



"The Awakening" by Kate Chopin - Edna Pontellier, a woman fated to die

Claudia Dewitz

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Seminar paper from the year 2007 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,7, Humboldt-University of Berlin (Institut für Anglistik/Amerikanistik), course: "Death and Sexuality in Early American Narratives", language: English, abstract: In the following paper I will subject the character of Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's The Awakening to a critical analysis. Edna Pontellier's death at the end of the novel is not the essential sense. Since the society of her time cannot allow such an "awakening" of individuality to take place, Edna is fated to die. Therefore death is a forgone conclusion. Given that Kate Chopin tried to paint the picture of a truly liberated, independent, and individual woman, she cannot let Edna go back to her conventional life, which would be the only alternative. Following the biography of Kate Chopin closely, the reader discovers many parallels between Kate Chopin's life and the character of Edna Pontellier. The novel does not, as some critics of Kate Chopin's time have claimed, lack "authorial comment and judgement".¹ Kate Chopin's novel was meant as a judgement of the Creole society of her time. Therefore it is important to examine the characters and the events that are crucial for the development that leads to the tragic end of Edna Pontellier. Starting with her husband, Léonce Pontellier, whom she does not love, I will discuss in what way the main characters Adèle Ratignolle, Mademoiselle Reisz, Alcée Arobin and Robert Lebrun are responsible for Edna's "awakening".

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