

Kate Chopin's Awakening - Edna Pontellier as Master of Her Destiny

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In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, the main character, Edna leaves her husband to find place in the world. Edna believes her new sexually independent power will make her master of her own life. But, as Martin points out, she has overestimated her strength and is still hampered by her "limited ability to direct her energy and to [master](#) her emotions" (22). Unfortunately, [Edna](#) has been educated too much in the traditions of society and not enough in reason and independent survival, admitting to Robert that "we women learn so little of life on the whole" (990). She has internalized society's conception of woman as guided by her emotions and not her mind and, therefore, in the search for another man to fill the void of love in her life, lets her goal become clouded instead of learning to depend on herself alone. Edna wants to overcome gender stereotypes, and is already using behaviours such as assertiveness and independence to question them, but the struggle is new to her and she fails to discover a method that would allow her to successfully leave behind society's preconceptions. Martin writes,

Ambition, striving, overcoming odds, the focusing of energy on a goal are habits of mind associated with masculine mastery. A woman who wants to develop these skills has to

defy a centuries-old tradition of passive femininity[.] . . . But Edna Pontellier does not have the emotional resources to transcend the conventions that regulate female behavior, conventions that she has, in fact, internalized. (22)

Even in her defiant disobedience to her husband, she is subconsciously aware of the futility of her struggle. During a fit of violent frustration with her marriage, "she stopped, and taking off her wedding ring, flung it upon th...

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