



Kate Chopin in the Twenty-First Century: New Critical Essays

Heather Ostman

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The essays in *Kate Chopin in the Twenty-First Century* update Chopin scholarship, creating pathways, both broad and narrow, for study in a new century. Given Chopin's atypical literary career and her frequent writing about unconventional themes for her time—such as divorce, infidelity, and suicide—she may have approved such approaches as the essays here suggest. This collection of essays offers readers newer ways of thinking about Chopin's works. They break away from the familiar trends of the feminist considerations of her work, ranging from her short stories, to her lesser-known novel, *At Fault*, to her best-known work, *The Awakening*. Part one introduces interdisciplinary themes for reading "culture" in Chopin, including urban living and theatre as a lens for viewing New Orleans's social and class stratifications; the importance of music—a central interest of Chopin's—in her texts; and the cultural relevance of *Vogue* magazine, where eighteen of Chopin's stories were first published. Part two identifies important and overlapping concerns of religion, race, class, and gender within the contexts of selected short works. And part three offers fresh readings of *The Awakening*, using the lens of race, as well as the lens of class to reconsider protagonist Edna Pontellier's transformation and her dependency upon the "rights" of privilege within a specific cultural context. Together, all of the essays in the collection, by both established and newer scholars, help to usher Chopin's work into the twenty-first century.

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