed.” And she’s disdainful, and that’s all that happened.

That was a day or two before the cyclone hit. So first she disdains him and then the cyclone wrecks his crop, and as he tells the servant after he chug-a-lugs that quinine in a great big slug of whiskey, that he’s gonna go — he says — the old servant says, “You wants li’le res’, suh” and he says, “No, I wants li’le fling; dat w’at I wants.”
'Course, now, that's not what he said. We're hearing what he said as spoken by the servant. And he says, “I can make out to stand up and give and take with any man I knows” — I'm translating here — “unless it's John L. Sullivan. But when God Almighty and a woman joins forces against me, that's one too many for me.” Isn't that awful? At least try it. “I can make out to stand up and give and take with any man I knows 'lessen it's John L. Sullivan. But when God Almighty and a woman lines forces against me, that's one too many for me.” Now I've got that Creole trying to speak Cajun — me.

Did you try to read some of this out loud? You remember that Cajun cook — I can't think of his name — on TV? He says, “Yeah, we'll put a li'l chicken and a li'l wine. Eh, eh. Li'l more wine, li'l more chicken.” We were talking about chicken. It said chicken gumbo. When our boy gets to the party he's too late for the chicken gumbo. What does gumbo mean? What's that word mean?

[Inaudible student response]

Well, that's what gumbo is. But what is gumbo specifically? It's an African word. What do you make — what do you have to have in gumbo in order for it to be gumbo? Okra. Gumbo is an African word for okra. Rice is good. My wife is from Louisiana. She cooked some shrimp gumbo last week that was absolutely wonderful, including filet. You have to put a little filet in there, the powder of the sassafras tree, to give it that Louisiana flavor. But it fascinates me that old what's-his-name — a li'l wine and so forth — is speaking African and doesn't even know it when he says he's gonna have some gumbo.

When we get to Flannery O'Connor — no, I guess it's Eudora Welty — they're
eatin’ goobers. What are goobers? Peanuts. Goobers are just peanuts. The African word for peanut is nguba, n-g-u-b-a, nguba. And so when you’re eating goobers, you’re actually speaking African. I think it’s pretty neat, too. So we should all have some goobers and gumbo.

But some of the footnotes are funny. They say, “Those cursed railroad people.” It’s those damn railroad guys, is what he says. Local color. I don’t know why that they think that’s a derogatory term. Local color. Look at what she does. We know what they eat, we know the kind of music they’re playing, and the mixture of English and French that they hear. That guy says he is chic, mais chic. Bobinot himself, however — more telling — “was dull-looking and clumsy. Most of the men were. But the young women were very beautiful. The eyes that glanced into Alcée’s as they passed him were big, dark, soft as those of the young heifers standing out in the cool prairie grass.” I thought that was a jarring comparison, don’t you think?

“But the belle was Calixta.” “He, Bobinot!” I’ll try again. “Mais, w’at’s the matta? W’at you standin’ plante la like ole Ma’am Tina’s cow in the bog, you!” She knows how Bobinot feels about her. We also are told that the women did not always approve of Calixta which probably makes her even more appealing. And when Alcée is talking to her and they see Bobinot come out on the porch, he says, “There is Bobinot looking for you. You are going to set poor Bobinot crazy. You’ll marry him some day; hein, Calixta?” “I don’t say no, me.” So she’s already made up her mind about that, hasn’t she?

But maybe this next incident is what makes her mind for sure. He says he’s
going down to New Orleans and she says, “W’at you goin’ do, yonda?” He says, “I don’t know. Drown myself in the lake, maybe.” Dialect is hard to do. Try to write it some time. Let alone if you’re trying to sound — in one case trying to sound like Creole French and in another case trying to sound like Cajun French, and another case trying to sound like African American dialect. “Dey — dey some one in de road, onda de mulbare-tree.” M-u-l-b-a-r-e. Mulbare tree. I’ve heard that all my life, mulbare tree.

And there’s Clarisse, standing there in her riding habit. Wouldn’t this make a good short film? It’s got everything. It’s got action. For instance, the end of that scene. Look how much — I just want to do an example of Kate Chopin as an artist. People talk about her themes, they talk about her subject matter, they talk about how daring she was to write stories about miscegenation and adultery and so forth. But she was also an artist.

So look at these few lines. “Alcée swung himself” — this is after the two women have noticed and spoken to each other. “Ah, c’est vous, Calixta?” says Clarisse. Anyway, “Alcée swung himself over the low rail and started to follow Clarisse, without a word, without a glance back at Calixta. He had forgotten he was leaving her there.” Now, there’s an example of omniscient point-of-view. First we’re told exactly what he does and then we’re told that he forgot about her. This is the same man who was whispering in her ear — in fact, kissing her ear just a moment ago, talking about her going down to New Orleans and let’s go back to this place where they had had — almost had an affair before, but her resistance and his honor had prevented it.

“He had forgotten he was leaving her there. But Clarisse whispered something
to him, and he turned back to say ‘Good-night, Calixta.’” What did Clarisse whisper to him?

[Inaudible student response]

Say tell her good-bye. I mean, who’s being led around here by the ear? And he turned back to say, “‘Good-night, Calixta,’ and offer his hand to press through the railing. She pretended not to see it.” She has just — you know, they were doing fine just then until all of a sudden this woman shows up in her riding outfit. I can see a little riding crop there, you know. Come home with me. And he says — he gets up, swings his leg over the rail, and doesn’t even look at her as he starts off. “Oh, good-bye” — and puts his hand out to shake it. She pretended — being an omniscient author, we know that she saw the hand, but she pretended not to see it. That’s just five little lines and she has all kinds of characterizations of Clarisse — but why does Clarisse tell him to tell her good-bye? That’s like when you’re leaving a party and your mother says, “Did you say I had a nice time?” Remember that? Did you say thank-you? You always had to do that. What if I didn’t have a nice time? It was miserable. Thank you. That’s great.

Here comes Bobinot. “Kin I go with you, Calixta?” “I don’ care.” Well, that’s encouraging, isn’t it? You know, he just schleps along with her and they go through the fields and she’s getting her dress wet. And he finally says — he tells her, “Watch out for your dress.” She says, “I don’ care; it’s got to go in the tub, anyway. You been sayin’ all along you want to marry me, Bobinot. Well, if you want, yet, I don’ care, me.” Now, that’s kind of a nice proposal, isn’t it? If you want to yet, if you still want to, it’s okay with
For Bobinot, “The glow of a sudden and overwhelming happiness shone out in the brown, rugged face of the young Acadian.” That juxtaposition of almost Bret Harte like language with that dialect is a great effect, too. Well, he says, “Oh, I’m satisfy, Calixta.” And the party’s over.

In the distance — oh, no, no. We’ve got another scene. We’ve got the other couple to take care of first. He asks her what happened back at the plantation because, you know, she’s alarmed him like maybe there’s something wrong with his mother. And she says, no, it’s just what happened to her. She saw him leaving and she thought he might be going to hook up with Calixta again and she couldn’t take it. She said, “I couldn’t stan’ it,—again. She had her face hidden in her arm that she was resting against the saddle when she said that. He began to wonder if this meant love. But she had to tell him so, before he believed it. And when she told him, he thought the face of the Universe was changed.”

Notice she doesn’t put that in dramatic presentation. She does that in telling and in direct quotation. We don’t have Clarisse saying, “I love you.” We have her explaining why he had to have her say it, telling, and then she does. And not to forget, the way his universe is changed, “just like Bobinot.” The rather seemingly slow-witted Cajun farmer and this rather aristocratic Creole planer both are struck by these women that they love.

The very end. “In the distance they heard the rapid discharge of pistol-shots.” More local color. This is apparently what went on at Cajun parties. “But it did not disturb them. They knew it was only the negro musicians who had gone into the yard to
fire their pistols into the air, as the custom is, and to announce ‘le bal est fini.’” The party’s over, the ball is over. One way to know that it’s time to go home when people are standing in the yard, firing pistols in the air. Kinda reminds me of The Who. Pete Townsend was interviewed one time on *Fresh Air* and Terry Gross says, “Why’d you guys start smashin’ up — what does that mean when you smash up those expensive guitars?” And Townsend says, “Just means the show’s over.” So, you know. Well, that’s it.

Five years later is the setting for “The Storm.” And she even identifies it as the sequel to “The ‘Cadian Ball” because it was a well received story, but she didn’t publish it. She didn’t publish it by her own choice. It was not that publishers were afraid of it. She had been burned so badly by the controversy and the criticism that she received for “The Awakening” that she just felt like the world wasn’t ready for this. But I’m glad the manuscript wasn’t destroyed and I’m glad that it was published finally in 1969 and brought to the world.

Even though she — and she wrote this, you know, seven years later as well, but she kept those characters in mind and I think it’s beautiful that you should always read the two stories together. Because what’s your feeling at the end of “The ‘Cadian Ball”? How do you feel about these four people that you’ve been introduced to? It’s not over? Oh, I was just kind of satisfied that it was almost, you know, like the end of — you know, Bobinot’s got Calixta, and Clarisse and Alcée they’ve got each other, and everybody’s gonna be happy, happy, happy. You didn’t feel that way? You know, like, “Aw, this story’s no good. It’s over now.” Like Thomas Harding in Thomas Harding novels. It’s
always over with the wedding. The courtship’s the good part. The pursuit, the falling in love.

Ah, and then we get “The Storm.” She has a 4-year-old child now, Bobinot and Calixta — Bibi. And Bobinot buys her a can of shrimps. Do you like that? I’ve never had canned shrimp. I can’t imagine that. Have you ever had that? That sounds hideous. But she likes ‘em. Well, this big storm’s coming up and her comes Alcée, riding in at the gate. We are told things. We are told in Part II, five paragraphs in, that “She was a little fuller of figure than five years before when she married; but she had lost nothing of her vivacity.”

He has to come in. They’re in the dining room which is also the sitting room which is also the general utility room which is also the room. “Adjoining was her bedroom, with Bibi’s couch along side her own.” We get a lot just in that little phrase there about the domestic arrangements of Bobinot and Calixta. The little 4-year-old boy’s cot is beside the bed. “The door stood open, and the room with its white, monumental bed, its closed shutters, looked dim and mysterious.” If you were filming this, I think the point of view of the camera ought to be something like — you know, they’d step in and then the camera is so that they’re both looking, and you see where they’re looking and there’s the room with the big bed. The big storm.

And she’s always said Bobinot and Bibi are gone for hours maybe, but they don’t mean for anything to happen. This is not — this was not — Alcée was not saying, “Hey, it’s raining. I’ll go --.” No. They’re looking out the window at the storm because this is such a terrible storm. “She went and stood at the window with a greatly disturbed look
“Alcée got up and joined her at the window, looking over her shoulder.” Perfectly natural thing to do, isn’t it? He wants to see the storm, too. He can’t see it standing back there. Besides, he’s tired of looking at that bedroom. “The rain was coming down in sheets obscuring the view of far-off cabins and enveloping the distant wood in a gray mist.” Is that pretty? Isn’t that a nice scene? “The playing of the lightning was incessant.” Oh, a little bit of spice there in the weather. “A bolt struck a tall chinaberry tree at the edge of the field. It filled all visible space with a blinding glare and the crash seemed to invade the very boards they stood upon.” The boom, the crash. He’s talking about the crack of the thunder that happens the instant the lightning strikes.

“Calixta put her hands to her eyes, and with a cry, staggered backward. Alcée’s arm encircled her, and for an instant he drew her close and spasmodically to him. “Holy Cow,” she cried, which is essentially what that means. It means “Goodness.” Was she faking that little backward shocking thing from the lightning? She doesn’t know he’s there? Oh, what can I do? “Calixta,’ he said, ‘don’t be frightened. Nothing can happen. The house is too low to be struck, with so many tall trees standing about.’” Course she's still in his arms while he’s telling her this. “‘There! Aren’t you going to be quiet? Say, aren’t you?’ He pushed her hair back from her face that was warm and steaming.” Oh, for cryin’ out loud. “Her lips were as red and moist as pomegranate seed. “I don’t know. I kinda like that comparison of the girl’s eyes to heifers more than I
like the pomegranate seed, but we’ll let that go.

Because pretty soon we’re getting to white necks and glimpses of full, firm bosoms and at this point I have to decline to read any further. It’s beginning to sound like one of those awful Silhouettes or what are those romances — Harlequins, like those Harlequins. I dated a girl whose mother bought those things by the case, you know. I looked at a couple of ‘em and it always kind of amazed me there’d be the big love scene and it would say — and they always picked the woman up and carried her, kind of like Rhett Butler in “Gone with the Wind.” But it would say, “He picked her up with a cry.” You know, and I’d wonder what kind of cry that was. Was it AHHHGGGH or what?

Well, at any rate, I have to say that some of this writing is — it may be a little bit trite, but at the same time — admit it. Admit it, admit it, admit it. Didn’t it draw you in? Didn’t you get into this — you didn’t get into this scene? Just too corny?

[Inaudible student response]

Well, this is pretty trashy, I think. I mean, when they have phrases like “quivering ecstasy.” “Her mouth was a fountain of delight.” But after all, think about when she was writing this and she had nothing to go on but Maupassant. At any rate, “And when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life’s mystery.” Those are abstractions piled upon other abstractions. But if you have the least bit of imagination and any sympathy at all for these two people in this terrible storm, and the situation they are in, five years of delayed fulfillment, you might be a little more sympathetic.

“The rain was over” — the end of this is terrific — “and the sun was turning the
glistening green world into a palace of gems.” Isn’t that wonderful? Again, this is so cinematic. She sees things so well. And Alcée leaves and here comes Bobinot. “Oh, Bobinot! You back! My! but I was uneasy. W’ere you been during the rain? An’ Bibi? He ain’t wet? He ain’t hurt?” And he said, “I brought you some shrimps, Calixta.” Handed her that can of shrimp. She goes, “‘Shrimps! Oh, Bobinot! You too good fo’ anything!’ and she gave him a smacking kiss on the cheek that resounded, ‘J’vous reponds, we’ll have a feas’ tonight! Umph-umph!’ Bobinot and Bibi began to relax and enjoy themselves, and when the three seated themselves at table they laughed much and so loud that anyone might have heard them as far away as Laballiere’s.” Which would be interesting if you could.

Well, just as she ends “The ‘Cadian Ball” by getting to our other participant, we get back to him. Well, what does he do when he gets home? He writes his wife, she and the babies — not the plural — in Biloxi. When we get to “The Awakening” you’ll see these summer vacations that people take, going down the Grand Isle, going down to the Gulf Coast, and he says if they’re having fun they can stay another month. Is that implying anything or not? Because I think you really have to decide what’s on Alcée’s mind. Is he gonna wait for another storm? I really don’t know. I mean, I really — that struck me more reading it this morning than it struck me in the past. I think the conclusion of this story and the impact of this story, and I think what she was trying to say in this story, is — would be spoiled if it looks like this is gonna be a continuing thing. I think he’s just saying, you know, if you are happy down there, then be happy down there.
I think — you know, a little separation or whatever, but I don’t think that he’s plotting returning. I don’t think she’d let him in. It seems like that. As for Clarisse — well, we even get the point of view of the missing wife which we haven’t had at all. In a way, this is almost really violating point of view. But from an omniscient point of view, you can go anywhere you want. So we switch down to Biloxi. “She was charmed upon receiving her husband’s letter. She and the babies were doing well. The society was agreeable; many of her old friends and acquaintances were at the bay. And the first free breath since her marriage” — and this is five years ago — “seemed to restore the pleasant liberty of her maiden days. Devoted as she was to her husband, their intimate conjugal life was something which she was more than willing to forego for a while. So the storm passed and everyone was happy.”

Oh, no, no. Now, we can’t publish that. Because we know that things like that can’t happen and everybody be happy. Bobinot comes home — you know, he’s happy. Calixta’s got the shrimps; she’s happy. Alcée, he’s happy for the moment. And, hey, the babies, they’re doing fine. That’s why she knew she couldn’t published it. You have to punish sins. Sin has to be punished. That’s real important when we get to “The Awakening.” I think it’s very significant when we get to “The Awakening.”

Okay. Please be sure you’ve read the whole thing for Monday ‘cause we don’t want to spoil it. I’ll see ‘ya.