

**“She sat at the window”:
Women’s portrait in Joyce’s (1914) and Chopin’s (1894) short stories**

**“Ela se sentou à janela”:
O retrato da mulher nos contos de Joyce (1914) e Chopin (1894)**

Lenise Mendes¹
Davi S. Gonçalves²

ABSTRACT: In this research we analyse the construction of the female identity in the short story “Eveline”, written by James Joyce in 1914, and “The Story of an Hour”, written by Kate Chopin in 1894. Also, we identify if and, if so, how the male characters present in both narratives influence the attitudes of their protagonists, Eveline and Louise, as well as what they might mean for the construction of both tales. Our main theoretical framework is that of gender studies, inasmuch as women’s role in literature has usually been defined by men who are marked by a tendency of reproducing patriarchal and male chauvinist patterns and objectifying female identity. Feminist literary criticism, thus, gives room for women to be seen in literature, as well as it gives a place of speech for women to fight against these consolidated patterns of phalocentrism. Our findings demonstrate how Joyce’s “Eveline” (1914) and Chopin’s “The story of an hour” (1894), although written over one hundred years ago, have still much to say concerning the patterns of women representation in a patriarchal society. Our hope, with this article, is to raise awareness for the relevance of gender studies as an analytical lens at a moment when the urgency of changing women’s role in society seems to have become unquestionable.

KEYWORDS: Joyce; Chopin; Stasis; Feminism.

RESUMO: Nessa pesquisa analisamos a construção da identidade feminina no conto “Eveline”, escrito por James Joyce em 1914, e “*The story of an hour*”, escrita por Kate Chopin em 1894. Além disso, identificamos se, e, se for o caso, de que modo os personagens homens presentes em ambas as narrativas influenciam as atitudes de suas protagonistas, Eveline e Louise, bem como em que medida eles tem relação com a construção de ambas as histórias. Nosso arcabouço teórico principal é o dos estudos de gênero, já que o papel da mulher na literatura tem sido comumente definido por homens marcados por uma tendência de reproduzir padrões patriarcais e machistas, objetificando a identidade feminina. A crítica literária feminista, então, abre espaço para que as mulheres sejam vistas na literatura, assim como também lhes fornece com um espaço para falar e lutar contra esses padrões consolidados do falocentrismo. Nossos resultados demonstram como “Eveline” (JOYCE, 1914) e “*The story of an hour*” (CHOPIN, 1894), ainda que tenham sido escritos há mais de um século, ainda tem muito a dizer no que concerne aos padrões de representação feminina na sociedade patriarcal. Nossa esperança, com esse artigo, é chamar atenção para a relevância dos estudos de gênero como lente analítica em um momento no qual a urgência de transformar o papel feminino na sociedade parece ter se tornado inquestionável.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Joyce; Chopin; Estase; Feminismo.

¹ Graduanda em Letras Inglês na UNICENTRO/I. E-mail: lenisemendes19@gmail.com

² Doutor em Letras pela UFSC. Coordenador do Projeto de Pesquisa: Estudos da Tradução e da Adaptação na UNICENTRO/I. E-mail: lenisemendes19@gmail.com

Introduction

Historically, it would be fair to say that the feminist movement is present in many social strata and manifestations, literature being one of them. Albeit long-established, the concern about women's representation and role in literature is still a current issue, because, even though many years have passed since the beginning of this preoccupation, a lot of male chauvinist patterns are up until now topics we still have to deal with. As a result, the creation of a literary criticism regarding feminism proved to be necessary. According to Bressler (2011, p. 144), "feminist literary criticism advocates equal rights for all women (indeed, all peoples) in all areas of life: socially, politically, professionally, personally, economically, aesthetically, and psychologically". Therefore, there is even a political struggle embedded within this theory, which fights against the patterns imposed by the system, but also tries to change the system itself.

Within feminist literary criticism, phallogocentric patterns are discussed and deconstructed throughout debates about women's role in literary materials, whether as writers or as characters. Bressler (2011, p. 147) postulates that "feminist literary criticism challenges such patriarchal statements with their accompanying male-dominated, philosophical assumptions and such gender-biased criticism". Women's role in literature has usually been, after all, defined by men who are reproducing patriarchal and male chauvinist patterns and objectifying them. Feminist literary criticism, thus, gives room for women to be seen in literature, as well as a place of speech for women to fight against these consolidated patterns of phallogocentrism.

As Rossini (2016, p. 5, our translation) affirms,

Feminist literary criticism starts to act in the sense of enabling the representation of social perspectives that the literary canon has not been able to show, revealing the traditional and sexist history of representation of women in the literary field of male authorship and thus allowing the inclusion of previously marginalized voices, both in the production of texts and in literary representation, which contributed for these voices being immersed in the literary field – so that they were legitimized.³

³A crítica literária feminista passa a agir no sentido de possibilitar a representação de perspectivas sociais que o cânone literário masculino não fora capaz de evidenciar, descortinando a história tradicional e sexista da representação das mulheres no terreno literário de autoria masculina e assim permitindo a inclusão de vozes antes marginalizadas, tanto na produção dos textos, quanto na representação literária, o que

It is important to see, therefore, if the way that women writers portrait female characters are similar to the way that men have been doing the very same thing. To include marginalized voices in literature it is indeed necessary to change the way that we tend to see the people who belong to the group of minorities. This is to say that, more specifically, through feminist literary criticism, we may be ultimately able to really see women characters and understand them through new lenses, but, moreover, this also gives us an opportunity to raise our awareness in what concerns women writers and their value for our transformation and/or obliteration of sexist paradigms. Doing that, we may finally legitimize these excluded people and understand what their roles in society really are.

There are many methodologies of analysis in feminist literary criticism. In some of these approaches, the female stereotypes are analyzed and discussed in order to be deconstructed. Still, in other approaches, there are researchers looking for forgotten women authors who could be (but are not) part of the literary canon. Also, methodologies of philosophy and psychoanalysis might be used to show how patriarchal discourses can and have empowered men and male narratives against women (BRESSLER, 2011). Among these methodologies, in this research we intend to analyse the female stereotypes present in the main characters of the short story “Eveline”, written by James Joyce in 1914, and “The Story of an Hour”, written by Kate Chopin in 1894. Also, we aim to see how the male characters influence the attitudes of the female characters and what they mean to the women who are present in the stories. After all, as Jacome and Pagoto (2009, p. 10, our translation) affirm, most women characters in literature are “entirely dependent of man to act and think, being incapable of reasoning politically and to guide their own lives”.

Discussion

“Eveline” is a short story written by James Joyce and published in his short-stories compilation book *Dubliners* in 1914. It tells the story of Eveline: a woman who basically looks through a window and thinks about the decision she made of running away with her

contribuiu para que essas vozes fossem imersas no campo literário - portanto, que fossem legitimadas. (ROSSINI, 2016, p. 5).

boyfriend, Frank. Most part of the tale happens while she is thinking about her life and looking through the window, but, almost in the end, there is a sudden time/space change in the scenario and readers find out she is already in the station waiting to leave. Nevertheless, she decides to stay. In the words of Reinares (2018, p. 38) this story consists in the “internal struggle of feminism through Eveline’s eyes as she captures the function of patriarchy and how it operates”. Furthermore, in the brief moment captured by the narrative, the whole inner cycle of pre-given gender based maturation concerning women (who go “from daughter to wife”) is depicted. Eveline “is conflicted by her vow to fulfil her mother’s wishes, her desire for change and attachment of environment, succumbing to the dangerous lifestyle out of her norms, and leaving her father” (REINARES, 2018, p. 39).

It is important to bear in mind that, the spatial and temporal context of this short story is one when it would be very difficult for any woman to make any sort of independent choice without masculine consent – hence, possibly, Eveline’s inertia to deal with something that she had never been used to deal with. Reinares’ (2018, p. 41) highlights that her choices were limited: “She could stay with her father and live the safe, normal life that her deceased mother had hoped for or she could go with Frank and live the dangerous sea life that deep down she had loomed for.” This condition is symptomatic of a patriarchal society: the sort of society to which women are viewed more as passive properties rather than autonomous subjects.

During the whole tale, Eveline mentions isolated parts of her life. She ponders if going away is really worth it and thinks repeatedly about her decision. This is basically the main intricacy of this short story, and a combination of the themes wrapping up the protagonist’s character and development. “Female isolation, alienation, and epiphany are themes that are apparent in this story and relate back to feminism: manifestations of how patriarchy holds up traditional male qualities as central and every other opinion or ideal is inferior” (REINARES, 2018, p. 43). Concretely, Eveline remembers important things that happened in her past and still seem to be relevant currently in the story. In a nutshell, “Eveline is conflicted with many different paths and struggles to bare. She was raised in an environment of oppression so she has dealt with her share of violence, between the death of her mother and seeing the guilt of her father” (REINARES, 2018, p. 51). While she is

reflecting upon her life, it is interesting for the reader to notice what the male figures represent to Eveline when she mentions her relationship with her father. The narrator says,

Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence. She knew it was that that had given her the palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl but latterly he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake. And no she had nobody to protect her. (JOYCE, 1914, p. 26)

In this excerpt it is possible to notice that the figure of Eveline's father still causes fear to her because of his violence and his threats. Also, she compares his treatment towards her in relation to the one her father had regarding her brothers; here, she emphasizes that such treatments were different probably because she was a girl. By the end, she talks about her mother's death and about the resulting absence of a female figure in her life. This condition makes her feel alone and unprotected. As Jacome and Pagoto (2009, p. 13, our translation) affirm, "the representations of women in culture are surrounded by the image of the male figure; that is, women could not exist socially without men's presence"⁴. Even in a family level it is noticeable in this story how the men who are present in Eveline's life (her father, brothers, and boyfriend) seem to have a considerable influence in her decisions. Her existence is based on what men did to her when she was young; and, regardless of how much she had suffered with these men, inevitably she stills cares emotionally about them. As a matter of fact, at some point, the narrator shows the affection that Eveline feels for her father:

Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh. (JOYCE, 2014, p. 27-28)

It seems that Eveline tries to attach herself to these good memories to justify the bad ones that pervade most of her life. Also, she may be using these positive aspects of

⁴ "As representações das mulheres na cultura são cerceadas pela imagem do sujeito masculino, isto é, a mulher não poderia existir socialmente sem o homem" (JACOME; PAGOTO, 2009, p. 13).

her father's relationship to her as a strategy for her to try to understand why she is not totally convinced that fleeing with her boyfriend is indeed the best alternative. So the reader has all these elements mixed together and providing us with a narrative: the death of the protagonist's mother, which has a consistent impact on her weakness as a woman, and which end up making it hard for her to move against what male figures determine. This feeling of powerlessness and dependency is very common to subjugated and marginalised people (given their gender, sexuality, race, origin, etc.) for they surface from a long standing tradition.

In the story the mom's death influenced her perception of female weakness. Society has told her she is powerless and that makes her feel like there is nothing she can do that has an effect. "This lack of power and confidence makes Eveline rely on a man to save her from her situation. It all boils down to justify her reaction to society, her mom, and herself. Patriarchy in this context is a tool to display her guilt and essence as a woman" (REINARES, 2018, p. 45).

Eveline keeps looking for reasons to be free in relation to others' agency in her life: a life that, ultimately, belongs only to herself. Still, she convinces herself that it is going to be a nice time when she flees. According to the narrator, Eveline thinks that "in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married – she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then" (JOYCE, 1914, p. 26). Moving to a distant and unknown country, as well as getting married, are for the protagonist necessary measures for her situation to improve, and for her to become more autonomous in relation to her family and her past. This idea the character shares with us are coherent with what Jacome and Pagoto (2009) affirm in their article when they say that "[...] it is interesting for the patriarchal system that women remain in their homes, taking care of housework, educating their children, without interfering in the social order" (JACOME; PAGOTO, 2009, p. 11, our translation⁵). As informed by her own thoughts, Eveline would only be treated with respect if she followed these conditions imposed by society, because, as a woman, she was supposed to be a good wife and also a good mother, and every freedom available to her would be directly restrained by the chains related to both this roles.

⁵ "[...] é interessante para o sistema patriarcal que as mulheres permaneçam em suas casas, cuidando de tarefas domésticas, educando seus filhos, sem interferir na ordem social" (JACOME; PAGOTO, 2009, p. 11).

However, Eveline is stuck. Like in many other tales concocted by James Joyce we have here a protagonist who is unable to move on, completely marked by hesitation and stasis. Eveline thinks a lot, but she does not talk and/or react. She stands nearby the window and, as the narrator tells us, “her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne” (JOYCE, 1914, p. 28). The presence of the window here is very symbolic: it provides Eveline with an opportunity to look out, to envisage new possibilities, even though these are only “available” through a small hole and considerably inaccessible to her in physical and objective terms. Windows grant us with a chance to look at things that, because we can see them, we believe we understand them: we think we know what is really there. This nonetheless is but an impression: looking through a window makes us feel more comfortable about our freedom, perspectives, and ability to move – regardless of how immobile we all are, in many levels.

The window may also be considered within this metaphorical stance in what regards the development of “The Story of an Hour” written by Kate Chopin in 1894. In this narrative, the protagonist, Louise, also sits nearby the window while wondering about her life: “There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul” (CHOPIN, 1984). The difference between both scenes is that, in the former, Eveline is wondering if she is going to flee with her boyfriend or not so as for her to achieve a certain kind of freedom; she looks through the window as if there were a solution “outside” and seems to wish for a way to get some liberty out of her own life. In the latter case, on the other hand, Louise had just heard that her husband died. So, in the moment that she, stuck and exhausted, is looking through the window, the protagonist is thinking about the death of her partner, as well as about how her life is going to be after all that. Despite the differences between these two situations, both cause the same impression of lack of movement in the female protagonists – which, in many senses, is a consequence of their dependence on the male figures present in their lives.

Like Eveline, Louise Mallard is also a rather complex character. By the beginning of the short story we are introduced to her weaknesses and fragility due to the fact that she suffers from medical conditions – which actually makes her herself a threat to her own life. People, therefore, are afraid of telling her a rather distressing news: the death of her

husband. Besides such news and Louise's medical conditions, nonetheless, readers also begin to wonder if her marital status is healthy at all – as she does not seem to “enjoy” it that much. Within the narrative, eventually and inevitably, “all of the action in the story revolves around Louise Mallard's preservation. Everything is orchestrated to save her from any sudden and/or extreme distress; in the end, the equilibrium of her situation is what survives” (TAHAMEED, 2005, 71). The resolution for the story occurs when Brently Mallard, her husband, surprisingly returns safely to her – an event which “proves Louise Mallard, or rather her circumstances, fatal to herself” (TAHAMEED, 2015, p. 72). We, readers, only get to know that specific excerpt of Louise's life; in “The Story of an Hour” (1894), we do not get to know many things about the main characters' past.

Regarding her relationship with her husband, however, Louise remembers that “yet she loved him — sometimes, often she had not” (CHOPIN, 1894). Thus, we thereby discover that there is more to their relationship than the other events of the story let us know; she was not very happy with her marriage before and, even though she felt sorrow for her husband's death, she had also started to realize that, maybe, positive things might come from this new situation. Louise “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” (CHOPIN, 1894). Her husband's death made her realize she was actually not free before then; and the idea of being free made her “celebrate”, although she does so in a cautious manner, because she still felt a little guilty about it, of course.

In the moment that Louise says out loud that she is free, “‘free! Body and soul free!’, she kept whispering” (CHOPIN, 1894), we are able to understand that “the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation” (LORDE, 1978, p. 42) to her. Symptomatic of such self-revelation is the fact that, prior to this moment, readers are presented to this character by the narrator's naming her Mrs. Mallard. After the aforementioned excerpt, she is finally called by her name, and not by the surname of her husband. This is indeed extremely symbolic, for it is precisely because he is apparently dead that she can become Louise: an autonomous, free, and independent woman. Beforehand, she would only be seen as the wife of some man, an appendix to another person, nothing but a minor member of a male body. Louise, therefore, becomes gradually more and more delighted by her freedom. She keeps thinking that she wants to live many more years so she can enjoy her – and only hers – own company. It is

interesting to notice what happens when the narrator compares her thoughts about living in two different moments: “She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long” (CHOPIN, 1894). The idea of living only to herself made her enjoy life; before that, life seemed to be a sacrifice to her.

Hence readers’ perception that Mr. Mallard’s death represent a paradigm change for Louise: an opportunity for her to rewrite her own prospects and future possibilities. Where there was darkness she now sees a colourful landscape; where there were obligations, rules, and guidelines she can now perceive a distinct essence: one of choices and of novelties. A path that Louise had no idea it even existed is opened in front of her: and it seems that she has finally a reason to move on. After a moment of reverie, when she reflects upon her life in a state of confusion and desolation, Louise is now brightened up, spirited, and galvanized into expecting something out of her life. Initially, she enjoys this new “condition” privately, due to the guilt she feels for not being completely devastated by her husband’s death. Louise is aware that, now a widow, her sadness is a matter of obligation: a moral code she needs to follow (much more than any widower does). When her joy is publicly revealed through her truthful, honest eyes, one can interpret that the return of her husband also works as a sort of punishment for Louise’s behaviour, after all she was clearly not supposed to be that “well” about his death. The protagonist, realising the presence of her dead husband, dies maybe because her happiness is fundamentally disgraced – and it is only disgraced because she is given a chance to envisage such happiness, which passes unnoticed for many (not to say) women like her.

By the end of “Eveline” (JOYCE, 1914), the protagonist is already in the station waiting to leave with her boyfriend. She looks at everything around her and she knows that Frank is speaking to her, but she cannot pay attention to what he is saying. She is only conscious about herself and her feelings; and, in this moment, she is also not feeling very well. Frank keeps trying to call her to go with him, but she is not able to do it. In this moment, it looks like she is drowning in herself, because she has the feeling that “all the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her” (JOYCE, 1914, p. 29). She feels suffocated by her own feelings and grabs an iron as if it could help her not to be swallowed up by her thoughts and sensations. When her boyfriend leaves, still calling for her, Eveline just looks passively at him: “She set her white

face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition” (JOYCE, 1914, p. 29). After so many struggle fighting with her own mind, she seems unarmed or even exhausted: something inside her had changed. Eveline’s thoughts led her to this moment when she gives up on a thing that she gave signs she did not want since the begging of the story. After that, however, she does not seem to feel triumph or relief. As a matter of fact, it looks like she feels nothing at all when she notices that she has finally made up her mind – or at least given up on trying to make it.

In silence and paralyzed after deciding not to go with Frank, we can make a correlation between Eveline’s behaviour to what Lorde (1978, p. 44) says in her article: “[...] while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us”. Even though it seems empowering that she refuses to go away with her boyfriend because she does not want to, we, readers, do not feel any sense of freedom in her act. This may be justified by the fact that, perhaps, Eveline is still feeling suffocated – not only by male figures, but also by herself. Her way to come up to a decision about her fate is unique, for she does not undertake it by speaking out loudly or acting for this or that to happen. Eveline just stands still. Her supposed freedom had maybe choked her and made her paralyzed and unable to speak about what she really (consciously or unconsciously) wanted to do.

The happy ending is not a feature of “The Story of an Hour” (CHOPIN, 1894) either. In the end of the story, Louise decides to get out of her room and comes across her husband alive. He had not died; all of it had been a misunderstanding. At the precise moment when she sees him, Louise dies. And “when the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease - of the joy that kills” (CHOPIN, 1894). Her feeling of freedom lasted too little; and, according to our reading, when she realized she would not be free at all, Louise finally died. Her wishes that she had a long, happy and free life disappeared instantly and killed her by something else – something that the doctors would explain according to their own and biased interpretation. We begin the reading of Louise’s story by getting to know her medical condition, according to physicians (male, of course) and her husband, and finish it by realising that, as her husband comes home, she dies for she feels to excited about this surprising news (in the words of the doctors and the mind of Mr. Mallard). That is, the circumstances of her illness, her status as a woman, and even her death are all dictated by men. This specific wrapping up for the short story is very

metaphorical for the construction of women's identity as pre-determined, determined, and post-determined by male figures (even when such figures are physically absent).

Louise's name, her medical condition, and even the reason for her death are all related to a narrative construct belonging to a male-dominated society. Louise can only be seen as what she represents to men, regardless of her own characteristics and experiences. Louise's relationship with her husband and with her own life choices, as it is also true for Eveline in the other story, articulates a strong argument about the status of women in the early twentieth century: in both narratives we see female identity as totally subject to a patriarchal master narrative, to a whole world functioning which is centred on the phallus (i.e. phallogocentric). Paradoxically, because "she had proved" unable to bear any children, married Louise had no value as a woman: and maybe such value could emerge if she became a widow, and thus owner of her own life. "Like so many wives in late-nineteenth-century America, Louise would be master of herself only after her husband's death. The self she finds in her room does not have any value in the world of masculine discourse and therefore may as well have not existed" (TAHAMEED, 2015, p. 105). Louise's existence is a strong metaphor for the existence of any woman in such context: an existence based on an inexistence – i.e. on the lack of a sense of self. Women are meant to live for others: for her family, her parents, her husband and kids. Without having someone to care for, without some male life to "complement", there is no purpose on being alive. As long as there is someone to provide, the life of a woman can be considered fruitful – on the contrary, the world would not miss her whatsoever.

Both "Eveline" (JOYCE, 1914) and "The story of an hour" (CHOPIN, 1894) show women's freedom in a controversial way. The two female protagonists of these stories are never really free, even though in their whole construction they are flirting with this freedom that they end up only getting rather close to. For Louise and Eveline (and, one could say, for many more women like them), it seems that there is always a hindrance in their way and that they will never be able to reach the liberty that they wish so much to enjoy. One of the most obvious obstacles to women's freedom is the man figure and what it represents in objective and subjective terms. In Eveline (JOYCE, 1914), the men in Eveline's life always seemed to be a problem and to make her suffer. Although she is happy about her boyfriend and compliments him throughout the story, this was not enough to convince her to go away with him. However, her decision of letting him go does not seem a happy

decision, because she gets paralyzed when she does that. The absence of men in her life still feels like a burden in the end of the story. It is as if men were a disease, but one that these women were unable to overcome or dodge – as long as patriarchy survives, there is no medicine to effectively wane its effects. After years and years of an overwhelming tradition Louise and Eveline's freedom may have indeed become only a mirage: these are characters that have a hard time trying to remember or even come up with a way to think of them in isolation and without any man around.

In "The Story of an Hour" (CHOPIN, 1894), we may see that the male figure is an obstacle to Louise as well. She gets sad when she knows that her husband is dead, but she quickly realizes what his death really means to her: that she can live for herself. She enjoys the moment that she notices it and she pronounces the words, saying out loud that she is free. This process is considerably different from the one Eveline goes through, after all Eveline never really recognizes her freedom or even gets to feel some sense of it. She did not have any time to deal in her epiphany with the absence of a determining man as Louise had. However, Louise could not handle this obstacle more than once: when she sees her husband alive again, she dies. Also, and as mentioned before, both characters go through an introspection moment while they were looking through the window. In "Eveline" (JOYCE, 1914), more than "The story of an hour" (CHOPIN, 1894), the main characteristic of the narrative is the use of stream of consciousness. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, stream of consciousness is a:

narrative technique in nondramatic fiction intended to render the flow of myriad impressions – visual, auditory, physical, associative, and subliminal – that impinge on the consciousness of an individual and form part of his awareness along with the trend of his rational thoughts.⁶

In Joyce's short story (1914) it is noticeable that most of the tale happens in the mind of Eveline, while she is thinking about her decision and its consequences. She stays in the same position, near the window, smelling nostalgically its curtain and remembering her past, the things she used to like and dislike, and the things she is going to miss if she goes away with her boyfriend. While life happens outside of her house, she is stuck in

⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica. Disponível em: <<https://www.britannica.com/art/stream-of-consciousness>> Acesso em: 16/05/2019.

there, just thinking and rethinking. Even though, when the scenario changes and she is in the station waiting to leave, the story still takes place in her thoughts. The fact that it is a short story with few events does not make it less intense, precisely because the narrator deploys narrative time and space as to explore the psychological energy of Eveline's thoughts. When the reader drowns in Eveline's feelings, all the story gets more interesting. A single event – running away with her boyfriend – becomes undoubtedly complex, getting greater and more ardent through the use of the literary technique of stream of consciousness. Making the story happen in the level of thoughts is a good way of telling it, because, even though it is short, the reader is able to feel connected to the character, sharing an empathy for her. Eveline's reflections grab the attention of the reader since the beginning until the very end of her story.

A similar process happens in "The Story of an Hour" (CHOPIN, 1894), after all most of it is also happening in Louise's mind. This kind of narrative may makes the reader feel more connected to the characters because s/he is given an opportunity to get to know their passions, confusions, and inner doubts – which is a very humane manner of constructing their identities. Even though Chopin's (1894) short story is considerably shorter in comparison with Joyce's (1914), we are still able to make connections to the character because of how the narrative is constructed as well. The readers are aware even of the most inconvenient thoughts of Louise, and this can make them feel empathy towards her and wish her the best. The introspection of the characters may also be meaningful and symbolic; after all, they are both in a process that hurts. While Eveline is wondering whether she should give up on her life to do flee with her boyfriend, Louise envisages her freedom for the first time in her life. But they are both in silence, most part of the story, for all the noise is going on just inside their minds. As Lorde (1978, p. 41) says,

to question or to speak as I believed could have meant pain, or death. But we all hurt in so many different ways, all the time, and pain will either change or end. Death, on the other hand, is the final silence. And that might be coming quickly, now, without regard for whether I had ever spoken what needed to be said, or had only betrayed myself into small silences, while I planned someday to speak, or waited for someone else's words.

Louise's death may represent exactly what Lorde says. It is, indeed, her final silence. She speaks earlier to herself that she was free, but she never gets the chance of

saying it to someone else. She never said what she needed or wanted to and never had the chance to speak. The same thing happens to Eveline: during the story, we may realize that she is betraying herself into small silences. Even in the end, she is not able to say anything; she remains in silence. Because both of them were always shut, and many women still are.

Final remarks

In this article, we compared women's portrait in Joyce's "Eveline" (1914) and Chopin's "The story of an hour" (1894) – more specifically these short stories protagonists: Eveline and Louise. Even though were written over one hundred years ago, they are still current and relevant. The patterns of women representation are still repeated in literature materials and it is relevant to bring up this discussion in an attempt of changing women's role in society, even if this happens step by step. Both characters in the stories have the same wish for freedom, but they never really get it completely. There is a moment when the narrator in Eveline (JOYCE, 1914, p. 28) wonders "why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness". It is indeed worrisome that this question still have some place to reoccur in the minds of many women, even nowadays. This pattern of unhappy female characters, present in literature, is after all a mirror and hammer of our own society(ies): it is the result of our patriarchal world, but can also represent an opportunity for redesigning such world. Paying attention to these patterns may help other writers not to reproduce it and the society to rethink about its moulds.

Regarding our analysis, we can finally highlight that the gender of the authors may have influenced in the way that both narratives were concocted, as well as in the construction of the characters by them portrayed. Although both stories can and were related as similar in some levels, there is an important difference that has been discussed within this article: Eveline never feels any real possibility for freedom and does not say a word during the story. She remains in silence, from beginning to end, and we could never really feel her happiness as something tangible – as something any close to her hands. On the other hand, Louise has a glimpse of freedom and happiness and she got a voice to talk about it, even though it happens quickly: "The oppression under which Louise suffers was by no means unusual for the time. What is ultimately unexpected and sudden in the story

is the opportunity for and exploration of her experience of freedom, no matter how transient” (TAHAMEED, 2015, p. 199). As Rossini (2016) mentions, women writers have been able to give voices and legitimize women in literature in a way that men were never capable of. There lies the importance of paying attention to women’s works and to value them: “Louise’s recognition of her unhappiness illustrates Chopin’s commitment to a woman’s perspective and what it beholds beyond the horizons of male discourse” (TAHAMEED, 2015, p. 200). Women have been speaking over years and years now about gender oppression as well as equal rights – it is high time we looked for those voices, and ultimately allowed them to unsettle our very questionably organised society.

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Recebido em: 07/04/2020
Aprovado em: 02/07/2020