

## Abstract

The objective of this study is to ascertain whether the principles of recent intersectional analyses of Kate Chopin's seminal novel *The Awakening* may also be applied to Chopin's short fiction and what conclusions would be drawn from such an analysis regarding Chopin's stance on the oppression of minorities. The purpose of an intersectional analysis is to evaluate the specific type of oppression that arises on the intersection of various social categories – the categories considered here are gender, race, and class. Intersectional analysis represents one of the latest methodological approaches regarding the fiction of Kate Chopin, expanding upon the inferences formerly derived by the feminist scholars. The first chapter introduces the concept of intersectionality and describes the changes of Kate Chopin's position in the American literary canon together with the development of the methods employed by the scholarship in relation to Chopin's works through time.

The second chapter is concerned with the demonstration of the main notions of five intersectional analyses of *The Awakening* carried out by Anna Elfenbein, Elizabeth Ammons, Joyce Dyer, Michele Birnbaum, and Dagmar Pegues. The first three studies are presented along with my additions to the arguments, and are concerned with the dichotomy between passion and purity, the stereotypical representations of women of color, and the importance of the colored characters' presence in the novel, respectively. The examination shows that Chopin's stance regarding the racial and class politics of her era was quite enlightened. The works of Birnbaum and Pegues associate the heroine of the novel with women of color due to her inner appropriation of otherness. Birnbaum's reasoning is offered without commentary or supplementation because of its elaborated execution. Pegues' statements are validated, and as her findings question Chopin's enlightened outlook only partially, the only remaining study that fully denounces Chopin for her lack of empathy with the minorities is Michele Birnbaum's.

The third chapter reproduces the processes of inspection introduced in the second chapter and examines the four selected stories – "Beyond the Bayou," "Tante Cat'rinette," "Désirée's Baby" and "La Belle Zoraïde" – in a similar manner. Birnbaum's study is omitted from this chapter as well, as it is included solely for the thesis to be comprehensive. The conclusions reached in the last section hold true for the most part of the third chapter's examinations as well – Chopin seems to criticize the ambiguity of the racist Creole concept of ideal femininity and some of the African-American female

stereotypes, and she also makes use of the colored characters' attitudes to call attention to the lack of freedom in American society. The only instance implying that Chopin addresses certain issues in a reactionary manner is Chopin's prolific use of the Mammy stereotype that she does not complement with any type of critique and instead presents it as an ideal state to which a woman of color should aspire.

The thesis concludes with the acknowledgment of some of its potential deficiencies, such as questioning the relevance of the selection of the stories with regard to the available intersectional analyses of the novel upon which the examination of the short fiction is performed. Finally, the thesis recognizes the steady interest in the re-evaluation of Chopin's works according to the principles of intersectionality as evidence of Chopin being a progressive author at least to a certain extent.

*Key words:* intersectional analysis, race, gender, class, Kate Chopin, The Awakening, short stories, feminism, stereotypes, sexuality, oppression