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CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS AND REBELLION IN KATE CHOPIN'S *THE AWAKENING*

Robert S. Levine*

It is one of the curiosities of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* that the "awakening" heroine does so much sleeping. Surely *The Awakening* is the "sleepiest" novel in the American literary canon.[1] Descriptions abound of Edna Pontellier's fitful sleep, listlessness, occasional deep sleep, and oncoming exhaustion. Throughout the novel the reader remains acutely aware that Edna needs sleep and resists that need. Her resistance results in a reordering of sleep patterns that more often than not leaves her tired and dull-spirited. Though now and then achieving a satisfying sleep and consequent waking clarity, Edna generally traverses the thin line between waking and sleeping and seems lost in a dreamy fatigue.[2]

The increasing lassitude weighing on Edna's consciousness seems at odds with the parallel development of her awakening from being "a dupe to illusions."[3] Critics who have commented on Edna's sleepiness have tended to be those sharply critical of her character. According to this group of commentators, Edna sleepwalks her way through the novel as an essentially passive and confused heroine. Her suicide is seen as the ultimate manifestation of such mental confusion. As the debunkers would have it, Edna, by the end of the novel, has experienced not a feminist awakening but a retreat into a self-absorbing dreamland.[4] But this condemnatory interpretation of Edna's "sleepy" character founders on two points: it fails to take note of Edna's active participation in her sleep-wake disruptions, and it wrongly isolates the problem of Edna's sleepiness from the larger pattern of circadian rhythms, or rhythms of the day, described in the novel.[5] A close study of this rhythmic pattern demonstrates the logical though tragic connection between Edna's sleep habits and her suicide and reveals the radical rebellious tendencies of her character. Edna's rebellion against the ordering patterns of both nature and community is the central drama of the novel.

Though hints are offered retrospectively in the text that Edna has been experiencing some sort of inchoate "awakening" of passion and

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insight during her summer at Grand Isle, it is a disruption of sleep at the novel's opening that seemingly initiates the events culminating in her suicide. Returning from a night with his male friends at Klein's hotel, Mr. Pontellier disturbs Edna's regular sleep: "His entrance awoke his wife, who was in bed and fast asleep when he came in" (p. 885). After awaking her, he smugly chides her for not properly taking care of their children. His arrogance and, no doubt, Edna's emerging romantic feelings for Robert Lebrun lead to the first rebellious act portrayed in the novel: Edna goes outside to the wicker chair on the porch and begins "to rock gently to and fro" (p. 886). At this point Chopin establishes the strong associations present throughout the novel between rebellion and the sea: "It was then past midnight. The cottages were all dark. A single faint light gleamed out from the hallway of the house. There was no sound abroad except the hooting of an old owl in the top of a water-oak, and the everlasting voice of the sea, that was not uplifted at that soft hour. It broke like a mournful lullaby upon the night" (p. 886). Resisting sleep, Edna becomes open and receptive to the call of the "sea": passional, nonrational sources. The act of resistance paradoxically creates a passivity of consciousness that nurtures these internal stirrings.

Edna's first resistance to sleep enlarges, by a ripple effect, to a more comprehensive rebellion against the regular circadian rhythms of her husband and, eventually, of her community. The next day Mr. Pontellier, the good citizen, arises early to take the rockaway to the steamer to his business in New Orleans while Edna remains fatigued. And when Mr. Pontellier the following week returns home late at night, his interaction with his wife, who lies outdoors in the hammock, stands in marked contrast to the first description of such an event:

> "Are you asleep?" he asked, bending down close to look at her.
>
> "No." Her eyes gleamed bright and intense, with no sleepy shadows, as they looked into his.
>
> "Do you know it is past one o'clock? Come on," and he mounted the steps and went into their room.
>
> "Edna!" called Mr. Pontellier from within, after a few moments had gone by.
>
> "Don't wait for me," she answered (p. 911).

Actively rebelling by staying awake, Edna challenges her husband (avoiding his sexual threat) and challenges also a larger complex of circadian patterning: "She would, through habit, have yielded to his desire; not with any sense of submission or obedience to his compelling wishes, but unthinkingly, as we walk, move, sit, stand, go through the daily treadmill of the life which has been portioned out to us" (p. 912).

Significantly, then, the most crucial scene of the Grand Isle section of the novel—Edna's romantic day with Robert Lebrun at *Cheniere Caminada*—follows immediately upon the description of her night spent on the hammock to "the hour before dawn, when the world seems to hold its breath" (p. 912). In effect, for the first time in her life, Edna "creates" her own day. Having slept only a few "troubled and feverish hours" (p. 913), Edna awakens at an early hour fatigued and yet feeling free. She lacks the conscious ego restraints that would accompany full alertness, and so she maneuvers in a sort of dream state where, as in a dream, "she had placed herself in alien hands for direction, and freed her soul of responsibility" (p. 913). Chopin underscores the dreamlike quality of Edna's perceptions: "Edna felt as if she were being borne away from some anchorage which had held her fast, whose chains had been loosening—had snapped the night before when the mystic spirit was abroad, leaving her free to drift whithersoever she chose to set her sails" (p. 915). The coupling of "drift" and "chose" effectively communicates the passive-active relation Edna has to her dreaminess. Though essentially passive and even a bit infantile, Edna has nonetheless sought such an instinctual state of consciousness and thus must be granted an active role in her rebellion against the rhythms and mores of her Creole society.

Edna lives within the ordered and hierarchical Creole world of weekly mass, yearly summer vacations at Grand Isle, and regular receiving days in New Orleans. While such order indeed offers its own compelling attractions—it allows for a "painless" subsuming of self to community; it alleviates the anxiety of choice—it threatens Edna the outsider who is identified throughout the novel not only as the sole individual undergoing an "awakening" of consciousness but as the non-Creole, the Kentucky Presbyterian. Thus, her response to Sunday mass at *Cheniere Caminada* signals a double rebellion—a rebellion against the patterning of her life and an "American" rebellion against the Catholic Church.[6] Sitting with Lebrun at Our Lady of Lourdes, she feels oppressed and drowsy: "Her head began to ache, and the lights on the altar swayed before eyes. Another time she might have made an effort to regain her composure; but her one thought was to quit the stifling atmosphere of the church and reach the open air" (p. 916). Edna's exiting from mass can be seen as a bold rejection of Creole and Catholic values.

Equally important, however, is Edna's subsequent act of napping mid-day at Madame Antoine's cottage, an act which radically reorders her day, seems symbolically related to her first sleep disruption, and reveals just how far out of synchronization she is with her community.

Rested by a sleep of her own fashioning, Edna uncharacteristically awakens fresh and satisfied: "Her eyes were bright and wide awake and her face glowed" (p. 918). Experiencing a renewed interest in food, she hungrily devours bread and an apple, drinks some wine, and then joins Robert for a dinner of broiled fowl. The feast emerges as a sensuous consummation of sorts, and as a substitute sexual experience. Additionally, by eating a full meal in late afternoon and lingering into the night with Robert, Edna rebels against the normal patterns of life she and others are accustomed to. For one day she has virtually abandoned her children, who have been cared for by the knowing Madame Ratignolle. And because she slept during the day, Edna now has little desire to sleep at night: she has altered her sleep-wake cycle over the past few weeks at Grand Isle, and has adopted a rhythm to her life at odds with that of the Creole community. For example, the chapter in which Robert announces his plan to go to Mexico begins: "When Edna entered the dining-room one evening a little late, as was her habit, an unusually animated conversation seemed to be going on" (p. 922). Her soup is served immediately upon her entrance because everyone else has already started eating. Whereupon her true distance from the community is made clear when the Creole "tribe" listens in silent awareness as Robert informs the surprised Edna of his impending departure.

Though Robert is to leave, it should be apparent from the imagery describing Edna's "awakening" that she is experiencing something more than a mere romantic infatuation. Robert may very well be the attractive object of Edna's restless passion, but her desires are more limitless and absolute than anything Lebrun has to offer. Like Emma Bovary, she is idealistic and romantic; unlike her continental forbear, her desire for transcendent passional moments emerges not from a misguided and naive reading of romantic fictions but from a youthful and sensuous response to nature. In this way Edna is more "American" than Emma. Resistance to sleep, therefore, while rippling outward toward a more complete rebellion against her community, also enables Edna to recapture and re-experience the memory of her youthful idealistic dreams. By staying awake, Edna increases the promises of sleep and dream.

Early in the novel, gazing out at the sea, a fatigued Edna tells Adele Ratignolle how the sea brings to mind her childhood dreamy memory of wading through the tall Kentucky grass: "I could see only the stretch of green before me, and I felt as if I must walk on forever" (p. 896). Additionally, she confesses to Adele: "I feel this summer as if I were walking through the green meadow again; idly, aimlessly, unthinking, and unguided" (p. 897). As Edna's resistance to sleep now

allows her to hear the seductive "voice" of the sea—"never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander a spell in abysses of solitude" (p. 893)—so it was an early rebellion against a Presbyterian sermon read by her father "in a spirit of gloom" (p. 896) that led her to seek a purer unmediated relation with nature. Edna's discussion with Adele thus prompts her to recall silently memories of that initial flight from her father. She remembers how at the time of her wandering in the grass she fell in love with "a dignified and sad-eyed cavalry officer who visited her father in Kentucky" (p. 897). As she grew older, she endowed each successive object of her desires with a remnant of this youthful, romantic passion, until finally Pontellier fortuitously became the recipient of emotions newly stimulated by a dramatic actor. When she first realized that Pontellier was not going to satisfy her in the way she believed the dramatic actor and that first cavalry officer could, she, in effect, woke up. The novel charts her resistance to "waking" to a similar truth about Robert Lebrun.

The (Frederic) Chopin Impromptu played by Mademoiselle Reisz permits Edna to resist this sort of "waking" because it arouses in her mind associations of the sea, her youth, her sexuality, and Robert. It eventually substitutes for Robert. When she first hears the piece with Lebrun, "the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body" (p. 906). Unconsciously developing an association between the music and her love for Robert (as Proust's Swann unconsciously associates the Vinteuil Sonata with his love for Odette),[7] she eventually seeks out Reisz's playing of the Impromptu in New Orleans as a way of compensating for Robert's absence and of reminding herself of the reality of her internal needs. Ultimately the music sustains the romantic passions and dream state Edna has cultivated by resisting and reordering sleep.

The extent of Edna's rebellion against circadian rhythms becomes clear when she returns with her husband and without Lebrun to New Orleans. As presented in the novel, New Orleans is a city of carefully circumscribed and ordered luxury.[8] The Pontellier house, New Orleans in microcosm, contains rich draperies, soft carpets, numerous cut glass and silver objects, and "nothing was amiss" (p. 931). The order of the house suggests the strictly ordered character of the culture, and so Edna's decision to wander through New Orleans on her Tuesday receiving day signifies a resounding rejection of the community's social patterns. When Mr. Pontellier takes her to task for neglecting her social responsibilities, Edna, upon his departure, stamps on her wedding ring and breaks a glass vase. The next morning she awakens "unusually pale

and very quiet" (p. 935), one implication being that she did not get much sleep. Her sleepiness thus exacerbates her feelings of isolation and even paranoia. In the downtown streets she becomes a sort of sleepwalker: "The street, the children, the fruit vender, the flowers growing there under her eyes, were all part and parcel of an alien world which had suddenly become antagonistic" (p. 935). She further isolates herself from the community by terminating forever her Tuesday receiving day and refusing to return the visits of those who leave their cards. Though disturbing to Mr. Pontellier, her rebellion evidently pleases the narrator: "He could not see that she was becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world" (p. 939).

As in the first half of the novel, Edna's rebellious reordering of her daily rhythms leads to an awakening of consciousness coupled with an increasing sleepiness. Pursuing her artistic desires, she begins to paint afternoons in her atelier—at the top of her house and overlooking New Orleans, like Reisz's chamber—but she also spends much time dreaming and sleeping: "She discovered many a sunny, sleepy corner, fashioned to dream in. And she found it good to dream and to be alone unmolested" (p. 940). By guarding her privacy and ordering her own life, Edna manages to infuse herself with a new vitality. Thus Doctor Mandelet, summoned by Mr. Pontellier to observe his "odd" (p. 947) wife, sees her as "some beautiful, sleek animal waking up in the sun" (p. 952). When Mr. Pontellier travels to New York for business and the children are sent to his mother in Iberville, Edna achieves near complete control of the rhythms of her day (she even takes to reading Emerson, the philosopher of self-reliance),[9] and experiences her soundest sleep of the novel (p. 956). Her ability to find satisfying sleep without her husband impels her to move into the "pigeon house," a smaller house around the corner she plans to maintain with money from her painting, racetrack winnings, and mother's estate. Her move is also prompted by her recent involvement with the dandy Alcee Arobin, the less than adequate object of her still awakening sexuality.

Not surprisingly, Edna's unsatisfying affair with Alcee is monitored by the most important barometer of inner feelings in the novel: descriptions of her sleep habits. After first meeting Alcee and becoming sexually aroused, "she went to bed, and tossed there for hours in a sort of monotonous agitation" (p. 958). At their next meeting he kisses her hand and, momentarily satisfied, she sleeps "a languorous sleep, interwoven with vanishing dreams" (p. 961). And yet it is clear that Alcee fails to fulfill Edna's boundless expectations and that she still

loves the idealized Lebrun, for after seeing Alcee, Edna usually journeys to Mademoiselle Reisz, whose evocative music evidently offers a more impassioned sensuous experience. Her affair continues to take a downward turn until finally, after Edna's last meeting with Alcee, her sleep is once again described: "There was no despondency when she fell asleep that night; nor was there hope when she awoke in the morning" (p. 989). Part of the reason she awakes with no hope, it seems, is that the physical aspect of her relationship with Alcee repulses her now that Robert Lebrun has returned.

Robert has been that character whom Edna believes she can passionately love without compromise. Interestingly, though, her feelings toward Robert have been paralleled throughout the novel to her feelings toward Adele Ratignolle, the "mother-woman" (p. 888). In the Grand Isle section of the book, for example, there is an almost contrapuntal movement back and forth from Robert to Adele, suggestive of lurking doubts in Edna's mind: Can a passionate love transcend the larger circadian rhythms embodied by Madame Ratignolle? Is such transcendence truly desirable? As a happy well-integrated Creole woman, Adele exemplifies both the positive and negative aspects of being a mother-woman. She possesses a healthy and enviable life spirit, but she seems enslaved by her maternal role: "Madame Ratignolle had been married seven years. About every two years she had a baby. At that time she had three babies, and was beginning to think of a fourth one" (p. 889). And so as Robert begins to influence Edna's thinking about a pattern of life she has heretofore quietly accepted, Edna turns to contemplate Adele, the Creole woman *par excellence*, and focuses her internal debate more on how she responds to Adele than on how she responds to Robert. Edna's resonating and ominous declaration that she could not sacrifice herself for her children (p. 929) is thus as much a dramatic event at Grand Isle as her day at *Cheniere Caminada*.

The contrapuntal movement from Robert to Adele initiated in the Grand Isle section culminates when Edna passionately kisses Robert and then in the midst of things is summoned to Adele's bedside, where she witnesses a larger truth of female existence: childbirth. In a great and absolutely central moment of Edna's "awakening," she re-experiences labor and childbirth through sympathetic identification and memory: "She recalled faintly an ecstasy of pain, the heavy odor of chloroform, a stupor which had deadened sensation, and an awakening to find a little new life to which she had given being, added to the great unnumbered multitude of souls that come and go" (p. 994). The word "awakening" here takes on a grim biological shading. What is for

Adele an event of utter fulfillment provides Edna with a "naturalistic" vision of futile and animalistic debasement.[10] Though shaken by what she sees, Edna refuses to leave Adele, out of loyalty, perhaps, but more likely from a desire to receive the education of a lifetime: "With an inward agony, with a flaming, outspoken revolt against the ways of Nature, she witnessed the scene of torture" (p. 995). Adele's parting whisper—"Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them!" (p. 995)—thus takes on a double meaning, one purely unintended by Adele, who simply wants Edna to return to her family and put an end to her extra-marital affairs. For even before Edna discovers that Robert will stand by the Creole code and abandon her, Adele's words "had driven into her soul like a death wound" (p. 997).

Edna has awakened to a vision of the tyranny and horror of the procreative imperative placed on women. This was her last cherished illusion. Sensing what Edna has learned, Doctor Mandelet declares: "Youth is given up to illusions. It seems to be a provision of Nature; a decoy to secure mothers for the race" (p. 996). If Edna still cherished any hope that Robert could offer a compensating satisfaction, his goodbye note explodes that dream. She thus finds herself in a moral and biological wilderness with no real sense of direction. Consistent to character, and the book's concern with sleep, Edna decides to resist sleep: "She did not go to bed. The lamp sputtered and went out. She was still awake in the morning, when Celestine unlocked the kitchen door and came in to light the fire" (p. 997). Depriving herself of sleep, she re-enacts the initial sleep disruption of the novel, recaptures the dreaminess that most satisfyingly assuages her stricken consciousness, and ultimately creates in her mind and body the need for an absolute fulfilling form of sleep.

Only incidentally a response to her abandonment by Robert, Edna's suicide is the final and most powerful expression of her passionate desire to pull herself apart from the circadian rhythms of existence, to resist a "realistic" world with which she refuses to make any compromises. Her thoughts thus at first focus on children—her own and those of future generations. As she makes her way to the beach at Grand Isle, she unconsciously feels the pull of her children: "The children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her; who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days. But she knew a way to elude them" (p. 999). Her children, who throughout the novel have done anything but enslave her, are now *the* children, the biological responsibility and burden of

women. Horrified most of all by this stark naturalistic truth, and in desperate need of "sleep," she walks naked into the sea. But unlike Emma Bovary, who swallows arsenic, suffers terrible death agonies and then simply "ceased to exist,"[11] Edna perceives death beckoning as a masterful and transcendent lover offering a final consummating sleep: "The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace" (p. 1000).[12] For Edna, suicide may have its sources in a naturalistic revolt, but it is nonetheless poetic and romantic, an act of imagination. It is also an un-birth and a striving for sleep which exhibits control and free choice.[13] Though in the beginning of the novel Edna nearly drowns while seeking "the unlimited in which to lose herself" (p. 908), before leaving Grand Isle she teaches herself to swim (p. 927). By swimming from shore until exhaustion overcomes her, she achieves for but a moment a flashing back to her youthful dreams of limitless possibility. She then submerges herself in dreams beyond contamination.

Notes

[1]Perhaps the place of *The Awakening* in the canon is still a matter of some debate. But the extraordinary interest in the novel since its 1956 rediscovery suggests *The Awakening* possesses an aesthetic and emotional power transcending its mere fashionable appeal. See Robert Cantwell, "*The Awakening* by Kate Chopin," *GaR*, 10 (1956), 489-94; and Kenneth Eble, "A Forgotten Novel: Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*," *WHR*, 10 (1956), 261-69.

[2]George Arms first stressed the importance of the sleep-wake activity in *The Awakening* in his "Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* in the Perspective of Her Literary Career," in *Essays on American Literature in Honor of Jay B. Hubbell*, ed. Clarence Gohdes (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 215-28. Cynthia Griffin Wolff takes note of the numerous instances of sleeping and dreaming in the Grand Isle section of the novel in her excellent "Thanatos and Eros: Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*," *AQ*, 25 (1973), 449-71.

[3]Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899), in *The Complete Works of Kate Chopin*, ed. Per Seyersted (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1969), II, 996. All future parenthetical page references are to this edition.

[4]Arms was the first modern critic to relate Edna's sleepiness to an evaluation of her character. What he finds most striking about Edna is her "aimlessness" (p. 217). In the best comprehensive reading of Edna's personality, Wolff argues that her sleepiness reveals much about her psychic disintegration. Though sometimes critical of Edna, Wolff does not condescend to Edna and she does take note of her rebelliousness. Owing much to Wolff's study is James H. Justus, "The Unawakening of Edna Pontellier," *SLJ*, 10 (1978), 107-22. Less sympathetic to Edna are Ruth Sullivan and Stewart Smith, who view the sleepy and "aimless" tendencies of the heroine, whom they allow has a positive side as well, as evidence that she is "a narcissistic, thoughtless woman, almost wantonly self-destructive." See their "Narrative Stance in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*," *SAF*, 1

(1973), 63. A number of the debunking essays seem inspired by the fear that feminists have appropriated the novel, wresting it from its "naturalistic" context, and made false claims for its sexual politics. This concern informs Nancy Walker's interesting "Feminist or Naturalist: The Social Context of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*," *SoQ*, 17 (1979), 95-103.

[5]The word "circadian"—from the Latin *circa*, around; *dies*, day—has been coined by sleep researchers and human biologists to describe those rhythms of existence which are influenced by the natural rhythms of the environment. The most obvious ordering influence of course is the day-night cycle, which generally determines the pattern of human, and animal, sleep. Sleep, then, is a reflection in microcosm of man's close relation to a system of such natural ordering rhythms. Regular sleep habits thus may signify a harmonious integration of self to nature, *and* of self to community, with its work days, work weeks, vacations, and other organizing structures affected in large part by the natural environment. Chronic problems with insomnia or sleepiness, on the other hand, have increasingly come to be viewed by sleep researchers as indications of an individual's difficulty in accepting the larger rhythmic patterns of his community. Though biochemical factors certainly play a role in some sleep disorders, the clear majority of sleep disorders are reflective of a worrisome separation of the afflicted individual from the prevailing circadian rhythms of his community. Insomnia is a small and undramatic indication of a larger problem of disintegration. Predictably, those people manifesting the most serious sleep disorders are the elderly who tend to be socially isolated. The concept of circadian rhythms is discussed in William C. Dement's witty and insightful *Some Must Watch While Some Must Sleep: Exploring the World of Sleep* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978), pp. 16-19, 107-111. I am much indebted to Dement, Director of the Stanford Sleep Disorders Clinic, who kindly made available to me the preliminary findings of his current research project, "Sleep and Aging." See also Gay Gaer Luce, *Body Time: Physiological Rhythms and Social Stress* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), pp. 1-26; and Richard R. Ward, *The Living Clocks* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), pp. 3-16.

[6]Good discussions of the clash between Creole and American values may be found in Marie Fletcher, "The Southern Woman in the Fiction of Kate Chopin," *Louisiana History*, 7 (1966), 117-32; Larzer Ziff, *The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation* (New York: Viking Press, 1966), pp. 297-304; and Per Seyersted, *Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography* (1969; rpt. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 134, 142. Though hierarchical and aristocratic, Creole society piqued the curiosity and interest of democratic Americans. By the 1880s, Mardi gras had become a national event. See Joy L. Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress, 1880-1896* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 284, 308.

[7]Such are the parallels between the descriptions of the Vinteuil Sonata and the Chopin Impromptu that Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* (1913) offers a helpful kind of "reading" of Chopin's use of music and synesthesia. See the C. K. Moncrieff translation (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 264-70.

[8]The image of New Orleans as a center of luxury was first compellingly created for Eastern readers of *Scribner's* by Edward King in a series of articles (1873-74), later published as a book. See *The Great South* (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1875), pp. 3-31.

[9]Arms argues that Emerson has put Edna to sleep and that this reveals how lacking in philosophical grounding is Edna's rebellion (p. 219). He fails to note, however, that any author will eventually put a reader to sleep. Donald Ringe suggests Edna's reading of Emerson illustrates the romantic sources of her awakening. See "Romantic Imagery in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*," *AL*, 43 (1972), 580-88.

[10]An excellent discussion of sexuality and feminism in naturalist fiction may be found in Lars Ahnebrink, *The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction: A Study of the Works of Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, and Frank Norris with Special Reference to Some European Influences, 1891-1903* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1961), pp. 21-33, 204-13, 220-28.

[11]Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Paul de Man (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965), p. 238. From the French, "*Elle n'existait plus.*"

[12]The influence of Whitman on the sea imagery is treated in Joan Zlotnick, "A Woman's Will: Kate Chopin on Selfhood, Wifehood, and Motherhood," *MarkhamR*, 3 (1968), 1-5; and Lewis Leary, "Kate Chopin and Walt Whitman," *WWR*, 16 (1970), 120-21. Ringe is very good on the romantic imagery and the suicide. For a discussion of the tensions in American naturalistic fiction between imagination and the darker vision of the French naturalists, see Donald Pizer, *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 11-14.

[13]Wolff has pointed out that Edna's suicide is in part a "reversal of the birth trauma she has just witnessed" (p. 471).