Kate Chopin: Famous Feminist Writer

Kate Chopin is a famous American writer, and she is one of the first feminist author of the 20th Century, some ideas about modern feminism was borne on her papers. She is famous for her describing the culture and folk around the New Orleans (Louisiana) area, particularly in the depiction of the spirit of liberty, the pursuit of emotional independence of American women. Her stories usually come with vivid characters, a beautiful and delicate psychological description. Although these stories are short, they don't lack keen observation and imagination. "The Story of an Hour" is considered as one of her best story about feminist and it is also one of my favorite story that I ever read. Therefore, my research paper focuses on her biographical information and then I do some exploration and discussion about this story.

"Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen are the foremothers of the modern women's movement. All of these people advocated for the dignity, intelligence, and basic human potentials of the female sex. However, it was not until the late 19th century that the efforts for women's equal rights coalesced into a clearly identifiable and self-conscious movement, or rather a series of movements" (Martha Rampton). Eventually after many years of fighting for their rights, the 19th amendment of 1920 finally granted women their right to vote (History Staff, 19th Amendment).

A normal situation, such as bereavement, warrants a normal response such as sorrow. In his article "Non-Ironic turning ironic contextually: Multiple context-determined irony in 'The Story of an Hour,'' Dan Shen takes note of this irony. Since Mrs. Mallard has a weak heart, great care is taken to soften the sad news of her husband's death. Their efforts are not needed as indicated by the emotional reaction Mrs. Mallard eventually has. "Indeed, in the present context, breaking the news as gently as possible becomes at once an ironic action in itself and a means to convey irony because it operates to set off the abnormality of Mrs. Mallard's response" (Shen 118).

Kate Chopin was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1850 and died in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1904, she was the third of five children in her family. She learned to tell stories from her grandmother and once earned the reputation as an excellent story-teller. In 1870, she married Oscar Chopin, a wealthy Creole cotton factor, and moved with him to Louisiana. As Emily T(2009) pointed out that: In the mid-1880s, she left Louisiana to live with her mother in St. Louis. Family friends and they encouraged her to write professionally. In 1904, Chopin suffered a brain hemorrhage and died on August 20.

Kate Chopin had different lifestyles in her life, which provided her with insights and understanding about the society. In her lifetime, she wrote two novels and three short story collections, in which she portrayed women and reflected on the issue of women. Her first story is "Emancipation: A Life Fable", which is a short story about freedom and restriction. After that, she wrote many other famous works, such as The Story of an Hour, The Awakening, The Storm, Regret, etc. She became famous for her novel The Awakening, though she was largely forgotten at that time after this book was banned. Her short stories and novels offer excellent ideas on the lives of American women of that time. Among them, the most famous short stories include "The Story of an Hour", "Desiree's Baby", etc. So, this research paper focuses on her short story-"The Story of an Hour". As Evans, Robert C., ed (2001) noted, this story is also praised highly by the feminist critics.

“The Story of an Hour” is a very famous short story written by Kate Chopin and published in the magazine-"Vogue" in 1894. This story is based on the social reality of the American South at the end of 19th century and Kate Chopin’s life experience. After reading “The Story of an Hour”, we can get some detailed information about the protagonist’s self consciousness, thus we know that woman’s values were ignored by American mainstream society and imposed constraints on spiritual freedom at that time.

In the “The Story of an Hour”, the writing style is so unique that it gives every reader a surprise when read at the end of the story. The story focused on Mrs. Mallard’s actions and behaviors after she got the news her husband has been killed in a train accident from her sister. The characters in this story were so lively and I read it many times, every time I got new ideas and thoughts after I read this story.

At first, the most interesting thing in this story is that the reaction about Mrs. Mallard when she got the news that her husband was dead from her sister Josephine. Her reaction was not as usual as other people thought. We can get the idea that others thought that she could not accept the news that her husband was dead.

To most readers' surprise, she did not like the vast majority of women in society as “unable to accept the reality.” Her actions are an unsuitable way for a people to act. We can clearly get this idea based on the content from the story. For example: “She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance.(Kate Chopin, 1894)”.

Moreover, the most funny thing is that at the end of the story Mrs. Mallard died when she saw her husband still alive. When she faced the unexpected her husband’s return, her emotions changed suddenly. Many of us may guess that she was too excited or no more freedom in future? Because at first, when Mrs. Mallard went out her room, and felt free both body and soul(Kate Chopin, 1894)”, and at the end of the story, “Her husband Brently Mallard entered the room, who was still alive and composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella (Kate Chopin, 1894)”. According to these sentences, we can conclude that Mrs. Mallard also felt disappointed and fear that the future is not free. From my perspective, Mrs. Mallard died from sudden emotions change. One reason is that, her husband stands in front of her, this is a big surprise for her, the other reason is that she hoped to get freedom and her mind thought return to before that there was less freedom in her life.

To conclude, there are three important messages that can be taken from Kate Chopin’s The Story of an Hour. Depending upon how it is interpreted by the reader there can be several things taken away from this short story. Chopin moves from the more simple views to much more complex in her writing leaving the complex ideas for those writers sophisticated enough to read deeper and discover the mysteries within the text. As a developing reader three things taken away from the study of this text were; independence, oppressive marriage, and supernatural forces to represent things in life.

Last but not the least, we can see many ironic elements in this story. In the whole story, Mrs. Mallard 's dead from when she saw her husband return. For example “Brently stood amazed at Mrs. Mallard 's piercing cry even though Richards’ quick motion to screen her husband from the view of Mrs. Mallard, and it is too late, doctor said Mrs. Mallard died of heart disease-of joy that kills.(Kate Chopin, 1894)”, When readers read at the end line of this story, every one may feel

pity for her death. Because her husband came back, we all hope she will have a calm life as before. She felt very bad for the loss of her husband, which made her unable to extricate herself. The sudden regained her again bears a lot of stimulus, at last emotion’s change kills her.

In sum, many factors may affect Chopin's ways of writing. After reading her stories, we also can get more deep information about the society which Mrs. Mallard 's times. First of all, according to Kemper, Alison (1998), for most of wives in the 19th century, they were economically dependent on their husbands and they lost their freedom, so they hope to move out of their family to find their identity and autonomy. At last, there also many creative writing skills in stories we can use in our own writing.

Work cited

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