
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY VIBES OF DELICATE AND SENSITIVE WOMEN THROUGH MALLARD IN THE STORY OF AN HOUR

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Abstract

Kate Chopin is well known for her writings. Being a woman, her portrayal of woman in her stories are realistic. Her writings are based on the inner sensitive feelings of women. Kate is bold enough to drop those ideas into light. This short story *The Story of an Hour* is a simple one binding up with complicated feelings. Kate Chopin has a strong belief on her readers. As a reader, the author can understand the bottle up feelings of Mallard. Chopin is considered as a forerunner of many feminist and modern writers, but in her period, she suffers a lot. In the nineteenth century, women are closely watched for their personality and character. She is considered as strong mentally and as weak physically. Chopin expresses her own feelings through Mallard. This paper is an attempt to bring out how Chopin carefully weave the character of Mallard and her flow of thoughts.

Key words: Nineteenth Century Women, freedom of thoughts, irony twist, transition

Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* is meant to bring out the feature of women and their happiness. Kate Chopin is bold enough to bring out the needy of women in that period. In the website www2.ivcc.edu/gen2002/women-in-the-nineteenth-century.htm., women in literature are discussed. In this page Kimberly M. Radek, Instructor talks about women in literature. In the Nineteenth century, industrial revolution causes so many changes. There is always an inequality, which prevails between the genders. The acculturating among women is in process in America. "Welter identifies four main virtues that a true woman must exhibit: They are i) piety ii) purity iii) submissiveness iv) domesticity. This historian Barabara Welter coined the term "The cult of true womanhood"

In the beginning of nineteenth century, men and women are treated equally. Both are indulged in all the process. But when the civilisation progresses, women are left at home to

do the domestic deities. Gradually women are treated as physically weaker sex. But they are considered superior morally to men. When *The Story of an Hour* published there is a time of transition in the mind set of women. This short story emphasises on Kate Chopin's attitude towards the society. As she has faced many personal issues in bringing up their kids, she delights the readers by pointing those problems in her writings. The Story of an Hour is one story where the readers can understand the characters of women. The protagonists of the story Mallard, is very well portrayed by her. She is presented as a nineteenth century women. She is submissive, obedient to her husband. She is an unhappy woman, yet she accepts her fate.

Josephine, the sister of Mallard is not known to the readers much. But the way she treats her sister and the tone she uses to reveal the death of her husband make us feel that she has a pleasant character. Kate Chopin produces two characters one with soft nature and the other with nervous nature. Kate Chopin cleverly creates the weather condition which gives additional taste to the story. This is purely the capability of Kate Chopin to use so many things in this short story. This story has a deep inner meaning which enters into the mind of all the researchers. Kate Chopin is a nineteenth century women, she struggled a lot in establishing herself as a successful woman in her life without her husband. The society which is bounded with old cultured people finds fault with her initially, but later everyone accepts her and also her writings.

On hearing the death news of her husband, Mallard expressions are inevitable. She is heartbroken by the death news of her husband and also she is thrilled to have a happy life. This can be observed by the words "free, free, free!" She is elated and she begins to dream for her new life. The happiness of women is not considered in that century. Her existence is not looked as vital both economically and socially. Kate Chopin's success is marked by introducing women to think of their happiness and their free life. In nineteenth century, women are trained to be moral and obedient to men. Mallard, who is trained to be an obedient woman, tie herself in the midst of her strict relationship with her husband. Looking at the husband in front of her, she falls down and her heart stops functioning. Mallard cannot bear the ironic twist of her dreamy life.

Kate Chopin analyses the emotional touch of women and she shows it through her writings. The Women in nineteenth century has a notion that they are weak physically and they usually think that they have to depend on males to satisfy their needs. During Kate period, true woman is considered as the "Angel in the house". Being trained as a true woman Kate is also a true woman; through her pen she tries to expose the free ideals of women. In the early nineteenth century women are powerless and they are completely dependence on male. After 1850s there is a gradual change in the literature field, especially women in literature. They are gaining importance by their own views towards the society. Kate Chopin never says

herself that she is a feminist. She readily accepts her life. Whatever she wishes to express, she delivers it through her characters. *The Study of an Hour* is the short story where she presents Mallard to come out of her dependent society. On hearing the death news of her husband from her sister, she cries, she mourns initially but she convinces herself and she is ready to face her new life, but on seeing her husband in the front door, she dies.

Kate Chopin cleverly twists the end of the story. She may die with the happiness mood or with the sorrowful mood. Kate Chopin leaves it to the imagination of the readers. Kate Chopin proves her strength in drawing the picture of Mallard. Both Mallard and Josephine are the representation of women. Kate Chopin concentrates much on Mallard and her expressions. Through Mallard Chopin exposes the perseverance of women in her period. The women are all bonded, and they are obeying their husband blindly, they do not have thoughts and ideas of their own. In the article written by Kathryn Hughes *Gender Roles in the 19th Century*, the author brings out the changes of women in the society and also at home. He used the term separate spheres to mention the separation of male and female.

The ideology of Separate Spheres rested on a definition of the 'natural characteristics of women and men. Women were considered physically weaker yet morally superior to men, which meant that they were best, suited to the domestic sphere. Not only was it their job to counterbalance the moral taint of the public sphere in which their husbands labored all day, they were also preparing the next generation to carry on this way of life. The fact that women had such great influence at home was used as an argument against giving them the vote (Hughes).

<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century>, 8th July 2019.

The readers can't analyse Josephine and her character. From her polished and polite tone, everyone can understand, she is very submissive, adjustable to all the characters. There is a progress in the status of women, but the readers cannot see the changes in the status of women. Chopin analyses Mrs. Mallard on her point of view. As a woman, she has no idea of choosing her life. Though she wishes to be away from her dependent life, Chopin finds her as a dying lady on seeing her husband. The death of Mallard conveys different meaning to different readers.

On seeing her husband's alive, she reaches at the top of the tension. This tension can be viewed in both the ways. It may be because of happiness or of sadness. Mallard may die when she thinks that she cannot lead her dreamy life or a happiness shock. This ironic twist is created by Kate Chopin. Mallard is a representation of a realistic women nature. The progress which changes the mind of women but one cannot see the changes obviously. Mallard who is

willing to come out from the bond is again caught into a trap of society, which stands as an obstacle.

Even in this small short story, Kate tries to show the quality of women in nineteenth century. American Literature does not flourish in the beginning, it can be considered as a branch of English, but gradually it grows and it begins to maintain its individuality. Being a nineteenth century writer, Kate Chopin cannot be apart from its society's influence. At that time, society is in transition period, women who are all caged cannot come out easily as they are having both the views of life – classical and modern.

Kate Chopin, a purely American author, is famous for her heroines. During her period, women are nearly considered as slaves for men, but she is bold enough to portray the ideas of women's oppression and their suppressed feelings. Through Mallard, Kate Chopin reveals the expectation of the society for women as wives and mothers. Through her heroines Chopin makes the readers to understand the requirement of women. Mallard acts her wife role much like women of that period. She never likes to ask questions to the society norms. Mallard stands as an observer and as a representation of the society. Though this story is a small description of an event, it is popped up with full of ideas and emotions of Mallard.

As a mother of six children, Kate Chopin struggles a lot in facing the society without husband. Though she lives in the midst of her own problems, she begins to write and she can make fame for her. Mallard expresses a hidden resentment toward men and the way the world looks down upon women; On hearing the death news of her husband, she feels free, She even whispered 'Free body and soul free'. But soon the happiness comes to an end. She is ready for freedom and even she dreamt for her free life. She dies on seeing her husband alive in front of her. It may be looked by everyone that her heart is not able to pump with the shock of happiness, but it is not true.

Kate Chopin wishes to support the women's movement began in the late nineteenth century. Kate Chopin affirms that every woman deserves independent in each and every activity. Chopin's writings touch the heart of all the readers. She wants to make an impact on the women's movement through her writings. But within this short story, Chopin brings out the feelings of all the women in the late nineteenth century.

Kate Chopin was an extraordinary writer of the nineteenth century. Despite failure to receive positive critical response, she became one of the most powerful and controversial writers of her time. She dared to write her thoughts on topics considered radical: the institution of marriage and women's desire for social, economic, and political equality. With a focus on the reality of relationships between men and women, she draws stunning and intelligent characters in a rich and bold writing style that was not accepted because it was so far ahead of

its time. She risked her reputation by creating female heroines as independent women who wish to receive sexual and emotional fulfillment.

The theme of the work is an important element of fiction to determine. Finding and understanding the theme can be useful in interpreting the overall meaning of the story. Kate Chopin's female protagonists are often highly unconventional characters who eventually choose not to follow the moral standards of their society, and she consistently portrays the choices of these women sympathetically rather than in a condemning manner. Chopin claimed that she was neither a feminist nor suffragist, but that she believed that women's freedom was more a matter of spirit, soul, and character living within the constraints placed on women by God. Despite her political views, Chopin's work emphasized women as individuals.

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