



Structuralist Perspective on Chopin's 'The Story of an Hour': Transformations of Eighteenth-Century American Women

Mahnoor Sher¹

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ABSTRACT

This study critically analyses Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" (1894) with special reference to Saussurean structuralism. It aims at exploring several different aspects of this work such as the notions of signification, binary oppositions, and language arbitrariness. The analysis conforms to the framework of Structuralism put forth into the field of linguistics by Ferdinand De Saussure. From the perspective of Structuralism, a close reading methodology is undertaken to evaluate this short story, its diction, characters, narration, and arrangement of paragraphs. Qualitative in nature, the study investigates a work of fiction through a linguistic theory thus giving the article a sense of novelty, originality and making it a worthy contribution to the disciplines of both linguistics and literature. Moreover, the reasons behind the author's choice of employing certain structures and figurative language are brought into light. These interpreted purposes, which are significant in comprehending Chopin's work within the parameters of Saussurean structuralism, go side by side in this paper. Besides Saussure, structuralism has been worked upon by many other renowned linguists as well. This study can pave way for researchers to examine "The Story of an Hour" from different structuralists' viewpoints like Lévi-Strauss and Jakobson, allowing the readers to understand this short story from a new perspective and standpoint.

INTRODUCTION

The United States of America is considered today as the unchallengeable and only global superpower. However, decades ago this was not the case and particularly in the 18th century, America presented a completely different picture. The country had witnessed many significant events that proved to be the turning points in the history of America. Such events include the series

¹BS Scholar, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar, Pakistan, Email: kmahi6771@gmail.com

of wars and conflicts, religious and political movements, and gender equality campaigns etc. all of which greatly influenced the country folks, particularly women.

Primarily discussing the tumultuous years of wars in the country, the men of the land were kept occupied every now and then on the battlefields. Consequently, all the manly responsibilities fell upon the shoulders of women who until then had been thought of as fragile creatures in almost all respects— emotionally, physically, and intellectually. Previously, they had been considered delicate enough not to participate or lend a hand in manly duties. Rather they had been confined solely to the domestic activities such as cleaning, cooking, nursing children and taking care of the farms and plantations in their husbands' absence.

Before the initiation of the American Revolution, America was still a colony of the British Empire and American women faced the horrors of slavery. They had been held enslaved and were supposed to perform all the chores assigned to them by their masters. On a brighter note, the Revolutionary War also marked the beginning of a new era in the country. During this war, women for the first time played a pivotal role in gaining independence for the country. They boycotted British goods most of which were household items. Also, women's role in the American Revolution is of considerable importance since they proved themselves as equals of men. They performed several important duties in this war including serving the soldiers by providing food, spying on British troops and last but not the least, they did participate in war though disguised as men.

Although it did not entirely change the status and position of women in the 18th century, the American Revolution did give rise to a thought and concept that women were worthy of political and social rights. Thus, it brought a slight yet positive change in the otherwise patriarchal society of America.

In the light of the aforementioned change, it can be said that the 18th century American society was undergoing a slow yet major political and social transition. The American Revolutionary war basically laid the foundation of a truly democratic and a constitutional government in which every gender, every culture, every race and every religion would enjoy all the privileges and rights of "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness". This event paved the way for a gentle breeze of feminism reaching to the people of America and later took the shape of a profound movement across the world.

Feminism found its roots in America in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention which addressed women's condition in the country. It was followed by various other conventions, amendments, and political gatherings to highlight women issues and their status in American society. Many activists, male and female, fully participated in this feminist movement to ensure women's equal rights to men. Their constant struggle proved to be successful and did not go in vain as many states recognized women's right to vote, to own property and child custody.

Apart from the acknowledgement of women's position in the political and social domains, many female writers also caught spotlight by expressing their views and thoughts boldly in the form of autobiographies, short stories, letters, and novels.

Among these brave women, Kate Chopin's name cannot go unnoticed. Her major works include

“Story of an Hour” (1894) and *The Awakening* (1899), a short story and novel respectively, in which she portrayed strong female protagonists very much alike her own personality since she herself was “raised in an unconventional and matriarchal...family,” and “went against nineteenth century chauvinist society (Tolentino, 2008)”.

To sum up, Kate Chopin’s literary work efficiently projects the feminist attitude and gives a comprehensive idea of the 18th century expected social and domestic roles of women. Her writings also depict the contrary responses and desires of the feminine gender against the conventional patriarchal outlook of society towards women in 18th-century America. In a word, she truly led the feminist wave to another level through her remarkable work in American literature.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this study is:

- To investigate the ideas of signification, language arbitrariness, and binary oppositions by examining the setting and social context in Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” (1894).
- To analyze the structural development, diction, lexical choice, and narration by evaluating the fictional characters in Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” (1894).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Opposing the Nomenclature View of Language

Unlike the formalists who centred their analysis on the innate features of a text, the structuralist critics are interested in analysing a text through its grammar and structure. Ghosh (2016) overviewed the contrasting nature of Structuralism and Formalism. For the most part, the concept of ‘sign’ is proposed along with the idea that the connection between signifier and signified is arbitrary. Coupled with arbitrariness, the duality of language signifies that each language has its own sound and concept of a particular word. Saussure thought of *langue* and *parole*, his preference of speech over writing, and his opposing perspective towards nomenclature view of language.

Language is a system of signs and one word or sign cannot be completely understood until and unless it is studied either in relation or in contrast to other signs or words. Ghosh (2016) aims at observing the foundations of structuralism in Saussure’s work as well as the preliminary steps he has taken towards the establishment of his concepts in this theory.

In the first place, Ghosh (2016) makes valid points regarding signifier, signified, nomenclature view of language, and arbitrariness which assure the readers of the validity and pragmatic aspect of language since these ideas brought forth can neither be denied nor overlooked while making a close analysis of structuralism.

Saussure’s perspective appears relevant to Plato and Freud’s viewpoint. By pointing out the similarities between Saussure’s, Plato’s and Freud’s views of the arbitrariness of language, the readers find a vivid picture, and a vast outlook to comprehend the reason behind why they thought the nomenclature view of language as inadequate. Ghosh (2016) not only puts forward inexplicit

statements but also, on the positive side, proves them with suitable examples; thus, leading the readers to have a clear understanding of what he intends to convey. To demonstrate, an instance can be noticed when he sets forth the idea of the sign by stating that a sign represents something other than itself. Later this concept is elaborated by giving the examples of red light at signal and ink marks on pages as signs.

Ghosh (2016) proceeds from a general idea to a specific one which provides certainty to his arguments just as he introduces sign in general and then specifies it in the field of linguistics to elucidate the syntagmatic and paradigmatic processes of analysing language.

Moghaddas and Dekhnich (2015) believe Structuralism as an intellectual movement. The authors provide a glimpse of how language before Saussure was studied in relation to nominalism. Therefore, they laid the groundwork for discussing the ways the attitude towards the study of language was slightly changed at the hands of Saussure and his *Course in General Linguistics*. What is known to be the primary concept of Saussure's structuralism is sign which is described as the basis of this particular theory. The concept of sign is put forward as performing a role i.e., it lets the speakers and hearers dig out the hidden meaning from symbols such as text. So, this article reveals how signification works in a language system.

Linguists like Foucault and Strauss have viewed structuralism as a method or an approach rather than as a distinct field (Moghaddas & Dekhnich, 2015). The main goal of this particular theory as a method is to investigate the deep structures that form a literary work. It is less concerned with meaning than with identifying how the structures are used to analyse text. The types of structuralism are holistic and atomistic. The atomistic structuralism studies the relationships that connect the parts to form a whole and these parts have distinct functions apart from their specified roles in the whole.

Unlike atomistic structuralism, the holistic structuralism requires the language system to actualize the possible statements that can become a part of that system. Theory of Structuralism has three approaches namely semiology, the search for deep structures, and Marxist structuralism. Semiology finds its origin in the study of signs. The search for deep structures says that a text could be better understood in terms of its underlying deep structures. For Marxist Structuralists, it is the social structures that shape human actions, not humans as creative beings make history through their conscious actions. Marxist structuralists believed that we should be researching structures, not individuals.

The aspects of structuralism are divided into two statements. Firstly, structuralism is a system of abstract concepts, images, and psychological structures of mind which are found in any text through which they can be analysed. Secondly, it is a method to explore the structural relationships by studying either Saussure's signification or Strauss's anthropological approach of binary opposition.

Hence, structuralism refers to two movements. The European Structuralism seeks to show that in a text, both meaning and structure are important whereas the American structuralism advocated that merely the form or the structure of a text is significant and not the meaning. Structuralism gave rise to the European and American schools of Structuralism and therefore becoming a theory

applicable in various domains of social sciences.

The study by Walle, Willems and Willems (2006) reflects cornerstone content of fundamental concepts of structuralism derived mainly from Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*. "Structuralism" gives a detailed description of various structuralist circles and movements including Prague Circle, Copenhagen Circle, and American Circle.

Equally important is a brief account of structuralism in linguistic sub-disciplines of phonology, morphosyntax, semantics and discourse analysis. In addition to these topics, special attention is given to the writings of Jakobson and Coseriu, two scholars who deserve to be recognized in great detail in virtue of their 'impact and intrinsic value' in the field of linguistics. Jakobson's work entitles 'interdisciplinary' because his study of structuralist movement is influenced by scientific disciplines, Saussurean concepts of structuralist theory, 'Peircean semiotics', and 'natural science' which took his findings to a next level (Walle, Willems and Willems, 2006). On the contrary, Coseriu's approach is 'integrated' since he endeavours to combine the viewpoints of different philosophers such as Aristotle, Humboldt, and Hegel to redefine structuralist theory in new parameters. In doing so, he broadens the scope of this movement by introducing new concepts such as norm, and three kinds of knowledge of speakers about language which are given Greek terms of *energeia*, *dynamis*, and *ergon* (Walle, Willems and Willems, 2006).

Structuralism became the most influential theory in the domain of modern linguistics in the 20th century. Linguistics played a valuable role in the development of structuralism through different stages. Structuralism serves as a means to an end, to make this theory easily comprehensible. As a matter of fact, it provides a rare insight into the complexities and obscurities of the structured system of language units such as sentences, sound segments, morphemes. Structuralist movement played a vital role in the establishment of the basic principles that are applied in various fields of study.

The theory of structuralism has also been worked upon from feminist perspective. These studies include contribution of scholars like Negin Karami and Esmaeil Zohdi (2015) who provide a feminist observation of Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" (1894). Their stance revolves around woman's self and identity and the way it comes in conflict with the conventional belief system of eighteenth-century America. They emphasize women's suppression of their repressed emotions of freedom, liberty, and autonomy of life with respect to their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters. Chopin, an American author, centred her work on feminist themes such as women's suffrage in marital relationships and their desire for independent lives free from patriarchal domination. Moreover, her writings represent her mind and views regarding the treatment of feminine gender in American society. She was courageous enough to speak her heart out through the power of her pen.

Speaking of which, Karami and Zohdi (2015), in their study, also consider Chopin to be a feminist in her representation of Mrs. Mallard on a quest of self-recognition as soon as she heard the false dole of Mr. Mallard, the stereotype of a controlling husband. What makes their work worthwhile is the comparative study of Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" (1894) and Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" (1929) for the purpose to elaborate the concept of women oppression dealt by the

twentieth century female authors.

Chopin (1894) mildly illustrates women's subjugation in this short story by discussing the conflicting thoughts of her protagonist, whereas Woolf's (1929) style is rather forceful and strong in voicing out for the egalitarianism of females and against the destructive attitude of male counterparts in society.

Karami and Zohdi (2015) note that Woolf (1929) promulgates the practice of self-realization in women since she does not believe in allowing the opposite gender to shape their destiny. Thus, they both claim that although Chopin and Woolf might differ in their manner of characterizing female protagonists in a struggle to fight male domination, however, these women authors stand together in their conviction of women empowerment in one way or the other. The notions of Chopin's feminist outlook in "The Story of an Hour" (1894) and defining the self in regards to Louise Mallard's character sum up the approach of twentieth century women authors towards patriarchy and female liberation from the chains of stereotypes.

Nour Ahmad (2018) focuses on Chopin's (1894) description of the institution of marriage as an oppressive factor for eighteenth century American women. She centres her work on three main arguments i.e. to depict marriage as a bond that restrains females from cherishing their identity, to demonstrate a marital relationship in eighteenth century America as an obstacle for women's independence, and last but not the least, to show what a woman gets as a result of her attempts to liberate herself from the shackles of patriarchy. All these ideas work together keeping in view Mrs. Mallard's character from "The Story of an Hour".

Ahmad (2018) reflects on the female identity suffering in the name of marriage since the real name of Chopin's protagonist— Louise Mallard, is not introduced until the middle of the story. She is presented as Mrs. Mallard, the wife of Mr. Mallard, therefore, delineating her marginalized identity from the very beginning of the literary work.

Moreover, Ahmad (2018) sees that Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" (1894) not only discusses masculine supremacy in a marriage but also seems not to negate the psychological effects on women of such authority of men in marital affiliation. Louise Mallard's thoughts and contemplations open a window for the readers to look into the troubled and lost female identity in face of males' hegemonic attitude towards females.

Important to realize is that Chopin's use of apt imagery, narrative style, and setting, all contribute to mirror the miserable position of eighteenth-century American women in public and private domains (Ahmad, 2018). Louise Mallard's hesitation and reluctance in relishing her long-awaited freedom reflects the level of her subjugated and crushed identity that does not let her enjoy even a small moment of liberty from her all-controlling husband.

Ahmad (2018) contends that death and destruction remains to be the ultimate destiny for a female who even dares to think of not walking a path created by society. Louise Mallard's death out of grief lies as an embodiment of such a sorrowful fate.

Chopin's literary work efficiently projects the feminist attitude and gives a comprehensive idea of

the 18th century expected social and domestic roles of women. Her writings also depict the contrary responses and desires of the feminine gender against the conventional patriarchal outlook of society towards women in 18th-century America. In a word, she truly led the feminist wave to another level through her remarkable work in American literature.

Tushar Kanti Baidya (2014) comes up with a different perspective of “The Story of an Hour” (1894) as he concentrates on how Mrs. Mallard’s physical ailment plays a role in her mental frailty and illness. He puts forth an idea that a person’s falling health is a factor that cannot be overlooked when it comes to their psychological or mental feebleness. Chopin’s (1894) protagonist is dealt with great care by other characters due to her illness. Her troubled marriage could also be one of the reasons for her wretched state of mind that constantly signals her to stop rejoicing the news of her husband’s death. (Baidya, 2014) Thus, the readers come to know of the battle going on in her mind that does not allow Mrs. Mallard to act as she wants, to think as she wants, and to live as she wants.

The tragedy of Louise’s life is that she derives her happiness from her husband’s death. Baidya (2014) argues that the fact she feels unhappy in her marriage could also be due to the communication gap between her and her husband as the story shows Mr. Mallard traveling. This reflects the nature of his job that hurdles the joy and satisfaction normally existing in the lives of a married couple.

Rizki Theodorus Johan (2008) states about the controversial nature of Chopin’s writings and the way they were banned in her time. He highlights the relation between Chopin’s own rebellious beliefs and opinions regarding women subservience in a patriarchal social context and how she chose to reflect these views through a woman’s standpoint in her fictional works. She deviates from the traditional and already established norms and values for women by society and exhibit such deviation through her female protagonists (Johan, 2008). ‘The Story of an Hour’ (1894), ‘A Respectable Woman’ (1894), and ‘A Pair of Silk Stockings’ (1897) become Chopin’s mouthpieces on the matter of women emancipation from the suffocating relationship of marriages in eighteenth-century America (Johan, 2008). He argues that women, as presented in ‘The Story of an Hour’ (1894), were merely objectified during that era and that neither did they have the right to individualism nor to make decisions for themselves.

She endeavoured to advocate women’s right of a free life of their choice despite the social stereotypical expectations attached to their gender. In other words, Chopin attempted to present confident and determined female characters in her writings with an aim to voice out and to show the world what women are really capable of and what they truly deserve. She managed to focus on themes and ideas related to feminist concepts and through her work, she remained in the limelight and interest of the literary community of her time. Chopin continued to be talk of the town because she chose to write on topics which were considered controversial and taboo back then.

Kyra Gemberling (2014) discusses the manner, agenda, and historical evolution of feminist content in the American women’s magazines. She suggests the development of feminism in America through media discourses particularly, magazines which contributed a lot to the advancement of women’s rights movements in the country. The role of print media was great in making the fair treatment of women possible in society as the magazines published articles propagating the equal

involvement of women in every walk of life (Gemberling, 2014).

Gemberling (2014) also specifies different time periods in which women participation in several fields of society paved way for their progressive approach towards life. These time periods witnessed a gradual success of 'female independence'. She proceeds her argument by claiming that United States of America has a long history of women discrimination as they were considered lower than men in social hierarchy of gender.

The prejudice against females was practiced mainly in the domestic spheres where they were supposed to be devoted to their families and possessed no sense of individuality. Women, in the nineteenth century America, engaged primarily in the editorial jobs which defined their significant share in giving rise to a liberal attitude of the society towards their gender. (Gemberling, 2014).

This paper speaks of the dynamic role of print media that encouraged American women to voice out their views on different matters either in form of fiction writing, reviews, or non-fiction—essays. This ended up in female writers emerging in a large number and questioning the orthodox frame of mind of men against women. The waves of feminist movements proved central in making people aware of women's right to independence and liberty from the otherwise male chauvinist society. To sum up, Gemberling (2014) writes about the eventual triumphs of American women, over the years, in the context of workplace, education, and etcetera.

Valerie Miller (n.d.) looks into different types of feminism and the manner they can be helpful to understand the bias and prejudice held against women. Her work is marked with an apt account of the diversity of feministic theory which proves substantial in comprehending the violation of feminine rights in a patriarchal social stratum.

She adds that liberal feminism motivates women to be actively participate in society, but refrains from defying or challenging the established conservative norms of a patriarchal world. Radical feminism endeavours to find the grounds of women oppression and offers solutions in forms of giving rise to movements that advocate women emancipation and empowerment. Black feminism revolves around the imposed submission and inferiority of Black females based on their race and colour. Miller (n.d.) defines Marxist Socialist feminism to be a major cause for women's yielding and passive attitude since it criticizes capitalism as a way to keep women under economic pressure and oppression. Further kinds of feminism she addressed are the cultural feminism, eco-feminism, global and transnational feminism and visionary feminism.

In a word, she provides a holistic view of all kinds of feminism which are significant in figuring out the reasons of women discrimination and the ways through which this situation can be improved.

Saga of Eighteenth-Century American Women: A Structuralist Reading

Kate Chopin developed an opposing perspective to the patriarchal societal norms of nineteenth century attached to womanhood which is clearly mirrored in her short story 'The Story of an Hour'. In the opening lines of story, Chopin revealed the protagonist, Mrs. Mallard, who was undergoing

a heart disease. Because of her physical frailty, the news of her husband's death was imparted to her very cautiously by her sister Josephine. After hearing this terrible news, she was overwhelmed by the feelings of immense grief and sobbed into her sister's arms. She then went to her room alone and looked through the window where she observed the outside beauty of spring. She was puzzled about her feelings regarding her husband's death. However, she soon recognized that she was going through the emotion of freedom which she tried her level best to hold it back with her weak will. The realization of this emotion gave a sort of relief to her soul and she became ready to embrace with open arms the coming life in which she would be self-standing.

Although she loved her husband, her aspiration for an unconstrained life was way more powerful than this fragile emotion of love towards him. She went downstairs where she witnessed Brently Mallard entering home safe and sound. Richards tried to prevent this surprising scene from the view of Louise but it was then too late. When the doctors came and examined her, they told she had died since she was having a heart disease so her weak heart could not bear the extreme "joy" of seeing her husband alive.

Chopin organized this story into short paragraphs most of which consist of not more than four to five lines. Her arrangement of these paragraphs exhibits an obvious synchronization—an idea discussed in one passage is closely linked to the next notion elucidated in the segment that follows it. The reason behind keeping the paragraphs brief is to hold the attentiveness of readers for long and detailed passages effect the richness and artistic value of the story.

Moreover, each idea is unfolded with special reference to the protagonist as she being the focus of the short story. A fine amalgamation of sub-ideas and main idea is incorporated within some paragraphs. The purpose of such combination is to employ a twist in order to maintain the interest of the readers and to avoid the firm consistency which may create a monotonous effect on the plot. An instance of merging of ideas can be seen when the physical ailment of Louise is narrated along with the presentation of sisterly care of Josephine towards her. Likewise, the description of Louise's facial structure is intermingled with the portrayal of an unusual thought that was occurring to her.

Coming towards the sentence structure, Chopin makes use of simple, compound and complex sentences in the story. An instance of a simple sentence in this text is: "Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously". The sentence, "There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory." can be taken as an illustration of a compound sentence. Whereas a complex sentence structure is obvious in this sentence: "When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips". The language of this short story is mostly concrete and having literal meanings e.g. window, armchair, trees, birds, sky, stairs, grip-sack, umbrella, door, and so on. However, some abstractions have also been used e.g. soul, love, self-assertion, care, death, joy, heart trouble, repression, grief etc. The total number of words of "The Story of an Hour" is one thousand and eight words.

The plot of this short story is structured in a compact whole — a beginning, a transitional middle and a convincing end. The beginning starts the cause and effect chain. The physical illness of Mrs. Mallard is described in the initial lines which eventually caused her death by the end of the story. The middle is caused by the earlier incident as the news of Brently's death instigated a sense of

freedom in the protagonist. The resolution is caused by the preceding events and does not lead to other incidents outside the compass of the story. Accordingly, a perfect unity of action is observed by Chopin because the ideas expressed in the story are bound together by an internal necessity. The plot is organized in chronological order because it consists of an exposition where Louise Mallard is introduced with the description of her heart disease. Then comes the rising action where she receives the news of her husband's death. The climax occurs afterwards when she begins to think of a happy life without her husband. The story proceeds to the falling action when she descends from the staircase with a "feverish triumph" in her eyes. Finally, the denouement takes place when she sees Mr. Mallard returning home alive and turning her daydreams of freedom to nothing but falsehood.

Since it is a short story, Chopin was able to maintain a single plot, encompassing a small number of characters and covering a short period of time i.e. an hour. As this is a short story so it can be read in one sitting and does not contain chapters or parts. Conclusively, it has an apt beginning, an accurate middle, and a persuasive end leaving no queries and perplexities in the minds of readers. The element of foreshadowing is noticeable in the introductory line of the text: "Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble..." This mention of "heart trouble" foretells that something bad will happen which turns out to be true when Mrs. Mallard dies in the end of the story. Also, the introduction of the protagonist as Mrs. Mallard foreshadows and emphasises on her character as a wife first and as an individual second (emphasis added). Similarly, Ahmad (2018) claims that Chopin does not familiarize the readers with Mrs. Mallard's name in the beginning of the story rather keeps the readers waiting until the middle to introduce her real name. Ahmad (2018) sees it as identity marginalization of the female character in this literary text. Likewise, Fitrie (2011) is of the view that "Chopin kept the name mystery until paragraph 17 to make readers emphasize her characteristic as a weak housewife".

The setting of this story is Mallard house. It can be observed that the setting is very limited as it covers merely a sitting room where Mrs. Mallard received the news of Brently's death and a room where she experienced a changed state of mind. The reason why Chopin kept the setting of this story restricted may be that she might wanted to produce in the minds of the readers, the effects of a restrained life of women in nineteenth century. Women at that time in America were meant to perform only the domestic duties and no potential autonomy of their own was conferred upon them. Similarly, the confined setting evidently reflects the defined position of females in that society. When Mrs. Mallard realized her independence after her husband's death, the first words that she uttered were, "free, free, free"! which mark that she had always felt bound and trapped in her marriage relation with Brently Mallard. Hence, the limited setting can be assumed to be connected with the limited amount of individualism enjoyed by women of Chopin's time. She wrote this story in Victorian age when wives were subjugated in a marriage bond and husbands had all the dominance. This can be a reason why Chopin wrote this story in a narrow milieu i.e. Mallard house.

The lexical choice employed by Chopin carries deep meaning and profound effects. To put it another way, the word choice in this short story is symbolic of many things. Symbolism is the concept developed by Saussure in his structuralist study of language which can also be found in this work of Chopin. For instance, the phrase like "open window" represents a gateway through which Mrs. Mallard could achieve her freedom which was till then restricted. This "open window"

became a source of her hope and in a sense filled her with optimistic thoughts. She began to think of her upcoming life where she would not be subjected to her husband's "powerful will". Instead she will enjoy "all sorts of days that would be her own".

Similarly, "spring" indicates a new and considerably improved beginning of Mrs. Mallard's previously colourless life. The "twittering" of birds also stands for pleasure and joy in the air that was felt by the protagonist. The expected rainfall can also be considered as a positive symbol as this "delicious breath of rain" will take away all the dryness and everything will be freshened up. The "heart-trouble" symbolizes the weak heart of Louise that has suffered much pain of being repressed in her marriage relation. The "slender hands" convey the feelings of her being frail and feeble possessing no power or distinct identity of her own. The "physical exhaustion" signify her extreme tiredness or inability to undergo more agony. Overall, the word choice used by Chopin appeals to the senses provided that it evokes powerful emotions and gives a deeper insight into protagonist's thoughts and life.

Binary opposition, a concept presented by Saussurean Structuralism, can also be found in this work of Chopin. Binary is the universally created social status but opposites are culturally created. The first binary opposition that can be identified is the male and female characters in the story. The male characters include Richards and Brently whereas the female characters include Josephine and Louise. Another instance of binary opposition is the characters as husbands and wives. Richards and Josephine share a marriage bond and Louise is the wife of Brently Mallard. An additional binary can be seen in the effective utilization of both the emotions of joy and grief. Furthermore, the feelings of love and self-assertion can also be marked as binary opposites. Also, when Louise felt that she loved her husband not "often" but "sometimes", these words function as binaries. "Body" and "soul" can also be referred to as binary oppositions in the story.

Most significant are the figurative devices which can be found in this story. Metaphor is implied in this phrase; "the storm of grief". "Monstrous joy" is an example of oxymoron. Paradox appears in "joy that kills". Personification can be seen in "a physical exhaustion that haunted her body" and alliteration occurs in "She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment...". An instance of simile is "...she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory".

Furthermore, the element of suspense is very obvious in this story. It is visible in the lines when Louise begins to think differently about her husband's death yet was unable to name that "subtle" and "elusive" feeling that was occurring to her. The readers, at this moment, are caught in suspense trying to comprehend what emotion the protagonist is getting conscious to. This leads to the birth of so many questions in reader's mind-why the protagonist is "fearfully" waiting for this unknown feeling to overcome her? Is she afraid of something? For what good reason the emergence of this instinct is described to be approaching Mrs. Mallard through "sounds, the scents" and "the colour that filled the air"? Is this a positive feeling or vice versa? Ultimately this feature of suspense plays a vital role in arousing reader's curiosity about what will happen next and to know how the protagonist will treat this emotion.

As far as the characters of this literary work are concerned, some of them are true to their roles while some function the other way around. An instance of the character who remains consistent throughout the story is Josephine-protagonist's sister. She, from the very beginning till the end of

the story is concerned towards Louise's health issues e.g. her sisterly care can be seen in these lines, "Josephine was kneeling before the closed door... Louise, open the door! I beg... you will make yourself ill... For heaven's sake open the door." Thus, she is true to her character of a sister in the story. She is a flat character because no change in her behavior has been mentioned by Chopin.

Richards- Josephine's husband, on the other hand, can also be assumed to be true to his character as he notably is intended to gently break the news of Mr. Mallard's death to Louise in the beginning of the story. Towards the end, he again tried to hide Brently from his wife in order to prevent her from a shock since he was aware of her heart trouble. His genuineness is evident in these lines; "Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife." and "and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message." He was connected to Mallard family and therefore was sincerely fulfilling his responsibility to protect the family from any further suffering. He is also a flat but true to his character.

Louise, on the contrary, whom everyone was expecting to be in state of mourning behaved contradictorily to the situation. Even though she wept as soon as she heard of Brently's death since she loved him "sometimes", however, her sadness fades away as she overcame it by the pleasant thought of having liberty in her upcoming life. She was able to move on and to think of her bright future instead of the depressing past that had (supposedly) gone. Here the readers find her behavior awkwardly strange since they were expecting her to behave like normally a widow would act but she left no stone unturned to surprise the readers first by taking delight in her pleasant surroundings and then by saying, "free, free, free!" Also, her thoughts about the new life indicate that she is behaving unconventionally which is absolutely not suiting her character. This reveals the difference, the arbitrariness in this short story. When she goes upstairs to her room in a melancholic state but comes back downstairs like a "goddess of Victory" startles the readers of how she has been quickly transformed from the status of being a stereotype fragile wife to a woman who looks more confident at that particular moment. This is the transformation and the shift of attitude that has been identified by the readers in Louise's character. It also shows that she is a dynamic character.

This story has been narrated by a third person narrator who seems to be keenly aware of the feelings and thoughts of Mrs. Mallard and describes them effectively. The narrator herself is not a part of the story but she knows what the protagonist is going through and conveys it to the readers. The narrator is believed to be female because the way she imparts Louise's thoughts reveals the fact that she somehow understands Mrs. Mallard's position, her sufferings in her marriage relation and her struggle to suppress the desire of being a free woman even though she wanted to be one. Her attitude in describing the protagonist's conduct is polite and careful. Although Mrs. Mallard was thinking unconventionally, however, her behavior was not treated harshly by the narrator. This could be the reason why the narrator is assumed to be female and not a male.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this structural analysis includes the brief description of different elements of the ‘The Story of an Hour’. The words, paragraphs, sequence of events, suspense, the lexical choices, the binaries, arbitrariness of situation and characters, role of the narrator, construction of plot, and changes in attitudes have been discussed with respect to the structuralism theory originated by Ferdinand de Saussure in the study of language. The structural analysis well exposed Mrs. Mallard as an unconventionally eighteenth-century woman whose behavior may be symbolic of the change in the social structures of 18th century America.

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