A Few Contemporary Reviews of
Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*

From the *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat* (1899)

"It is not a healthy book; if it points any particular moral or teaches any lesson, the fact is not apparent. But there is no denying the fact that it deals with existent conditions, and without attempting a solution, handles a problem that obtrudes itself only too frequently in the social life of people with whom the question of food and clothing is not the all absorbing one. Mrs. Pontellier does not love her husband. The poison of passion seems to have entered her system, with her mother's milk."

From *The Outlook* (1899)

"*The Awakening* is a decidedly unpleasant study of a temperament. The author, Kate Chopin, is known as the writer of several faithful stories of Louisiana life. This, too, is faithful enough in its presentation of certain phases of human passion and downward drift of character, but the story was not really worth telling, and its disagreeable glimpses of sensuality are repellent."

From *The Providence Sunday Journal* (1899)

"Miss Kate Chopin is another clever woman, but she has put her cleverness to a very bad use in writing 'The Awakening.' . . . The worst of such stories is that they will fall into the hands of youth, leading them to dwell on things that only matured persons can understand, and promoting unholy imaginations and unclean desires. It is nauseating to remember that those who object to the bluntness of our older writers will excuse and justify the gilded dirt of these latter days."

From *The Nation* (1899)

". . . we cannot see that literature or the criticism of life is helped by the detailed history of the manifold and contemporary love affairs of a wife and mother. Had [Chopin] lived by Prof. William James's advice to do one thing a day one does not want to do (in Creole society, two would perhaps be better), flirted less and looked after her children more, or even assisted at more accouchements [scenes of childbirth] . . . we need not have been put to the unpleasantness of reading about her and the temptations she trumped up for herself."

From the *Providence Sunday Journal* (4 June 1899)

“Miss Kate Chopin is another clever woman, but she has put her cleverness to very bad use in writing ‘The Awakening.’ The purport of the story can hardly be described in language fit for publication…. The worst of such stories is that they will come into the hands of youth, leading them to dwell on things that only matured persons can understand, and promoting unholy imaginations and unclean desires. It is nauseating to remember that those who object to the bluntness of our older writers will excuse and justify the gilded dirt of these later days."