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ÉDITORIAL

Ce troisième numéro de *Perspectives Plurielles* prolonge la dynamique éditoriale amorcée en décembre 2025 et confirme la vitalité d'un projet scientifique pluridisciplinaire désormais solidement établi. L'ampleur des contributions reçues, la diversité des laboratoires et des institutions représentés, ainsi que l'exigence maintenue de l'évaluation par les pairs ont conduit le comité de rédaction à reconduire, en l'approfondissant, le choix opéré lors de la précédente livraison : le numéro paraît en deux tomes, le second se déployant lui-même en deux séries. Cette architecture respecte l'identité de chaque grand champ disciplinaire tout en préservant l'unité d'un projet résolument intégratif.

Le Tome I rassemble les travaux relevant des Arts, Lettres et Langues : littératures africaine, francophone, hispanique et anglophone, sémiotique, sociolinguistique et analyse du discours, didactique des langues, lexicologie et terminologie, études culturelles et postcoloniales. Le Tome II, consacré aux Sciences Humaines et Sociales, se déploie en deux séries. La série 1, « Territoires, sociétés et développement », réunit les recherches en géographie humaine et physique, en aménagement du territoire, en sociologie, en économie et en développement. La série 2, « Savoirs, éducation et représentations », accueille les sciences de l'éducation, la psychologie, les sciences de la communication, la philosophie, l'histoire, l'anthropologie et les études culturelles.

La diversité des terrains étudiés : Côte d'Ivoire, Sénégal, Bénin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo, Guinée, Niger, Cameroun, Gabon, République du Congo et République démocratique du Congo, illustre la portée continentale de cette livraison. Plusieurs lignes de force s'en dégagent : la résilience environnementale et sanitaire des territoires, les recompositions urbaines et foncières, la gouvernance des ressources naturelles et des biens communs, l'inscription du numérique dans les pratiques sociales et politiques, les transformations des systèmes éducatifs, ainsi que la place des savoirs endogènes dans la régulation des sociétés contemporaines.

Le comité de rédaction adresse sa profonde reconnaissance aux auteurs, aux évaluateurs et au comité scientifique, ainsi qu'à l'UFR Communication et Société de l'Université Alassane Ouattara, partenaire fidèle de cette aventure. Que ce numéro confirme Perspectives Plurielles comme un espace de référence où s'élaborent, en dialogue, des savoirs ouverts sur les sociétés contemporaines et leurs mutations.

Bonne lecture.

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GYNOCENTRISM IN "THE STORY OF AN HOUR" BY KATE CHOPIN

ANALYSE CRITIQUE DU GYNOCENTRISME DANS « THE STORY OF AN HOUR » DE KATE CHOPIN

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Abstract: *Since its publication in 1894, "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin has triggered critical debates over her projection of gender relations in the short story. The debates mostly turn around the attitude of the female protagonist, Mrs. Mallard, who secretly celebrates her husband's supposed accidental death. Participating in the ongoing debate, this study seeks to decipher the basic motive lying behind Chopin's making her protagonist, Louise Mallard, rejoice over her husband's accidental death without any apparently valid reason. To this end, the study claims that Chopin's motive lies strongly in her gynocentric ideology that has long been hidden in the short story. To support this claim, the study adopts a deductive method of analysis, drawing on Louise Rosenblatt's transactional reader-response theory, with the help of textual evidence from the short story and specialized opinions. The study has achieved significant results by revealing that gynocentrism permeates the entire short story in various traits, suggesting the preservation of women's interests while excluding men. As the entire analysis reveals, the short story is marred by an excessive focus on female well-being that overlooks the indispensable importance of men in women's lives. When present in the family, the man appears useful only as a protector of the woman, whereas—paradoxically, from a Chopinian gynocentric perspective—his permanent absence would signify her liberation. The close look at Chopin's gynocentrism in the short story reveals that, since it is meant for the exclusive happiness of women to the detriment of the highly important social institution of marriage in general and of men in particular, this female-centered ideology would be detrimental to societal stability.*

Keywords: *Reader-response, gynocentrism, Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour", literary analysis*

Résumé : *Depuis sa publication en 1894, la nouvelle « The Story of an Hour » (L'Histoire d'une heure) de Kate Chopin a suscité des débats critiques sur la manière dont l'auteure y dépeint les relations entre les sexes. Ces débats portent principalement sur l'attitude de la protagoniste, Mme Mallard, qui se réjouit secrètement de la mort présumée accidentelle de son mari. S'inscrivant dans ce débat, la présente étude cherche à élucider la motivation profonde qui a conduit Chopin à faire réjouir son héroïne, Louise Mallard, de la mort accidentelle de son époux, sans raison apparente valable. À cette fin, l'étude soutient que la motivation de Chopin réside essentiellement dans une idéologie gynocentriste, longtemps dissimulée au sein du récit. Pour étayer cette thèse, l'étude adopte une méthode d'analyse déductive fondée sur la théorie transactionnelle de la réception de Louise Rosenblatt, en s'appuyant sur des éléments textuels de la nouvelle ainsi que sur des avis d'experts. Les résultats obtenus sont significatifs : ils révèlent que le gynocentrisme imprègne l'ensemble de la nouvelle sous diverses formes, privilégiant les intérêts des femmes tout en excluant les hommes. Comme l'analyse le montre, le récit est marqué par une focalisation excessive sur le bien-être féminin, au détriment de l'importance capitale des hommes dans la vie des femmes. Au sein de la famille, l'homme n'apparaît utile qu'en tant que protecteur de la femme, alors que, paradoxalement, dans la perspective gynocentriste de Chopin, son absence définitive serait synonyme de libération pour elle. L'examen approfondi du gynocentrisme chez Chopin suggère que cette idéologie centrée sur la femme, visant son bonheur exclusif au détriment de l'institution sociale majeure qu'est le mariage et, en particulier, des hommes, pourrait nuire à la stabilité de la société.*

Mots-clés : *Théorie de la réception, gynocentrisme, Kate Chopin, « The Story of an Hour », analyse littéraire*

Introduction

"The Story of an Hour," a short story published by Kate Chopin in 1894, deals with a woman named Louise Mallard, who exults over her husband's supposed accidental death instead of showing sadness, as her sister, Josephine, and her husband's friend, Richards, do. However, this controversial attitude raises an important question that literary critics continue to discuss: why does Kate Chopin make her protagonist, Louise Mallard, rejoice over her husband's accidental death whereas there is no particular blame she can put on him? Although P. Seyersted (1970, p. 153) claims that, "during the next half century [following its publication], "The Story of an Hour" was remembered by only a handful of critics," my broad online search revealed that a number of critics have already addressed this question, mostly basing their analyses on various feminist perspectives.

In her comment in 1907, L.R. Whipple (1907, p. 863-866) praises Chopin's "honest description of feminine psychology", but deplores that she "could not appeal to a wide audience because of her theme [feminism]". In his analysis, P. Seyersted (1970, p. 153) implies that "The Story of an Hour" and other short stories express a realistic view of women's lives but, "she would never be allowed to publish the kind of realism she was aiming at". J. Corry (1985) claims that the protagonist's attitude, in a narrow sense, is feminist, as it unravels women's repression, redemption, and final fate, although nothing about it suggests a tract. In the same vein, E. Toth (1999, p. 10) analyzes the short story as a radical attack on the social institution of marriage and claims that Kate Chopin makes her protagonist die at the end of the story because an autonomous widow would be viewed as a threat to patriarchy in the 1890s. The protagonist's death probably led D. Denneau (2003, p. 210) to imply that many readers would see "Louise as a normal, understandable, and sympathetic woman" in a male-dominated society.

Using a qualitative descriptive study, N. Sheheryar (2024, p. 2213) examines gender roles and patriarchy in the short story, seeing in the protagonist's attitude a suggestion that women have long been restricted to "subservience and patriarchal norms." H. U. Rehman and H. I. Nawaz (2023, p. 82) argue that "Chopin fights for women in her era because she believes that there is no limit for women in social context," while Dewi *et al.* (2023, p. 64-81) suggest that the short story is the representation of liberal feminism characterized by the search for equal liberty, equal rights, and equal freedom. As for Ullah and Ullah (2022, p. 15-29), they contend that Chopin critiques oppressive social institutions and their impact on women's selfhood.

Broadly speaking, the list of critics addressing gender issues in Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" is long. The vast majority of her critics read her short story from feminist perspectives, commending her artistic ability to fight for women's autonomy and independence. The current paper counters these feminist

perspectives and claims that Chopin's making her protagonist exult over her husband's death results from her highly gynocentric stance on marriage; a type of gynocentrism that is a danger to men.

To support my thesis, I draw on Louise Rosenblatt's transactional reader-response criticism. This critical approach is based on the concept of transaction: the belief that when a person reads a literary text, a process of transaction takes place between him/her and the text. The text acts as a stimulus guiding the reader's process of deciphering, which is also influenced by his emotions, feelings, memories, or previous knowledge. In a word, the text and the reader both collaborate to give meaning to the work of art as a whole (L. Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 6-21). My choice of this theory is justified because it recognizes that different people view works differently and that people's interpretations change over time. Since Chopin's short story was published over a hundred years ago, its interpretation has kept changing over time. The transactional reader-response approach allows me to propose a new interpretation of the story by showing how gynocentrism operated in it without critics ever discovering it.

The guidelines of my analysis are as follows: firstly, I deem it important to clarify the concept of gynocentrism to harmonize the readers' comprehension of it. Secondly, I unravel the multiple gynocentric traits and behaviors that permeate the short story. Thirdly, I unmask the dangers of Chopin's gynocentrism for the highly important social institution of marriage in general, and for men in particular. However, before delving into these points, I deem it important to lay out a clear methodology.

1. Methodological framework

No critical work can achieve conclusive results if the critic does not adopt a clear methodology, because it is the headlight of the criticism process. That said, to support my thesis, I use a deductive analysis, following a top-down process of interpretation that draws on a broader theory to analyze the story from its general to its particular aspects. Drawing on Louise Rosenblatt's transactional reader-response theory, I use textual evidence to decode the gynocentric representations hidden in the story. Since my analysis does not aim to assess the aesthetic value of the short story, I only refer to the stylistic elements that contribute to the reader's understanding of Chopin's gynocentrism.

My analysis focuses on the third edition of "The Story of an Hour" (1969) by Kate Chopin. This choice is justified because it contains all the gynocentric traits and behaviors that my study intends to decipher. In addition to the textual evidence collected from the corpus, I refer to other specialized opinions and analyses from scientific articles and published books to better understand Chopin's gynocentrism in the short story.

A broad internet literature search revealed a large number of internet references on gynocentrism, but many of them seem to be published for militant purposes rather than improvement in knowledge. Some were publications of political and civil society organizations ranging from left to right, pressure groups, lobby groups, and think tanks, some expressing a pro-gynocentric or anti-gynocentric point of view. Their analyses often seem to be conducted in ways that suit their biases. Therefore, while referring to them, I take special care to minimize biases as much as possible. To prevent any ambiguity, it is important to clarify the concept of gynocentrism to harmonize readers' understanding.

2. Deciphering the concept of gynocentrism

Gynocentrism has been a prevalent pattern in male-female relations for over two centuries. This phenomenon has become so pernicious that many people fail to perceive how it has been permeating gender relations. Gynocentrism is formed from the Greek elements gyno-, from γυνή, "woman," and kentron, "center." Literally speaking, according to C. Prathap and P. Kumaresan (2022, p. 716), "Anything can be considered gynocentric when it is concerned exclusively with a female point of view." The concept was formulated in 1888 and theorized by Lester F. Ward in 1903 as gynocentrism, a school of thought that approaches the world from a uniquely female point of view. The female gender is perceived as the origin of human existence on earth and must be respected and protected as such. Man's role in humankind is minimal because, contrary to the idea of man's superiority over woman, which is usually believed in and taught at home and schools, it is rather the woman who is the superior and most important being on earth. In other words, this concept places the woman at the center of the universe and assumes that she is really the most important being, since she gives birth and ensures the perpetuation of the human species (L.F. Ward, 1903).

Drawing inspiration from Ward, E. Showalter (1979), however, deviated from him to develop what is known today as gynocriticism, a critical method of analyzing female texts, but not a doctrine of female primacy. This critical lens views women not as consumers of male-authored texts but rather as producers of their own texts inspired by their own experience as women. Showalter's critical lens sharply contrasts with Ward's, as it does not find any necessity for women to oppose men as their oppressors. Rather, it is important for women to go beyond gender opposition and reach self-discovery, permitting them to produce a genuinely independent and female-centered art (E. Showalter, 1979).

Coming back to Ward's gynocentrism, it holds that men must show deference to women and guarantee their needs, envies, and desires. Man is viewed as being incapable of giving birth. When he dies, in this perspective, he does so alone, but woman is seen as the source of procreation and, when she dies, beyond the individual, it is a whole generation of individuals whose coming into life is

interrupted. From this perspective, woman appears as the root of a tree and man its branch. Cutting a branch does not end the life of a tree. Yet when the root of the tree (symbolizing woman) is cut off, its life comes to an end. To understand the life of the tree, therefore, one has to go from its root. In other words, one cannot imagine the tree without its roots, whereas one can do it without its branches. In this respect, woman becomes the most important element of existence and man is only there to care for her and ensure the perpetuation of the human species. In this vein, Ward's comment makes a stronger case for the centrality and primacy of woman over man:

> *The female sex is primary in point of origin and of importance in the history and economy of organic life. And as life is the highest product of nature, and human life the highest type of life, it follows that the grandest fact in nature is woman […]. Woman is the unchanging trunk of the great genealogic tree; while man, with all his vaunted superiority, is but a branch, a grafted scion, as it were, whose acquired qualities die with the individual, while those of woman are handed on to futurity. Woman is the race, and the race can be said to be raised only as she raised up [sic]. (L.F. Ward, 1903, p. 27)*

In Ward's account, woman is the core of history and economy; in a word, of life. Nature is viewed as female, and this can be seen in linguistic uses in which Nature is attributed the personal pronoun "she". From this perspective, woman becomes the center of attention at the expense of man, since it is believed that her absence would lead to the end of the human species, whereas the absence of man would not. That could be the reason why Ward goes further, asserting that "The gynocentric theory is the view that the female sex is primary and the male secondary in the organic scheme, that originally and normally all things center, as it were, about the female" (L.F. Ward, 1903, p. 27).

If it is believed that the female sex has absolute primacy over the male sex in society, one can contend that society is gynocentric, and that American society does not escape from that rule. In his travel narrative, George A. Birmingham claims that American social life seems gynocentric. For him, it is arranged to delight women. Men come in where and how they can (G.A. Birmingham, 1914, p. 197-198). Although Birmingham's claim can be understandable, assuming that it reflects what he felt about American society during his travels, one can legitimately counter him, arguing that a travel narrative could not establish the gynocentric character of a society. Nevertheless, W. Farrell (1996) goes further, suggesting that "Men's greatest weakness is their facade of strength, and women's greatest strength is their façade of weakness" (p. 27). In this view, men believe they are more important, whereas women are held to be superior, being the root of the tree, men being merely its branch, which can be removed without endangering life. These gynocentric views and traits permeate the whole story in a way that is worth investigating in the next section.

3. Gynocentric traits and behaviors in "The Story of an Hour"

"The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin deals with women and marriage, presenting an unconventional perspective on the theme. Her protagonist faces a choice between what society expects of her and what she truly desires, and she finally decides to follow her own path to the detriment of the social institution of marriage. From my perspective, a man or a woman becomes complete only in the social framework of marriage. Therefore, it appears too daring for Chopin to explore marriage as a problem and dilemma that women face, and that a woman's final choice between marriage and independence would be made on the second.

Chopin particularly addresses a dichotomous intertwining between marital love and female independence through her brief characterization of the supposedly widowed Louise Mallard in her last hour of life. After discovering that her husband has died in a train accident, Mrs. Mallard faces conflicting emotions of grief at her husband's death and exultation at the prospects for freedom in the rest of her life. The emotion of exultation eventually takes the upper hand in her thoughts. Mrs. Mallard's attitude suggests that although Mr. Brently Mallard has always treated her well (since there is no mention of Brently maltreating her in the story), any relationship between a man and a woman with such a permanent interdependence must be disadvantageous to some extent. Mrs. Mallard's whispering, "Free! Body and soul free!" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 353), is highly suggestive of this reality. However, I contend that this narrative strategy is merely a subtle way for Chopin to hide her protagonist's gynocentric tendency to avoid a negative reaction from male readers who would certainly not share her ideology. By the way, it is this fear of disclosing her gynocentric attitude that leads Mrs. Mallard to whisper her exultation instead of shouting it out.

Since Mrs. Mallard is aware that neither Josephine, her sister, nor Brently's friend, Richards, would likely understand such a gynocentric attitude, she decides to embrace solitude as the best key to free choice. That could be the reason why she isolates herself from Josephine and Richards to settle her inner conflict between the loss of a husband and gynocentric freedom. When Josephine asks her "for heaven's sake [to] open the door", she seems categorical and confident in her response to her: "Go away. I am not making myself ill" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 354), which further suggests her husband's death does not make her ill. The tone through which she responds to her sister's request is really a clear indication that she is annoyed at the fact that people think she is upset by her husband's death. She would like to cry it out to society that she is rather relieved by her husband's death, but, as such an attitude will certainly put her at odds with the whole community, she is compelled to indulge in secret celebration of her husband's death.

Kate Chopin's characterization of Mrs. Mallard can really be said to be controversial in the odd nature of her grief over her husband. Though X. Wan (2009,

p. 167) presents it as "a truly remarkable tale about a subdued wife's vision of intending to live only for herself," Mrs. Mallard's attitude signals excessive egotism or shameless insensitivity, and the readers might well be angered, notwithstanding Chopin's vain attempt to divert them from interpreting the story in this manner. In fact, Chopin presents her as a sympathetic character with strength and insight. The idea that her husband's death will bring her independence does not seem to come from her. On the contrary, she even seems to resist such an idea; however, it is "creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 323), which may suggest that her feeling of freedom following her husband's death is imposed by nature and is therefore natural. Nevertheless, it turns out to be incomprehensible or even reprehensible that Mrs. Mallard considers that losing her husband is not a great loss compared to an opportunity to get rid of marital duties.

Chopin sets out to show that Mrs. Mallard's reaction does not necessarily mean she did not love her husband, as it can be seen that even when she begins to recognize the freedom that Brently's death promises, she knows that she will weep with sadness when she looks upon his "kind, tender hands folded in death" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 354). However, Chopin betrays her own argument by presenting Louise and Brently's common life as peaceful and even lovely. Louise's joy at her newfound freedom suggests it is not only a critique of her marriage to Brently, but also a critique of the entire institution of marriage that she threatens with the brandishing of death. Yet, without this social institution, family life would disintegrate, and social life would become unbearable for everyone.

Probably, in a vain attempt to ease Louise's guilty conscience and to absorb male readers' shock following her exultation over her husband's death, Chopin writes, "she had loved him — sometimes" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 354). Such a statement appears transgressive, probably leading the reader to the following question: "What is that kind of love Chopin deals with?" I can safely answer that it is a fragile and worldly love that cannot stand the test of marital duties. The love that Chopin claims Louise sometimes had for Mr. Mallard can be viewed as a mere variable and ephemeral emotion. Such love can be associated with a positive emotion that provides physical pleasure and creates bonds between woman and man. This conception of love refers to an attachment to an object of desire that lingers as long as it provides satisfaction and joy. This type of love is purely material and contrasts sharply with the intrinsic meaning of true love, which is a responsible and sustainable choice. Among many other definitions, I define true love as a decision, a willing act which, of course, does not exclude emotion, but is not restricted to it either. It is a strong commitment to a person, treating them not as an object of pleasure but rather as a subject. This type of love is a deliberate choice which requires the lover to care for their loved one and to persevere in doing so in any situation whatsoever. That being said, it becomes clear that, from my perspective, Louise has never experienced true love. The only love that Louise

experiences is, to borrow Chopin's own words, an "unsolved mystery" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 354), based on mere emotions. In such circumstances, once the positive emotion shifts, this fragile love disappears, which accounts for the mysterious behavior Louise displays, and marriage resulting from such a love becomes a blind commitment.

In Louise's "moment of illumination," she sees marriage as centered on "that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 354). However, is marriage a mere matter of imposing a private will upon a fellow-creature? My answer is certainly negative, and I can find justification in the very short story. Indeed, while Mrs. Mallard claims the institution of marriage is a framework where a man or a woman imposes their private will on the other, such a claim is lopsided. In marriage, a man and a woman rather willingly try to meet their partner's will and desires, displaying their true love for each other. This means Mrs. Mallard's statement is based on her own subjective conviction, but not on any tangible evidence that any rigorous critic would have expected from her.

In perhaps more radical terms, Mrs. Mallard's stance on marriage could be considered groundless, and her attempts to lead the reader to see her as a victimized woman rather contradict her narcissistic reaction to her husband's death. Such behavior can be classed as what Sherrill terms "acquired situational narcissism," which is a "narcissistic behavior that is brought about or triggered by an experience of celebrity status" (In P. Wright, 2020, p. 28). It would take a brief analysis to understand such an attitude in Mrs. Mallard, as, after a solitary mourning of Mr. Mallard's death, she appears with "a feverish triumph in her eyes, and […] carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 354). The simile is telling: "like a goddess of Victory." This statement implies that Mrs. Mallard has never mourned her husband's death. On the contrary, she appropriates for herself the misfortune that has struck her husband, celebrating it more than even the victim's enemy would have done.

From a Chopinian perspective, Mrs. Mallard's fall into temporary euphoria may suggest that women's need for independence can sometimes go beyond love and marriage. Yet, a close look would reveal Chopin's short story is "directed by the intent to prioritize female well-being over male well-being, based solely or partly on the sex of the intended beneficiary(ies) being female and for which there are no equivalent efforts made to provide corresponding commensurate benefits to males" (P. Ryan, 2018, p. 7). From my perspective, an independent woman enjoying no love outside marriage and denying male importance in her life would be a socially dead person.

The story concludes by attributing Mrs. Mallard's death to heart disease, which is explained as a particular "joy that kills" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 354). In

reality, Louise is very likely to have been killed by the disappointment at her husband's return. In this respect, the male's return stands as an impediment to the female's happiness. In other words, despite being married to each other, the man's absence is tantamount to the woman's joy. Such a situation would prompt the reader to wonder whether the woman wished the man's death long before the train accident occurred. Once more, I can see gynocentrism transpiring from Mrs. Mallard's attitude, since marriage, instead of bringing happiness for the woman, is rather presented as an emotional experience where the woman is oppressed. Yet, in the story, there is no mention of Mr. Mallard ever oppressing her. Therefore, her attitude appears gratuitous, inconsistent, and based on mere gynocentric individualism.

In "The Story of an Hour," even the stylistic techniques Chopin chooses contribute to the reader's deeper understanding of her gynocentric ideology. By way of illustration, the text is written in a poetic style, with the use of anaphora in some paragraphs, as the following excerpt shows:

> *There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair.*
>
> *There were patches of blue sky showing here and there…*
>
> *There was something coming to her, and she was waiting for it, fearfully.*
>
> *There would be no one to live for her during those coming years.*
>
> *There would be no powerful will bending hers. (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 453-454)*

The reader can see the poetic structure here and the use of the stylistic device called anaphora. This "there" anaphora suggests the place of Mrs. Mallard's new sense of autonomy coming from nature, through the open window, "reaching toward her" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 353), and reminding her that, from now on, there is no man to live for in the framework of marriage. This implies that a husband's love does not matter before her long years of freedom and autonomy to come, an implication that is made visible by Chopin's very narrative: "What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!" (K. Chopin 1969, p. 354). The presence of the exclamation mark at the end of what is apparently an interrogative sentence suggests that Mrs. Mallard no longer wonders which of marital love and female autonomy is more important, but rather asserts the primacy of the latter over the former.

Moreover, Chopin uses repetition as a literary device to highlight important gynocentric ideas. For instance, she repeats the word "open" nine times throughout the story to emphasize the freedom of Louise's new life, as the narrative shows: " the open window', 'the open square', 'he opened […] her arms', 'Louise, […] open', 'I beg; open the door', 'open the door, 'She […] opened window', 'She […]

opened the door', 'Someone was opening the door'" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 353-354). The repetition of the word "open" suggests that Mr. Brently Mallard's death opens the door for Mrs. Mallard to enjoy her newly-found freedom, notwithstanding this being at the expense of her husband's life, which is a manifestation of gynocentrism. Chopin also has Louise repeat the word "free" five times: "free, free, free! Free! Body and soul free" (K. Chopin 1969, p. 354). That is one of the few words Louise actually utters in the story and indicates how much she enjoys her recovered freedom in total contempt for her husband's life.

Likewise, the story covers only one hour in Louise Mallard's life, from the moment she learns of her husband's death to the moment he unexpectedly returns alive. The text's short, dense structure may mirror the intense hour Louise spends trying to address her inner conflict between marriage ties and her gynocentric autonomy. The short narrative structure shows that, when it comes to the woman choosing between the institution of marriage and gynocentric joy, the process takes no more than an hour, as the short story's title suggests. Indeed, it becomes clear that one hour is sufficient for the woman to choose gynocentric freedom over marital happiness, even though this implies her husband's death, revealing how dangerous Chopinian gynocentrism can be for men.

4. The danger of Chopinian gynocentrism for men

On closer inspection, the reader unmistakably notices that Chopinian gynocentrism is an existential threat to men. As a general rule, it would be logical for all gender theories to put the focus on equality of chances between women and men and their fair protection without any regard to sex. That is why Jaramillo (2014, p. 1) perceives gender equality as "living on your own free will despite of [sic] your gender. Women and men should not only be given equal access to resources and equal opportunities, but they should also be given the means of benefiting from this equality." Chopinian gynocentrism shakes this rational logic and rather seems to overestimate women's lives to the extent of playing down men's, which is dealt with as less important. Instead of fairly treating men and women, Chopinian gynocentrism particularly denies men any legitimacy of being protected, considering that they are responsible for women's constant feeling of insecurity. The reader can grasp this idea from the trivialized man's accidental death and the woman's subsequent exultation: "Free! Body and soul free!" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 354), which implies that marriage was a prison for her, a prison guarded by Mr. Mallard, her husband.

There is no shadow of doubt that men's interests are denied in gynocentric gender struggles. In claiming women's superiority and clamoring for women's rights, gynocentrism goes so far as to reject any attempt at questioning this biased practice. This reality transpires from Mrs. Mallard's conversation with Josephine, her sister: "What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake, open the door" (K.

Chopin, 1969, p. 354), Josephine asks for entrance. "Go away. I am not making myself ill" (p. 354), Mrs. Mallard retorts. Indeed, while Josephine is mourning her husband's death in the living room, "she was [rather] drinking in a very elixir of life" (p. 354). Mrs. Mallard's attitude clearly relegates men's lives to the margin. In other words, from a gynocentric perspective, all that matters is the woman and her interests, and any different perspective is turned down. Such a strategy is only a policy of female-based sexual exclusion against men that P. Elam and A. Tieman (2018) denounce at large:

> *As gynocentrism manifests itself in the realm of sexual politics, I do call it the tendency in human beings to prioritize the needs and wants of women over the needs and wants of men. […] The reason I like to frame it in terms of needs and wants is because in this gynocentric milieu, the gynocentric landscape in which we live, it's not just protection and provision that women demand of the culture around them; it is everything. Its protection, its provision, its privilege, its power, its 'believe the woman,' its, you know, if I say something I don't want to be questioned; this goes way beyond protection and provision. (n.p.)*

It is interesting to note Elam and Tieman's remark that the woman's demand of the culture around her goes beyond protection and provision to encompass everything. By dint of wanting everything, what would be left to men at the end of the day is very likely to be nothing. Applying the same reading grid to the short story, I suggest that the likes of Mrs. Mallard want everything for themselves and nothing for men. Among the things she wants for herself are full autonomy and independence, and in order to achieve them, her husband's death as a bitter event is trivialized, as the narrative implies: "But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 354). This quote suggests that losing Mr. Mallard causes very little grief before the long years of freedom she welcomes with open arms.

From a gynocentric point of view, men's lives as such come down to taking care of women in a way that all their needs and desires are fulfilled. According to Oriel Feldman Hall and his research collaborators, this pattern can be traced back to the intersection of culture, society, and history. As they claim, "A culturally pervasive social norm is the chivalrous idea that women should be protected from harm. This is exemplified by 'women and children first', a historical maritime code of conduct stating that […] those who are more vulnerable should be saved first" (O.F. Hall *et al*., 2016, p. 542). This assertion suggests that women were considered the most precious thing that can exist in society and, therefore, deserved to be protected by all means.

"Gynocentric chivalry is alluded to by alternative terms such as benevolent sexism, romantic love, gentlemanliness, courtesy, gallantry, heroism, or simply chivalry" (B. Bennett, P. Elam, 2013, p. 1). In Chopin's short story, Richards

epitomizes gynocentric chivalry as, to protect Mrs. Mallard's psychological stability following her husband's death, he "hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 353). Although man's obligation to take care of and protect woman appears noble, what about woman's indebtedness to her protective man that the gynocentric position that Mrs. Mallard exemplifies in Chopin's text tends to ignore? In a society where only man is obliged to woman, as promoted by Mrs. Mallard through her attitude, is there not a risk of witnessing the disappearance of man's subjectivity? Is there not a risk of replicating the gender inequality that gynocentrists pretend to fight against? Will man still have a societal role to play in such a female republic? A. Kostakis's comment arguably answers these questions:

> *We would be plunged immediately into a two-tier system of rights and obligations, where men and women form distinct castes of citizens, the former weighed down by the obligations that enable the latter to luxuriate in their total autonomy. Life for women would be a literal lawlessness, while men's every move would be dictated from above, geared to the purpose of providing for all female needs and wants. It would not be inappropriate to call such a system sexual feudalism, and every time I read a feminist article, this is the impression that I get: that they aim to construct a new aristocracy, comprised only of women, while men stand at the gate, till in the fields, fight in their armies, and grovel at their feet for starvation wages. All feminist innovation and legislation create new rights for women and new duties for men; thus it tends towards the creation of a male underclass. (A. Kostakis, 2011, n.p.)*

Kostakis thus warns against the advent of a female republic dominated by gynocentrism, because such a republic would lead to the death of masculine identity and the perpetuation of female dictatorship in which there will only be rights for women and duties for men.

What could be called a striking danger of gynocentrism, in "The Story of an Hour," is Mrs. Mallard's gratuitous exultation over her husband's supposed death. Yet no background information is available in the narrative leading the reader to think that her response attests to her husband's oppressive behavior. By portraying Mr. Mallard as a man who innocently dies and whose mourning is replaced by joyful, cheerful celebration, Chopin lacks the poetic justice that would have kept her gynocentric plot coherent. Chopin seems to promote poetic injustice that yet turns into poetic justice in favor of Mr. Mallard, as it is his wife who finally dies and he who survives. It is clear that when someone's wife celebrates his supposed death in a train accident, because such a death will leave her so-called freedom and independence, and that finally it is she who dies out of disappointment at his safe return alive, poetic justice has worked on his side.

In the process of Mrs. Mallard welcoming her newly-found joy, Chopin involves Nature as the narrative suggests: "But she felt it, creeping out of the sky,

reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air" (K. Chopin, 1969, p. 453). The involvement of Nature in Mrs. Mallard's joy seems unjust, because Nature is usually fair and would not force joy for someone's death with no tangible reasons. Mrs. Mallard can be considered an anti-hero, as she subverts the traditional hero's values. Even Chopin's attempts to involve Nature in Mrs. Mallard's advantage backfire. Indeed, though Chopin makes Nature force the joy and freedom of exultation into Mrs. Mallard's mind to prove that she is not responsible for it, it is the same Nature that, following her husband's return, forces the unbearable disappointment into her heart that finally kills her.

Conclusion

In light of my analysis of "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin, it can be remarked that autonomy, in which the protagonist attempts to gain or regain an aspect of control in her life, appears to be a heartfelt issue for the author. Drawing on Louis Rosenblatt's transactional reader-response criticism, it is revealed that Mrs. Louise Mallard recognizes that her husband's death and the subsequent breaking of the marriage tie will leave her an independent woman who is subject to no one in her actions. Such a gynocentric attitude implies that she did not feel free in the household and was even thirsty for independence or autonomy. Nevertheless, one can put a damper on this as the study reveals that these moments of freedom can be extremely fragile or temporary, as Mrs. Mallard dies as soon as she discovers that her husband has returned home safe and sound.

Although Chopin can be commended for her attempt to make her female protagonist behave unconventionally, while preventing the reader from automatically condemning her, the study reveals that the reader may be unsympathetic to the protagonist, which appears as Chopin's failure to fight for women's freedom without being demonized by society. Surely, Chopin's short story is relevant to post-modern societies, as one can see recurring gynocentric issues today. However, Chopin's gynocentric ideology, promoting women's autonomy and independence to the detriment of men, should not set an example since such an ideology would collapse just like her gynocentric protagonist, who dies at the end of the story.

My deductive method of analysis, which is made of a top-down process, drawing on Louis Rosenblatt's transactional reader-response theory, has enabled me to debunk the long-hidden gynocentric traits and behaviors, and their danger for men, that had lain strongly behind Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" for over a century. However, I must admit the limits of this method in its incapacity to achieve a comprehensive understanding of gynocentrism because the interpretation, which is based on my own transaction with the text, can suffer from subjectivity and struggle to provide adequate criteria for evaluating my reading in comparison to another. Moreover, the militant status of some of my sources, such as Lester Frank

Ward (1903), Warren Farrell (1996), Peter Ryan (2018), and Adam Kostakis (2011), may also increase the risk of bias.

Nevertheless, the study lays the foundation and opens up new critical perspectives for critics to dig deeper into Chopin's works and unravel the presence of gynocentrism that is usually concealed. For instance, it would be critically rewarding for future critics to approach gynocentrism in Chopin's works, such as *The Awakening* (1899), from Elaine Showalter's gynocritical perspective, which would offer a specific reading grid for a more specialized interpretation.

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