

# Kate chopin's the storm

Literature



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The Ideas of Modern Day Women about Sex and Marriage in Kate Chopin's "The Storm" As you've probably already known, the beliefs about marriage, sex and feminine sexuality that existed at the end of the 19th century, the period when Kate Chopin wrote "The Storm", differed greatly from the ones that exist nowadays. This story, unlike most of other authoress' works, hadn't been published during Chopin's lifetime; it was found in many decades after her death among piles of papers in her grandson's attic. If we recall about the beliefs and opinions on the topics Chopin raised in "The Storm" that existed at the period when the story was written, the fate of this story won't astonish anybody. The thing is that for the 19th century America the idea to compare feminine sexuality to the storm seemed weird and appalling. In fact, mentioning feminine sexuality alone was considered to be improper. The society was persuaded that women do not have any sexual desires, that for the females sex is just one of the chores they have to accomplish together with washing the dishes and cooking. "The Storm" offered view on the feminine sexuality that was totally new for that time, and, probably, in the authoress' opinion the society wasn't ready to discuss this topic.

The title of the story is the main metaphor used in the text, the kernel around which the entire story is built. Joanna Bartee, the author of the analysis of the Chopin's story found in *The Making of a Southerner & Other Essays*, notes: "Chopin uses the image of the storm to represent the sexual tension that builds throughout the story between Alcee and Calixta". And it isn't the only purpose for which the authoress uses this metaphor. With the help of it Kate Chopin illustrates the ideas some of her women contemporaries had of marriage and sex, and her own understanding of the

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feminine sexuality.

The first important message about the storm (meaning the breach of the female protagonist's sexuality) was that it happened when her husband and son were away, and they decided to wait until the storm wore off. It can be seen as a symbolical manifestation of the society's attitude towards women's sexuality, the reflection of the fact that at those times the society was really afraid of the feminine sexuality. Bobbinot feels the storm is dangerous, thus he stays away of the house where the female protagonist, Calixta, is. This fact is also the reflection of the fact that the authoress together with the other women in her times didn't consider marriage to be the suitable " place" for the manifestation of sexuality. When " the storm" comes, the husband has to be somewhere away; he is not a suitable object for passion.

Chopin notes that at the beginning of the story Calixta was " greatly occupied and did not notice the approaching storm."(p. 307). The protagonist fulfilled various household chores, and it prevented her from noting that the storm is coming. It's obvious that the authoress tried to convey the message that all the housework that women had to fulfill prevented them from noting their sexuality, from doing something about it.

The next episode when Alcee, Calixta's ex beau, appears in the gates of her house and distracts her from household chores shows that when stopped thinking about the washing, sewing and cooking, women do begin to recognize that they have sexual desires. After being distracted by Alicee, Calixta notes that the storm is coming and tries to protect herself from it by the habitual actions - taking care about her husband's and son's clothing. But when she has no shirts or pants to sew in her hands, she suddenly stays alone with Alcee and the storm, her desire and passion. For some time she

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still tries to protect herself from " the storm" by talking about her husband and son, but the storm behind the window becomes stronger, the same as her sexual emotions towards Alcee.

The real storm begins after Alcee kisses Calixta. She stops to control her feelings and emotions; it's only the sensual desire that guides her in those minutes. And after the storm was over, " the sun was turning the glistening green world into a palace of gems."(p. 308) Calixta and Alcee parted, and " he turned and smiled at her with a beaming face; and she lifted her pretty chin in the air and laughed aloud."(p. 308). It's obvious they both are happy, the storm has ended (and the sexual desire fulfilled).

We see that Kate Chopin's " The Storm" is the masterfully written story of the manifestation of feminine sexuality, about the barriers that prevented this manifestation in the 19th century society. The usage of the word " storm" was a metaphorical depiction of the image of the female sexuality the authoress herself had. Also some persuasions that existed in the society of those times are reflected in the story's text, like the one that the husband is the unsuitable object for manifesting sexuality.

#### Works Cited

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