



Kate Chopins - The Awakening - The Influence of Family, Friends and Lovers on Edna Pontelliers

Awakening

Emel Elbek

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Seminar paper from the year 2003 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,7 (A-), University of Heidelberg (Anglistics Seminar), course: Proseminar Literature Studies: American Women Writers at the Turn of the Century, 5 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: here is no denying the fact that Kate Chopin's novel The Awakening represents one of the milestones in women's literature. Like numerous other late nineteenth century novels and essays written by females, The Awakening caused heated discussions as far as women's liberation and its presentation in literature is concerned. Literary criticism ranged from sympathy and admiration for the main character Edna Pontellier to rejection and disapproval of her behavior: Many considered The Awakening as a "a first-rate novel" while others ridiculed Edna Pontellier's awakening as "a champagne-like performance."

In The Awakening, Edna Pontellier undergoes a development towards independence and individuality - the awakening of her self. This internal progress results from external factors such as experiences with fellow human beings. In other words, Edna's awakening cannot be fully understood without taking the social factor - her surroundings - into consideration.

It therefore seems appropriate to look closely into her immediate environment, her family, first. To what extent do her husband Léonce Pontellier and her children Raoul and Etienne contribute to Edna's awakening? The second category of persons surrounding her are her friends Madame Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz. How great is these females' impact on the evolution from Mrs. Pontellier to Edna? And finally, how much do Edna's lovers Robert Lebrun and Alcée Arobin affect the awakening of Edna's self? These are the questions I will try to answer in this paper.

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