



*Black Feminism in Kate Chopin's
"The Awakening"*

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ABSTRACT

The present study sheds light on the analysis of feminist characters in "Kate Chopin's "The Awakening" describing the libber personality" and analyzing the main female lineament as women's liberationist eccentric and the contribution of the women's rightist characters to the developing of the game of ground .

The purpose of the research is the author's position as a Black female. The findings of this research show that from the characters existed in Kate Chopin's The Awakening, The feminist character is "Edna Pontellier. She is considered "feminist from her conversation, activeness of disregarding "patriarchy and social bound toward "women, an effort to complete self-rights, self-needs, and her inner thought about freedom and self-autonomy. Also, this research "show that Edna Pontellier's feminist "character has a contribution to the developing of the plot of the stories. Her feminist feature and behavior affect the plot. The feminist characters' "thought and posture play important role in changing the characters action that developed the plot of social .

المخلص

تسلط الدراسة الحالية الضوء على تحليل الشخصيات النسوية في رواية كيت شوبان "الصحوة" وكذلك وصف الشخصية الليبرالية من خلال تحليل الأنثى الرئيسية كطرف تحرري غريب الأطوار للمرأة ومساهمة الشخصيات اليمينية للمرأة في تطوير النسوية.

الغرض من البحث هو تصميم وصفي. أظهرت نتائج هذا البحث أنه من الشخصيات الموجودة في صحوة كيت شوبان ، فإن الطابع النسوي هو إدنا بونتيلير. وقد اعتبرت نسوية من محادثتها ، ونشاطها تجاه الأبوية والاجتماعية المرتبطة بالنساء ، وهي محاولة لاستكمال حقوق الذات ، والحاجات الذاتية ، وفكرها الداخلي حول الحرية والاستقلال الذاتي. أيضا ، أظهر هذا البحث أن الشخصية النسائية إدنا بونتيلير لها مساهمة في تطوير حبكة القصص. لها سمة وسلوك نسوي يؤثر على المجتمع. تلعب فكر الشخصيات النسوية وموقفها دورًا مهمًا في تغيير روح النسوية في عمل الشخصيات حتى يتم تطوير المجتمع.

1.1 Feminism

There are a number of introductions to feminism that attempt to offer definitions of what the various 'strands' of feminism mean. Jaggar (1983) offers a political philosophical analysis of liberal, radical and socialist feminism which enables anyone with only a slim grasp of political thought to gain a solid understanding of the roots of modern feminisms. Feminism struggles for economic, social, and political equality in the United States with national liberation movements in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Americas.

The word feminism comes from French word *féminisme* and according to the Cambridge online dictionary feminism is "the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state." The term 'feminism' itself is used to describe a cultural, political or economic movement aiming for equal rights for both women and men. Nonetheless, the terms 'feminism' and 'feminist' did not gain widespread meaning until the 1970s when they started to be used in the public parlance more frequently.

Feminism emerged in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries by female activists such as Kate Chopin, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842), Mary Cassatt (1844- 1926), Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855), and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806- 1861), who were the four women who started the move, though on the Nineteenth Century (Koubek, 2012). These women were nationals of America, France and United Kingdom. Before the commencement of the movement, women were not allowed to vote, were denied property rights and their personal rights of womanhood belonged to men

Wood, (2008, 324) defines feminism"as "the belief that men and women are equal and should have equal respect and opportunities in all spheres of life-personal, social, work, and public". Women's activist correspondence tries to make the voices of ladies heard, and"feature their" encounters inside the social development of life"orientation, (Foss & Foss, 1994: 39) define American women feminism "their experiences of oppression and of coping with and resisting that oppression". Consequently, women"thought of about"how male-controlled society, or"male use power or authority over the"substances and voices of ladies, isn't something kept up just by men nor is it intentional. Rather, it is held in place by"systems often"beyond the awareness of men and women, and consented"to and participated in by women themselves (Zompetti, 2012: 365-382). Every one"of these thoughts could likewise apply to bigotry, "uncovering comparability among sexism and prejudice. Be"that as it may, bigotry and sexism are"additionally joined"in the encounters of ladies of shading, whose particular life circumstances are not completely tended to by"either antiracist"endeavors or woman's rights.Collins (1990), for example, argues that African American"women in the United States live"in a site of triple oppression—by race, sex, and class, with these"oppressions articulated by both the dominant white"community and within the black community

Black feminism is a branch of"feminism which arises with the emergence of Black Women's Movement in the 1970s in the United States. It mainly studies the multiple oppressions"of sexism, racism and class prejudices"imposed on"black women in the American society, reveals the sufferings of black women caused by the multiple oppressions and provides methods to help black women. Black feminist critics analyze the works of black female writers from a feminist or political perspective. According to Hornby (1975: 560) feminism is "the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim"



Black feminism plays an important role in the formation and stability of black families in the United States. This movement allows black women to free themselves from the authority of men in fighting effectively against domination, exploitation and sexism by the writer novelist Chopin . Black Feminism related to female empowerment is often portrayed in many works of famous black female authors. Chopin's has many interesting ways, the themes of which are worth"exploring, such as the victimization of women. In doing so, these women want to assert their equality with men, make their rights recognized and show that they are"as competent and intelligent as men. Their determination allows to establish and direct families where prevail joy, harmony, understanding and brotherhood. Thus, "they give education necessary for the social integration of their children. under a single heading. Cultural, social, and political ideas continue to change and become entwined".

1.2 *Kate Chopin*

Kate Chopin (1850-1904) is likely"to be the most familiar to modern"readers. Her novel "*The Awakening*", which led to a scandal"on its publication in 1899, was reprinted for the first"time in 1969, significantly by a European"scholar, Per Seyersted. It"quickly became a classic within the Women. Liberation Movement, admired by American and British feminists who recognized in it their own revolt against socially prescribed roles and especially definitions"of female sexual behavior. "The novel has since become a considerable critical and commercial success in the USA, where its new position on Freshman English course"has given it minor economaical status, and in Britain, where it is generally included in Women's Studies syllabuses .The enthusiasm for *The " Awakening* has been followed by interest in her entire work, though it is generally agreed that Chopin wrote nothing to compare with this extraordinary novel".

Chopin is admired as one of the foremothers of 20th century feminist literature. "She may not have considered herself a feminist as such; she simply thought that women's desires and ambitions were just as valid as men's". As such, in her fiction, she focused on "women's constant struggles" to forge an identity of their own, especially within the rigid constraints of Southern culture". Though Chopin's body of work is primarily fiction, her stories presented profound and very real observations. "She allowed the range of human experience she viewed in everyday life to come through in her writing."

1.3 Textual analysis of Black feminism in Kate Chopin's "The Awakening"

Most of the novels that have a feminine touch are not Feminist novels or prefer not to be called so. "Kate Chopin is best known nowadays in the literary world" as the author of *The Awakening* which is her masterpiece and the thing that allowed her to complete it. It was the 'mastering' (Beauvoir, Simone de 1988) of the novel genre that allowed Chopin to complete her final masterpiece, to develop a style best suited to her thematic concerns. This development did not of course occur in isolation. All writers have their predecessors and in Chopin's case it appears that one man in particular was highly influential. For Chopin's Edna Pontellier this is, indeed, an "important message and one that she could be said to adhere to an ever greater degree as the novel progresses. Why, then, should she fall asleep when reading Emerson's work"? Her drowsiness could well be accounted for by the fact that "what she was reading had no relevance to her whatsoever and thus bored her." But Emerson never specifically mentions women in his appeal to his audience; "all his examples are focused on males. By" ignoring women, Emerson suggests that such ideas are inaccessible and still to be realized for the female species of society. "By having her fall asleep, Chopin suggests that such an idea is a dream for women, hence Edna's own

reaction of disinterest and fatigue on her reading of the novel. Before proceeding to a discussion of characters and themes in "Chopin's literature that portray her view of marriage and women's rights, it is first necessary to establish the historical context of the time in which"Chopin wrote and then delve into the roles, influences and type of life a typical, American middle-class woman of European descent belonging to this time would have been expected to adhere to.

Kate Chopin talks about women and their problems, and "many others talk specifically about black women. Women, whether white or black, European or Asian, have faced a lot of problems adjusting and trying to fit in a patriarchal society that treats women as inferior beings.

"Kate Chopin's understanding of women's identity and, basically what it means, to be a woman is an integral part of her writing, as an American Writer. " At the same time, her expression of this flies into her depiction of men's understanding of women as one that is complex and intricate, only to be outdone by the woman understanding of her own sense of self. "Feminism is seen in this light in Chopin's work, something that she considers as nuanced as any beginning or start of the construction of reality": The "beginning of things, of a world especially, is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing. "

As a moderate feminist, "Chopin tried to portray an androgynous woman. Edna begins to perceive her androgynous self positively, by which many of her societal obligations are rejected. However"her relationship with Robert brings a new dimension to her problems. To establish a hybrid identity, "Edna blurs her role with that of a man and subordinates herself to a sentimental obsession. She feels relieved after freeing herself from patriarchal obligations yet receives a negative notion of being more masculine and less feminine to completely liberate herself. In this novella Chopin experiments with the opportunities, liberty and freedom available to men by changing the conventional notions.

It was an attempt done to blur the demarcation of gender lines. Edna's new sexual urge and intense sensuousness are also thought to be unusual in a woman. She begins to visit horse races to bet and "to spend time with intellectual women and men of questionable morality, for instance Arobin. "She decides to make a living by selling her sketches. She wanted to adopt a life of an independent man as many of her actions and decisions are considered to be acceptable for men only".

She becomes an androgynous character and is attracted towards Madame Ratignolle physically. "She starts going to events she prefers, stays out late at night, skips church, which results in her husband's" dismay. After experiencing closeness with a member of her own sex, she desires the same rewarding pleasure with a man. This is more conventional and more appropriate for her. When "Edna begins to see more of Robert, she also begins to look at the sea more- a vast body of water that is analogous to her submerged identity and sexuality. Chopin's narration "describes this sexuality as something liberating and subject affirming as: (Chopin 1899:46)

" Every step which she took toward relieving herself from obligations added to her strength and expansion as an individual Womanly pleasures such as shopping with her husband for household fixtures don't interest her, as her utmost pleasure is felt in Robert's company. Her relationship with Robert is also charged with male domination. Her feelings: Which she entertained for Robert in no way resembled that which she felt for her husband, or had ever felt, or ever expected to feel".

"Her marriage to Leonce Pontellier was purely an accident, in "this respect resembling many other" marriages which masquerade as the decrees of Fate.



It was in the midst of her secret "great" passion that she met him. But ultimately Edna's attempt fails because of centuries of "conditioning."

In *The Awakening*, Chopin questions gender-roles, but can not show a satisfactory resolution. The ending of "*The Awakening*" is ambiguous because of Edna's suicide which can imply both her defeat or triumph. Papke writes: For Chopin, each "individual-particularly each woman-possessed infinite potential for self-fulfillment and expression" but also, at the same time, the greater possibility for self-compromise and self destruction. Showalter believes that *The Awakening*: "A Solitary Soul," may be read as an account of Edna Pontellier's evolution from romantic fantasies of fusion with another person to self-definition and self-reliance" (Chopin 1899:7). Eventually "Edna fails to reach the final destiny. Edna's suicide has been interpreted in various ways. Gilmore remarks that "Edna's story: has to end in death because there is no way for the world she inhabits to accommodate the change in her[...] Nothing less than a transformation of social reality would enable the 'new-born creature' . Edna has begun to go on living? "As hard as Edna tries ultimately she's doomed" to failure but this can not be called her defeat as she never regretted any of her decisions.

She commits suicide "because she does not want to look back and as she realizes there is no position in society for such women" she decides to celebrate her autonomy, and freedom by committing suicide. Although she dies, it is her victory that she did not feel the need to repent anything. The present alone "was significant; was hers, to torture her as it was doing then with the "biting conviction that she had lost that which she had held, that "she had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded.

In Chopin's *The Awakening*, the reader learns that in 19th century white America, men held authority over their wives and children; "husbands were the undisputed sovereigns of their homes. With the public endorsement of the doctrine of separate spheres and the strong male presence of their own fathers throughout childhood, most women accepted and even expected this despotism. In a conversation with her married friend, "Adelle, Edna remembers the childish desire to escape her father's strict Protestant influence. She says, "Likely as not it was Sunday...and I was running away from prayers, from the Presbyterian service, read in the a spirit of gloom by my father that chills me yet to think " (Chopin 1899: 60).

In a later visit to New Orleans, "Edna's father is described as a military man who enjoys strong drinks, racing horses, and dictating others. When Edna refuses to attend her sister's wedding, "the Colonel tells her husband, Leonce, "You are too lenient, too lenient by far...Authority, coercion are what is needed. "Put your foot down good and hard; the only way to manage a wife." (Chopin 1899 :125). In turn, Leonce thinks, "The Colonel was perhaps unaware that he had coerced his own wife into her grave" (Chopin 1899: 125)."

Though the reader finds no clear evidence of exactly how the Colonel "coerced" his wife to death, it can be inferred that he must have dominated her until she no longer had a will of her own. Even in rebellion, Edna cannot escape her father's patriarchal influence. Her decision to marry Leonce Pontellier is only augmented by her father's "violent opposition" to her marriage with a Catholic. "This early rebellion foreshadows Edna's later behavior in reaction to her husband's singular authority.

After an evening at the club, "Leonce returns home late and informs his sleeping wife that their son has a high fever that requires attention. Edna knows her children are healthy, yet Leonce "reproached his wife with her

inattention, her habitual neglect of the children." If it was not a mother's place to look after the children, whose on earth was it? He himself had his hands full with his brokerage business. He could not be in two places at once; making a living for his family on the street, and staying at home to see that no harm befell them" (Chopin 1899 :48). Such a speech confirms the reader's suspicions: Edna has married a gender-conservative, insensitive man. Born into a male-dominated culture, raised by a patriarchal father, and married to an authoritative husband, Edna finds no outlet for her own individuality.

Chopin writes with the description of a realist, portraying her characters' inner psychological and emotional landscape in an open, unapologetic manner. Peter Seyersted, a leading Chopin expert and biographer, argues that *The Awakening* goes further in its "truthful treatment of material," (Chopin ,1899: 206) especially the treatment of sexuality, than the works of Dreiser, Crane, Norris, and other American Realists of the time. She writes in a utopian vein, detailing her vision of racial and gender equality by conveying a character's actions and words. Here, what a character says or does is more important than what he thinks or feels.

The reader may begin to question whether the variance seen in Chopin's views on marriage, sexuality, motherhood, and economic independence is related to stylistic concerns rather than race and class. To draw out the point, the reader should examine the views of Frank Latimer and Leonce Pontellier in connection with their wives' involvement in the public sphere.

When Mr. Pontellier learned of his wife's intention to abandon her home and take up her residence elsewhere, he immediately wrote her a letter of unqualified disapproval and remonstrance" ...He was not dreaming of scandal...He was simply thinking of his financial integrity...But remembering Edna's whimsical turn of mind lately...he grasped the situation with his usual



promptness and handled it with his well-known business tact and cleverness...Mr. Pontellier had saved appearances!" (Chopin1899: 150-51).

Here, Chopin"describes Leonce's actions and the internal thought process that motivated him., Leonce describes Edna as "whimsical" and "rash." Chopin presents Mr. Pontellier at his best and worst, "while Harper makes Dr. Latimer a saint with no possible faults. Though"these male characters reflect their authors' stylistic achievements, they also illuminate race and class considerations. In the example above, Leonce"is concerned with the threat of rumors of financial misfortune (which a move to a smaller house might warrant) thus, harming his"business investments. These are the concerns of an upper class white businessman.

In *The Awakening*, Chopin finally creates a white woman character with the remorseless sexuality previously limited to women of color. Edna's"transformation from virtuous to sensuous"can be best illustrated by a close examination of her relationship with Mariequita. A passenger"on the ferry taking Edna and Robert to Grand Isle, Mariequita is described as " a young barefooted Spanish girl, with a ...round, sly, piquant face and pretty black eyes...her feet were broad and course. She did not strive to"hide them. Edna looked at her feet, and noticed the sand and slime between her brown toes" (Chopin 80). Mariequita represents a free and easy sexuality. Self-confident, flirtatious, and unashamed of her body, she"becomes the unconscious model on which Edna moulds her awakening sexuality.

At Grand Isle, Edna revels in the"autoerotic quality of her own body. Later, she learns sexual"fulfillment in her affair with Alcee. In the final scene before she swims to her"death, "she cast the unpleasant, pricking garments from her, and for the first time in her life she stood naked in the open air...How strange and awful it seemed to stand"naked under the sky! How

delicious!" (175). "Toes in the sand, naked to the world, Edna's" transformation is complete.

For mainstream "Victorian society, motherhood was a woman's crowning glory. It was believed that a lifetime of love and devotion to one's children should be enough to fulfill any woman. Once again, "the New Woman disagreed. She questioned why women were expected to give up their future goals and dreams to become mothers, why motherhood was compulsory to success as an adult woman. These questions are familiar to readers of Chopin's "*The Awakening*". For Edna, motherhood felt unnatural and burdensome; thoughts of the children came only sporadically. Marriage and motherhood held her back from a discovery of her true self, the self she was expected to "sacrifice to the needs of others upon marriage. Edna explains to her married friend Adelle, " that she would never sacrifice herself for her children, or anyone. 'I would give up the unessential; I would give up my money, I would give up my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself' (Chopin 1893 : 97). Later, as Edna makes her final suicidal swim, she thinks of her husband and children: "they need not have thought they could possess her body and soul" (176). Chopin also has an interesting personal history when examined in connection with her writing. She grew up surrounded by strong, successful, and independent females.

According to "Chopin's biographer, Emily Toth, the "author's father died in a train accident when she was only five. The loss of this domineering and patriarchal figure enabled Chopin's mother to gain access to an independence and freedom for which few married women could have hoped. After her "father's death, Chopin's grandmother, also a widow, moved into the house. She told her young granddaughter stories of their women ancestors surviving and thriving in the rugged west. In fact, "Chopin's great-



grandmother"was the first woman to divorce her husband in the state of Missouri. "

Surrounded by generations of forceful women, "Chopin gained further examples of women's strength while schooled at the Academy of the Sacred Heart. It"was through the examples of the nuns that she learned of women's capacity for spiritual and intellectual fervor. "Although her childhood was filled with powerful women, most of"Chopin's women characters are weak and trapped by the oppressive forces around them. One might conclude that her personal experience with women's independence made her especially"sensitive to the oppression of other women. Knowing that"women can and do survive without male "protection" undoubtedly changed her vision of Victorian gender "constructs and enabled her to record the injustice she saw in her fictional writing.

Despite her own female centered background, Chopin"creates no strong mother daughter relationships in "*The Awakening*". In fact, the only mention of a mother and daughter"interacting takes place at a recital on Grand Isle: " A little girl performed a skirt dance"in the center of"the floor. The mother played her accompaniments and at the same time watched her daughter with greedy admiration and nervous"apprehension. She"need have had no apprehension. The child was mistress of the situation" (Chopin 1899: 69). In this"short description, the reader finds that mothers instruct their daughters on"the proper behavior, attire, and posture with which to construct an outward image pleasing to the audience of onlookers. This early performance is merely a fantastic training session in the elaborate process of becoming an enticing Victorian woman.

The daughter's success will"be measured in her ability to capture a desirable husband, and this achievement will be a representation of the

mother's skillful instruction. Underlying the concern with outward appearance, there is little focus on self-understanding, self-realization, or negotiating a successful relationship with one's husband. Edna's frustration with the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood is, in part, a reflection of her own mother's early death. She has had little preparation for filling her role as wife and mother.

The narrator concludes, "It would have been a difficult matter for Mr. Pontellier to define to his own satisfaction or any one else's wherein his wife failed in her duty toward their children. It was something he felt rather than perceived ... In short, Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman" (Chopin 1899: 51). Edna has had even less encouragement to discover her own wishes and desires or attempt to understand her own identity, and yet "Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her" (Chopin 1899: 57).

Edna's disconnection from mother-daughter relationships also works to enforce her sense of isolation in a patriarchal world. The narrator comments that Edna "was not a woman given to confidences, a characteristic hitherto contrary to her nature. Even as a child she had lived her own small life all within herself" (Chopin 1899: 57). With no intimate childhood girlfriends, Edna has learned to undervalue female friendships and, consequently, to fill up her youth with romantic fantasies of older men. Her fascination with the male sex and her romantic tendencies foreshadow Edna's dissatisfaction with the everyday realities of marriage, eventually leading her to adultery.

Her lack of female connection also prevents Edna from finding a realistic role model in her search for self-realization. Clearly, Edna is neither a "mother-woman," nor a celibate intellectual and artist like Mademoiselle

Reisz. "When Adelle asks Robert to stop flirting with Edna, she remarks, "Let Mrs. Pontellier alone...She is not one of us; she is not like us. "She might make the unfortunate blunder of taking you seriously" (Chopin 1899: 64). Adelle understands that Edna is not a Creole either. She is an outsider looking in, desperately seeking her own identity.

With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, more women left their homes to seek employment. In response, conservatives once again used "the doctrine of separate spheres to remind women of their"place in the home. New Woman supporters encouraged women to "seek higher education and to pursue their own careers. Although faced with prejudice at school, on the job, and in the amount of pay received, they believed that a career or "outside interest gave women opportunities for self-realization that "marriage and motherhood could not. In *The Awakening*, Chopin's character Edna aspires to be an artist.

Art brings her "satisfaction of a kind which no other employment afforded her" (Chopin 1899: 55). The creative act, the "ability to see the end product of her skill and imagination, provides Edna with a sense of meaning. The label of artist gives direction to her listless energies. Without the "opportunity to define herself through work, Edna feels "dissatisfied.

Art is intensely introspective and requires not only time, but also a great amount of money. Edna's "desire to become an artist suits her introspective nature, and is simultaneously, being one of the few occupations "available for a respectable woman of her class. Though each character's "choice of work proves beneficial in some way, race and class limitations impact the connection and meaning these characters draw from their work. Edna because of her race, these white female coworkers are playing into the "system of white male power. The same oppressor that forces black women into menial domestic "work



prevents white women from obtaining high paying careers"or moving into traditionally male-dominated fields.

Edna must also face others' definitions and limitations for female artists. When Leonce chastises Edna for"putting her painting ahead of her"family obligations, he says, "It seems to me the utmost folly for a woman"at the head of a household, and the mother of children, to spend in an atelier"days which would be better employed contriving for the comfort of"her family...in God's name paint! but don't let the family go to the devil" (Chopin 1899: 108). A closer examination proves that both Chopin and She recognize the limitations"Edna and Iola face in their quest for meaningful employment.

Interestingly, both Chopin"use the presence of the "other" to convey a heroine's oppression to the reader and"at times to the heroine"herself. The "other" also functions to connect the multiple forms of oppression through race, class, and gender in the reader's mind.

In *The Awakening*, Edna"has several encounters with women of different class and ethnic"backgrounds. In one of the most direct encounters"with the "other," Edna must face the forces that keep her in"check. Feeling the weight of her marriage bond, Edna symbolically attempts to break the ties that hold her to Leonce: "and taking off her wedding ring, flung it upon the carpet...she stamped her heel upon it...but her small boot heel did not make"an indenture, not a mark upon the little glittering circlet" (Chopin 103). Hearing the commotion, "the maid enters the room, cleans up the remnants of Edna's tantrum, and returns her ring.

With this small action, the maid reminds Edna of her place as Mrs. Pontellier, a respectable and"well-behaved upper class white woman. Literary critic, Anna Elfenbein argues, "Caring for Edna as she cares for the other possessions in Leonce Pontellier's household, the maid extends the reach of



Leonce's power by reenacting his [earlier] gesture with Edna's wedding ring. "Edna's response to the maid signals once more"her blind resignation to the relationships that perpetuate her husband's power over her" (151). This scene"proves compelling because"the tensions surrounding and between these two"very different women is rooted not only in class distinctions, but also in"their connection to Leonce Pontellier. One wonders if the maid realizes"Edna's frustration and isolation and conversely, if Edna sees the maid's oppression.

Though Edna's vision may be obstructed, Chopin's narrator oversteps these limitations to comment on the"women of color enabling Edna and her friends to continue her privileged"existence. Perhaps Chopin's most satiric commentary on the mistreatment of the "other" comes in the scene when Edna visits"the LeBruns in New Orleans. As she waits at the gate, Edna overhears"Victor arguing with the maid about who should"open the gate. Later he explains that, "the black woman's offensive conduct"was all due to imperfect training, as he was not there to take her in hand," (Chopin1899: 111).

By continually casting him"in a bad light, the narrator reproves"Victor and his mistreatment of the servants. The narrator's"subtle observations and wry commentary on the plight of the "other" illuminate Chopin's awareness of the oppression surrounding her. Elfenbein comments: "Striving for individual transcendence, Edna discovers the bounds of her prison, "coterminous with those confining other women. But because"her thinking, including a negative view of her own sex, is grounded in convention, her solitary insights are unfocused" (Chopin 1899: 143). Although"Edna is not always"aware of her privileged existence, the narrator's subtle irony reveals"Chopin's determination to convey the oppression surrounding her.

In the final scene "when Edna arrives at Grand Isle, she"again confronts the "other," this time in the form of Mariequita. Filled with Victor's stories and exaggerations of Edna's party, Mariequita's"vision of this upper class white woman has been skewed: "She contemplated with the greatest interest this woman who gave the most sumptuous dinners in America, and who had all the men in New Orleans at her feet" (Chopin 1899: 174).

The young Spanish woman, who had been chatting comfortably with Victor, is immediately restored to"her lower rank upon Edna's unexpected arrival. Victor says, "You may go to my room to brush up and rest yourself. Mariequita will show you" and again, "'Run and find Philomel's mother,' Victor"instructed the girl. 'I'll go the kitchen and"see what to do. By Gimminy! Women have no consideration! She might have sent me word.'" Here, Edna's upper class insensitivity makes her unable to consider"the trouble she has caused for these "others." While Edna is swimming out"to her death, Mariequita and Victor will be hurriedly arranging suitable accommodations for her. Elfenbein sums up Mariequita's role as the dark woman [Edna] needs to provide a plausible story of her accidental drowning. Mariequita will provide that story, for she believes in the mythic Edna [of] Victor's construct...[her] belief in the mythic Edna reconfirms the potency and prevalence of the romantic illusions dat divide women from each other. A final contrast to Edna, who detaches herself from story-making and story hearing by committing suicide, Mariequita survives untouched by Edna's awakening (157). Here, Chopin forces a direct encounter between the privileged and the other in a moment of crisis.

A final contrast to Edna, who detaches herself from"story-making and story hearing by committing suicide, Mariequita survives untouched by Edna's awakening (Chopin 1899: 157). Here, Chopin"forces a direct encounter between the privileged and the other in a moment of crisis. By simply



"commenting on Mariequita's role in Edna's final moments, Chopin directs our attention to the plight of the "other."



Conclusion

In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, there is one character who is considered being a liberator character that is Edna Pontellier. She becomes a liberator as a final result of social expectation and men's mastery toward her. She wishes to represent herself as a cleaning woman, an individual, not simply as a married woman of a man and a mother of children. In *The Awakening*, Chopin portrays the oppression of women in the patriarchal society of nineteenth-century America through the quintessential Southern plantation home. By representing the domestic sphere, Chopin depicts Edna unable to embrace her feminine ideas and express her desires fully. A constant image in her fiction, the plantation home is an image of domesticity that locates Chopin's passion for women trapped in the private sphere to be able to have a voice, portraying their fears and delusions as tied to a patriarchal society.

Doubleness in identities is a common feature in Kate Chopin's novels. Edna Pontellier, for example, is dependable on her individuality which determines how she understands herself, and at the same time how she receives the message that is enforced by external factors. Even though Edna Pontellier's awakening can be named as a victory against the rules of the society, it can also be called a failure, because the individual is a part of the culture and vice-versa. In other words, one cannot win against himself/herself. Without her forced social self, Edna did not manage to live as a moral member of the society. The phenomenon of identity forms within every individual, therefore it could be analyzed in other fiction or real people.



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