Feminist and Pessimist Existentialism in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour": A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis

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Article Info	Abstract
	This article interprets Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" using systemic functional grammar analyses (genre, transitivity, mood structure, and thematic structure) and thus implements the view that textual or linguistic justification is crucial for a credible literary reading. The SFG analyses result in the textual symptoms signifying that the short story deals with existential and feminist issues pessimistically that calls for a reexamination of Sartre's and Beauvoir's existentialism – especially on the notion of freedom, intentionality, and desire. However, the implementation of SFG itself raises a problem since the interpretation can be achieved without even implementing it in the first place. This research, therefore, highlights the question of the position that linguistic analysis has in literary reading; re-addressing the fundamental philosophical problem on the notion of credibility, objectivity, and methodology. However, the application of SFG is very useful in understanding Kate Chopin's literary style and the proof of the non-existing line between language use and gender.

INTRODUCTION

The fact that Kate Chopin was one of the forerunners of twentieth-century feminism (Nilsen, 1990) leads the majority of literary scholars to postulate that "The Story of an Hour" is purely a feminist text (Larsson, 1981; Papke, 1990). Recent studies serving as the example of the story's feminist reading are those done by Wang (2008) and Karami & Zohdi (2015). On the other hand, several researchers interpret the story to 'counter' this feminist reading by showing the limit of its theoretical practice implemented in, to use Lacanian term, the symbolic order which is society. Berkove (2000), for instance, interprets this story as an illustration of how an exaggerated and egoistic self-assertion can destroy one's soul while Chong-yue & Li-hua (2013) read it as an illustration of an ungrateful and unfaithful wife. This type

of interpretation, I believe, seems like a desperate effort to find a *niché* in the academic discourse, to collect what Bourdieu calls a cultural capital for themselves by showing to other academicians that they can interpret a literary work differently and in so doing revealing their unconscious stance on the issue of gender equality: standing for the patriarchal power hierarchy. Here I ask, how can one develop a noble academic reputation in the twenty-first century by justifying the system of oppression? How can one be unsuspicious about the marital system, for example, that most of the time is used to justify the exploitation of women by 'othering' them into an object of a patriarchal desire or as a mere technology that should carry out certain functions in the society?

In another direction beyond the opposition of feminist and anti-feminist reading of the story, some scholars define the story's theme in a more general sense: Jamil (2009) describes it as an exploration of human psychology, Wan (2009) illustrates it as Chopin's struggle for grappling the nature of life and death, and Hu (2020) explores it concerning the concept of identity. There are also some studies reading the story using other unique perspectives. Foote (2013), for instance, states that the suspected death by a train wreck implies Chopin's phobia on the instant development of technology. Meanwhile, Mayer (2010) explains that the story illustrates the danger of making raw assumptions. The varied interpretations of a single short story expound the post-structural dictum about the non-existence of a true and totalized meaning of a text. Even if two researchers try to read a single work using the same theoretical perspective, as Sabagh & Sughei (2014) argue, their results would differ from one another, not because of the lack of mastery over the theory, but due to the existence of a cognitive pre-disposition that shapes one's interpretation: *Dasein* manifests itself in the act of *Verstehen* (Heidegger, 1996). With this proposition at hand, this article asks how can one interpret "The Story of an Hour" differently in such a way that the interpretation sympathizes with the social issue inherently existing in the story, that is to say, does not take sides with the oppressive regime (i.e. the patriarchal society) and does not end up generalizing and abstracting, as previous studies have done, the specific problem that the story wants to address?

To answer those questions, the findings of previous researchers can serve as the breadcrumbs leading us to the desired path. It is crystal clear that feminism has to do with it and I think Hu (2020) and Jamil (2009) are correct in saying that the

story deals with the identity crisis resulting in psychological problems. Finally, I cannot help but take into account the importance of Louise's death discussed thoroughly by Wan (2009). The issues of death, psychological grappling, and identity crisis are (among others) the subthemes of existentialism. In this context, there is no existential figure who most comprehensively discusses the connection between human existence and gender equality other than Simone de Beauvoir.

For the record, Simone de Beauvoir never acknowledges herself as a philosopher but insists on calling herself a feminist. However, one could never ignore her educational background: she learned philosophy at the University of Paris under phenomenological tradition. One should not also forget the highly philosophical propositions existing in her 1943 novel *She Came to Stay* which anticipate Sartre's primary existential treatise published in the same year, *Being and Nothingness*. (It has been noticed by numerous scholars, such as Solomon (2005) and Bergoffen & Burke (2020) that Beauvoir contributed posthumously to Sartrean existentialism, it was never developed all by himself but through his intimate discussion and conversation with Beauvoir.) The central point through which Beauvoir's ideas are realistically illustrated in the novel is that existential ambiguities –existing in between responsibility and freedom and in between the existing self and the surrounding others regarding the legitimacy of violence, the temptation of bad faith, and the existential reflection– trump the Hegelian slave-master dialectics stated in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* arguing that each conscience seeks the death of the Other.

In *Pyrrhus and Cinéas* (2004), Beauvoir develops her first treatise concerning the ontological questions regarding human existence. Central to this issue for her is the distinction between radical and situated freedom. Each subject, she argues, has absolute freedom that cannot be violated even if it is physically and/or psychologically violated: human beings are still human beings even if they are dehumanized. This absolute freedom, in its very essence, is radical in a way that it allows the subject to choose either to follow or to reject, to challenge or to obey, the values and meanings (e.g. tradition, culture, morality, religion, etc.) brought into the world that situate it. But this absolute freedom is also situated within the intersubjective constraints: the acts through which we manifest this freedom are meant to be directed to and, at the same time, to affect the Other. Here, Beauvoir's treatise enters its ethical dimension, asking how can I act freely in such a

way that I may not harm others, but inspire them of their freedom instead? Beauvoir, however, answers it pessimistically: "I am the face of the others' misery … I am the facticity of their situation (p. 58)"; "[w]e are condemned to [do] violence [towards the Other] (p. 77)."

Beauvoir would elaborate on her existential ethics in relation to Husserl's idea of intentionality and Hegelian dialectics in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (2018) whose depth is too lengthy to be explained in this brief essay. Its starting point, however, is that the intentionality which is the basis of freedom designating the meaning-disclosing, meaning-making activities, and desire is insistent (spontaneous and unstoppable) and ambiguous (precluding any closure). Yet it may fail in operating those activities and in fulfilling its desire. Here, Beauvoir (and Sartre) insists that the result of the struggle in practicing freedom is not the point. Instead, for them, the material and practical dimension of intentionality is the one that signifies the subject's freedom defining its existence.

Simone de Beauvoir's feminist thinking is based on her existentialism. The most famous passage in her magnum opus *The Second Sex* (2011), "one is not born but becomes the woman (p. 13)," has been interpreted as a suggestion that gender distinction is nothing but a social construction presupposing that women's experiences are actually similar to men's. But it is this conception that she wants to debunk: women's experiences are, in their very essence, different from men's. Another conception that sometimes is misunderstood in her feminism is that women derive pleasure from a bad faith –using their freedom to deny their absolute freedom (Sartre, 1984; Beauvoir, 2011)– that they are the subordinate Other. Here Beauvoir addresses the Heideggerian notion of facticity: just as human beings, in general, live their lives situated under certain circumstances, values, and meanings; so do women; hence, the pleasures or advantages that women can get are so far situated by the oppression they are experiencing. At this point, Beauvoir invites us to imagine what kind of happiness (pleasures and advantages) that women can have had they achieved their absolute freedom as independent subjects. Therefore, women liberation is a must, but not in a way that women should act in a similar way to the 'independent' men. *The Second Sex* thus ends with Beauvoir's optimistic stance in feminism.

In line with the general questions this article is trying to answer, a specific problem arises: would Kate Chopin agree with Beauvoir's optimistic stance on

women liberation? In answering this question, different from the usual close reading method (that has been accused by linguists and positivists as highly unscientific) used by literary scholars, this paper tries to interpret the content of "The Story of an Hour" through a more detailed textual analysis to justify the result of interpretation being as objective as possible. Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a suitable linguistic tool for this purpose since it can uncover what functions do the utterances employed in the text have –functions that may serve as the artefacts of its holistic meaning. In so doing, theoretically, SFG views language as a network of interlocking options where each option has its own function. It systematizes those functions into three domains: experiential (dealing with the experience that the author wants to share), interpersonal (the social reality in which the author and/or the participants of the discourse are situated), and textual (the semiotic system in which the experience and the social reality are manifested). Each function within each domain is explored in each linguistic stratum: phonology/graphology, clause, and discourse semantics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Focusing only on the clause level of language, this article aims to see how each process or event in "The Story of an Hour" is realized in such a way that its configurations could provide, as the research gap that this research has suggested, the symptoms of Kate Chopin's existential and feminist belief. In detail, there are four particular objectives this article has: 1) to understand the structure of "The Story of an Hour" within the perspective of SFG realized through its genre and phases; 2) to scrutinize the configuration between each participant and each process employed in the story realized through transitivity; 3) to explore each participant's attitudes toward each process employed in the story based on the mood structure; and 4) to comprehend how the messages delivered in the story are structured based on the thematic structure.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Because it aimed in interpreting a literary work, this study implemented qualitative research within the model of discourse analysis. The primary data are all the clauses of "The Story of an Hour" that had undergone transitivity, mood, and thematic analyses, which is to say also that clause is the unit of this article's analysis. For the record, many linguistic scholars tend to confusedly treat its data as quantitative, thus for them meaning is determined by statistics (usually in the form of

a percentage). However, this research treated a text as a social process because what is meaning-making if not a social process, arbitrarily negotiated by social agents? Therefore, this paper applied Miles & Huberman's (1994) interactive method that –by relating the collected data with their positions within the stages in the genre system as the system that mediates them with cultural and social realities– includes domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural context analyses.

The genre system that is used in the interactive method is the one proposed by Martin & Rose (2008) which classifies the stages of the analyzed text as the domain analysis. Transitivity, mood, and thematic analyses, however, are put under taxonomy analysis. The componential analysis, the combination between the two, functions to give a piece of knowledge about the relations between the registers employed in and the genre staging of the text which results in behavioral patterns. The cultural context analysis is derived from the data of componential analysis with an elaboration to previous researches and related social, cultural, and philosophical theories, especially those of existentialism and feminism. This research intended to gather and process the data as credible as possible in ways that the collected data, although listed in the tables and treated based on their sums, were processed with respect to the social and cultural process within which the text is situated. Hence, the results were not too artificial and deterministic. It is also important to note that this research was faithful in implementing Santosa's (2017) suggestions in applying this analytic model, especially by treating the collected data not in percentage for in doing so one would end up prioritizing only the data having the higher percentage.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Structure and the Interpretation of "The Story of an Hour": Genre Analysis

In scrutinizing the structure of the short story, one must note that the point of departure in interpreting the text is to view it as Louise Mallard's psychological journey. A clue to this proposition is the story's opening clause: "Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble" which implies the heroine's (physical, but results in) psychological fragility. Here, Jamil (2009) takes a good starting point but fails as she gets too preoccupied with the emotional aspect of the story.

The genre analysis shows that the story consists of six stages: Orientation, Complication, Evaluation, Resolution, Complication 2, and Coda. Martin & Rose

(2008) describes the Orientation as the stage that "sets the stage for the story" (p. 68). In "The Story of an Hour", this stage is done through five phases: setting (the description of Louise Mallard's psychological and physical fragility and other characters' grappling in delivering the 'bad' news regarding her husband), event (Josephine's, Louise's sister, decision to deliver the news), the second setting (the existence of Richard, the family's friend), description (the background story of how the news is gathered), and reaction (Louise's first response).

After a brief moment of silence, Louise produced a more expressive reaction by weeping "with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms" (para. 3) which marks the transition from the Orientation to the Complication, the stage where Louise's psychological disruption emerges –the stage that needs to be resolved. It consists of three phases: event (Louise's weeping and going to her room), setting (the description of her room and her solitude), and the second event (the beginning of her lamentation).

Lamentation can be regarded as an experiential and psychological reflection of oneself. The beginning of lamentation in the story initiates the Evaluation stage to begin. This stage serves as the heroine's search for strategies to resolve the conflict –her psychological disruption. It consists of six phases: setting (the environmental condition of her room to support her contemplation), problem (the coming of her sadness of 'losing' her husband), description (Louise's expression and appearance), event (the coming of sudden realization), the second problem (Louise's inability to comprehend the realization), solution (Louise's ability to feel the realization), and reaction (Louise's openness for the realization).

After gaining the solution for her psychological disruption through sudden realization, Louise's story comes to the Resolution stage which is realized through eleven phases: event (Louise's ability to utter and embrace the realization), description (Louise's acceptance and embrace for the realization), reflection (Louise's search for a justification for the realization), problem (the memory of Louise's love for her husband), solution (Louise's ability to justify the realization); the second event (Josephine's coming), comment (the author's description towards Louise's condition), the third event (Louise's hopeful future), the second description (the comparison to Louise's past), the fourth event (Louise's decision to come to her sister), reaction (Louise's state of mind for having to resolve her psychological disruption), and the fifth event (Louise's coming out from the room).

However, Kate Chopin does not leave the story to end plainly. Instead, she adds a plot twist: Louise's husband neither actually died nor experienced any accident. Here, the second Complication starts, consisting of three phases: event (the coming of Brently Mallard), description (the true story about Brently at the time of the reported accident), and the second event (Louise's second psychological disruption). It is an important stage that symbolizes the reality in which the cultural (symbolized by marriage) and the social (the existence of Brently Mallard) constraint prevent women (Louise) to achieve absolute existential freedom. Hence, the story ends with a tragic Coda: Louise dies right after her second psychological disruption due to her physical and psychological fragility and the loss of the recognized freedom whom she took a glimpse of during the Evaluation and accepted in the Resolution stage.

This analysis shows that human intentionality for meaning-making and subjectivity is constrained by the contextual obstacles: Louise's journey to assert her existence undergoes cultural and social constraints symbolized by the marriage system and the existence of the oppressing subject realized by the figure of Brently Mallard. Thus the theme of the story is in line with Simone de Beauvoir's feminist existentialism: "The Story of an Hour" is a story about the tension between existential status and social conditions constraining it. Louise undergoes, and here I agree with Paudel (2019), existential angst and thus performs a problematic inner struggle to justify existential freedom and its limit. "[S]he did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her," (para. 11) while at the same time she is tempted to fall again for the bad faith she had lived with (by loving Brently forcefully and dedicating all her life for him): "And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not." (para. 13).

At the end of the Resolution stage, Louise rediscovers and accepts the absolute freedom that had been jailed by social and cultural constraints. The 'death' of Brently Mallard, in this story, means the destruction of those constraints so that women can live their lives freely in asserting their existence as the independent subjects, not as the oppressed Other. However, the tragic Coda suggests that social and cultural constraints will always exist to prevent women to achieve freedom. Here, we have answered the main question of this research, finding the specific point that previous studies have failed to acknowledge: that Kate Chopin is pessimistic, as may be the result of her life experiences, that women could ever

achieve their absolute existential liberation because the cultural and social constraints are too strong and too embedded in the reality in which singular existential force of individuals is too fragile to challenge.

But then again, if it is true that Beauvoir practiced the mode of life that accentuates her absolute freedom, Kate Chopin's pessimism is seen as the result of fear of failure. The result of asserting freedom, as Beauvoir and Sartre suggested, is not the point of human freedom; *Dasein*'s facticity in general is, in fact, the necessary condition for its freedom; freedom can only be practiced if there exist its obstacles. But what if, in trying to assert our freedom and existence, we are led to a manipulation by the ruling group? After all, freedom is easily coopted by certain interests for power. This is what Chopin tries to grapple in the passage "she did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her (para. 11)": Louise interrogates her recognition of freedom by examining whether or not the death of her husband is the correct way to practice the newly-found freedom. By way of pointing out concrete examples, the entertainment industry argues to have provided women a working place where they can express themselves freely through (among others) nudity. One case example is Amanda Seyfried. As reported by Smith (2013), although having refused to act in nude scenes anymore recently (Ali, 2019), when she is asked about how she felt after acting in a nude scene, Seyfried said that it is a liberating experience. Here, we can further interrogate the case and ask whether or not this concept of liberation is an imposition by those in power to exploit these poor actresses. On the other hand, recent social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube also claim to have provided women in all classes of society a place to express themselves and even to monetize their expressions of liberation: thus many women dance and show the parts of their bodies sensually to attract as many likes and followers as possible. Who, in the end, are the ones gaining more profits from their expressions of freedom if not the patriarchal subjects (by enjoying their male gaze) and the heads of those companies (by gaining as many economic profits as possible because of the high number of viewers/users and advertisements)?

This is how our discussion becomes pessimistic: not because can one not always attain what one wants in expressing one's freedom, but rather because freedom itself can be used as a means of exploitation. Meanwhile, the very concept of desire, which is intertwined with the practice of free will, itself is also

problematic. Lacan (2005), for instance, with his famous phrase, "*che vuoi?*", points out that our desire is formed through the encounter with the Other: we never decide what we desire, we want what the Other, *faute de mieux*, wants us to want.

2. The Symptoms for Psychological and Existential Angst: The Transitivity Analysis

Table 1. Relations between Genre Staging and Transitivity

GSP	Transitivity Processes								Min	∑
	Mat	Men	Ver	Behavioral		Relational		Exi		
				Men	Ver	Att	Ide			
Ori	3	2	2	3	1	4	2	2	1	20
Com	4	1		2		2		1		10
Eva	12	5	1	8	1	5	4	4		40
Res	16	9	2	5	4	17	2	6	2	63
Com2	3	2				1	1	2		9
Cod	2		1			1				4
∑	40	19	6	18	6	30	9	15	3	146

Concerning the configuration between the participants and the processes of the story, or the result of the transitivity analysis, there are three behavioral patterns (as presented in Table 1) that this article finds. First, that most of the clauses are stored in the Resolution. This pattern supports the proposed theme of the story: Louise's existential journey resulting in psychological disruption (Jamil, 2009) and existential angst (Paudel, 2019). This first pattern explains how the readers will find the story extremely tragic: while they are relieved that Louise is finally able to overcome her psychological disruption through a long process of reflection and contemplation, Brently Mallard who is the imagery of patriarchal bond is still standing between Louise and her existential freedom in which Louise's psychological fragility cannot stand to challenge, forcing her to descend into death where true freedom can be finally acquired.

The second behavioral pattern shows how each stage is arranged in the discourse: the Orientation is developed by describing (attributive relational, mental behavioral, and material processes that provide a backgrounding story related to the coming event and each participating character), the Complication emphasizes the existence of happening (material process underlines the event,

while mental behavioral and attributive relational processes illustrate the reaction), the Evaluation combines the external (material process) and the internal actions (mental and attributive relational processes), as well as the combination between the two (mental behavioral process), the Resolution refers to digesting the contemplative realization (attributive relational and mental processes) and implementing it into actions (material process), the second Complication is triggered by the real event (material process), the existence of Brently (existential process), and emotional response from Louise (mental process), and the Coda shows the consequence of the overall event (material process).

The previous pattern gives rise to the third one: that the play of the material, attributive relational, mental, and mental behavioral processes which are the majority of processes in the story can be seen as Chopin's literary style in exploring human psychology and existence. Additionally, the relatively high number of the existential process may signal the existential theme in the form of the tension between the heroine and her environmental reality. Here are some examples of transitivity analysis of the story:

(Clause 8a)

[[When the storm of grief had spent itself]]	She	went away	to her room	alone.
Circumstance	Actor	Material Process	Goal	Circumstance

(Clause 18a)

She	Was	young, with a fair, calm face, [[whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength.]]
Carrier	Attributive Relational Process	Attribute

(Clause 57a)

There	Was	a feverish triumph	in her eyes,
	Existential Process	Existent	Circumstance

3. The Negotiation between Language and Gender: The Mood Structure Analysis

The result of the mood structure analysis may not be as significant as the previous ones as a way to read the story, for it deals with social reality where each participant in the discourse is situated within social and cultural codes and values which eventually discover Chopin's stance on those rules through her language use in developing an authorial persona and communicating to her readers. In this

sense, mood structure analysis touches on a profound conception of language use in relation to gender.

Table 2. Relations between Genre Staging and Mood Structure

GSP	Mood Structure			Min	∑
	Dec	**Int**	**Imp**		
Ori	19			1	20
Com	10				10
Eva	39	1			40
Res	53	3	5	2	63
Com2	9				9
Cod	4				4
∑	134	4	5	3	146

This article finds that the nature of a narrative text that is aimed at telling the journey of a protagonist to overcome her/his conflict is signaled by higher use of declarative rather than interrogative (which will function in this genre as seeking confirmation) or imperative clauses (which will provoke the readers to agree with the author), with the exception in dialogues. However, it is not quite unusual for the authors to employ other types of clauses although their number will not usually be as significant as the declarative ones. Examples of this case are Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* and Poe's "The Black Cat." They show how other types of clauses can be used to develop a more communicative and aligning narrative between the authors and the readers.

Related to studies on the relation between language and gender, Tannen (1996) and Eggins & Slade (1997) argue that it is women who will likely develop a more persuasive, communicative, and aligning narrative through producing various types of clauses; but Poe and Dostoevsky are male authors. Hence, following Cameron (2005) and Khadafi & Santosa (2020), this paper agrees that clear and specific distinctions between male and female authors will lead to nothing since those distinctions do not exist in the first place. Instead, one must view the differences in language use in terms of their function which in the end is closely

related to power relations. Thus, the high number of declarative clauses dominating the discourse can be viewed as Chopin's strong feminist stance in trying to break the myth of the general mapping of language use across gender. In the end, if there are some differences in language use or literary style, one must regard them in relation to the individual and the contextual dimension, not to the authors' gender.

Another behavioral pattern that this article finds in mood structure analysis is the significance of the Resolution stage for the story. In this stage, all kinds of clauses are employed. This type of language use, in a way, makes the story more tragic because the readers unconsciously thought that the story will come to an end. In this sense, the diverse use of clause types will affect the play of suspense: Chopin employs all variants of a clause not to become persuasive but to play with her readers' expectations. Examples of mood structure analysis are listed below:

(Clause 53)

Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days	that	Would	Be	her own.
S	Conj	F	P	C
Mo-	Re-	-od	-sidue	

Indicative: declarative: proposition

(Clause 46)

"Louise,	open	the door!
Voc	P	C
Residue		

Imperative: proposal

(Clause 47)

What	Are	You	doing,	Louise?
Wh/C	F	S	P	Voc
Re-	Mood		-sidue	

Indicative: interrogative: proposition

4. What Chopin Concerns the Most: The Thematic Structure Analysis

The thematic structure deals with how a message is structured in a clause. For instance, the usual message organization in English puts the Subject, either explicitly or implicitly (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), as the point of departure (Lock, 1998). This point of departure, or the *theme*, may not be the main point of the message that the clause has, but it shows what part of the message that the author concerns the most. By correlating this organization with genre analysis, we will understand Chopin's message priority in the whole discourse.

Table 3. Relations between Genre Staging and Thematic Structure

GSP	Thematic Structure							Min	∑
	Top		Int	Tex	Com				
	Unm	Mar			α	β	γ		
Ori	9	2		4	4			1	20
Com	5	2		2	1				10
Eva	19	2		11	7		1		40
Res	33	6	1	6	13	1	1	2	63
Com2	6	1		2					9
Cod	1	1		1	1				4
∑	73	14	1	26	26	1	2	3	146

Kate Chopin tends to use the unmarked topical theme the most which are followed by the textual theme. Chopin also employs three kinds of a combined theme; the first type (α) consists of a textual + an unmarked topical theme, the second one (β) consists of an interpersonal + a marked topical theme, and the last one (γ) is a textual + a marked theme. Among these combinations, the first one is the most dominant whose total being equal to the singular textual theme. In Orientation, Complication, and Coda, the unmarked theme is followed by a similar amount of the textual and the α themes. In the Evaluation stage, the unmarked theme is followed by the textual theme with a significant difference of sum from the α theme. In the Resolution stage, however, the α theme becomes the runner-up. Meanwhile, in the second Complication, the textual theme (the runner-up) is followed by the marked theme.

These patterns conceal several points. The first one is that the part of the message Chopin concerns the most is the Subject; meaning that the whole discourse revolves around it. Of course, one could criticize this interpretation as highly one-sided and unfair, knowing that almost every English text is dominated by unmarked themes. However, if one connects the dots of each result this paper has presented so far, one will see that this fact becomes a supporting proposition that Chopin, in this story, meditates the nature of human as Being, as *Dasein*, who exists with its absolute freedom as its essence.

The second point that the pattern suggests is related to Chopin's literary

style. Although there exist some invisible jumps that do not explicitly state the correlation between one process and another which usually occur in-between the stages of the story, Chopin's works are relatively easy to read because she provides the linguistic resources (typically conjunction and connective) to build coherency and cohesiveness. This pattern, once again, challenges the traditional mapping on male and female language, especially the one formulated by deficit tradition pioneered by Otto Jespersen stating that women's language is blurred.

It is important to note that the principle of the methodology this paper applies is not to stop at the dominant data to establish the interpretation: one must also consider the role that the marginalized, less in number, data have. In this case, the marginalized data is the thematic structure of the second Complication. To repeat, SFG views any differences in language exploitation as carrying out certain functions. The thematic structure of the second Complication, thus, must also have a function to carry out. Relating it with the result of the mood structure analysis, this less numbered data functions to shock the readers. One can state that the difference or the jump that it creates may result in a sense of alienation in the reading process which will invoke the feminist existential theme. Moreover, one can also scrutinize this fact by relating it to the previous point that Chopin's work is easy to understand: The dominant use of the marked theme describes the delivered message, thus improving the readability of the text. Here are some examples of thematic structure analysis of "The Story of an Hour":

(Clause 17)

She	sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except [[when a sob came up into her throat]]
Unmarked Topical Theme	Rheme

(Clause 35)

But	She	saw beyond that bitter momento a long procession of years to come
Theme		Rheme
Textual	Unmarked Topical	

(Clause 56b)

And	Opened the door to her sister's importunities
Textual Theme	Rheme

CONCLUSION

"The Story of an Hour" is Kate Chopin's meditation on the attainability of women's absolute freedom as the essence of human existence through a traumatic experience of existential angst and a divorce with a bad faith that they should be the humble servants of their husbands. The result of this meditation is, for Chopin, an impossibility: Chopin is pessimistic that women will ever achieve their full liberation. This result differs from the ones found by Wang (2008), Karami & Zohdi (2015), and Paudel (2019) who, in reading the story, conclude that even if women liberation seems impossible, Chopin implicitly insists that there will always hope existing. This article, it should be noted, does not aim to say that women will always be subordinate to men. Chopin's pessimism, this article implies, invites us to reevaluate the notion of freedom and equality, that have been the emblems of feminism, whether or not they are coopted by certain interests of power.

Meanwhile, if there is, in fact, absolute freedom, it is not located on the will to attain something, but –following Merleau-Ponty (2013)– in mediation between to do and not to do; "to be, or not to be (*Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1)". Freedom, then, lies in the very process of reflection before action, and this freedom has been practiced by Louise Mallard by "ask[ing] if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her (para. 11)". That being said, we can start practicing our freedom by asking ourselves two questions addressed by Krzysztof Kieślowski to all the characters in his avant-garde documentary *Talking Heads*: "who are you?" and "what do you most wish for?". But here, we must add another question: "why do you wish it?"

Even though this research has achieved its goals, a concluding review on the theoretical tool needs to be done by asking whether or not this research can achieve its goals without applying the linguistic analyses. The answer to this question will show how important the applied linguistic analyses are for literary interpretation. The answer, however, is: yes, this research can conclude that Kate Chopin is a pessimist-feminist existentialist only by applying a close reading. This research shows that even after the linguistic analyses are done and the data are collected, there will still be a jump to make to draw the data interpretation –an interpretation that will differ from person to person based on the cognitive predisposition. The application of SFG in this research formally functions only as a textual or linguistic justification. But why should there be a formal justification if it

does not add up to the result? What does this formal justification function in the academic discourse so that it has a very crucial position to hold? Barry (2009), furthermore, suggests that relying only on textual or linguistic analysis is problematic. How can the dominant use of the unmarked theme, for instance, can lead one to conclude that the text is an existential text? To what extent does the use of material, attributive relational, mental, and mental behavioral processes serve as the symptom of an existential theme? Therefore, further studies need to reexamine the position of linguistic analysis in literary interpretation. What this issue will likely to interact with is the problems of credibility, objectivity, and methodology that have been raised by post-structuralists like Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan.

But still, the application of SFG still positively results in several supporting findings that the close reading will not cover. The first is Kate Chopin's literary style and the second one being the further proof that there is no universal mapping between language and gender. These supporting findings stimulate further questions concerning the problem of interpretation from a linguistic perspective: Is linguistic analysis, therefore, only capable of answering questions related to stylistics and the structure of language use, not the meaning of a text?

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