

47-The personification of the natural aesthetics of the night in Kate Chopin's "The Night Came Slowly" (1894)¹

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Abstract

This article highlights that the manifestation of the emotional world of an individual can be expressed through the reflection of the imagery of natural aesthetics as in American writer Kate Chopin's short story "The Night Came Slowly." The narrator was sitting under the maple tree observing natural aesthetics and, thereby, diving into her sentimental world. Therefore, this article has a psychoanalytic evaluation within itself as the night had the personification of natural aesthetics. This emphasizes that the narrator was full of dark psychological perspective because of explaining the night with the creeping overview. Therefore, there was a strong interaction between the narrator and the personification of natural aesthetics. The night was a means for the narrator to write her inner monologue so that it was time to reflect her feelings as the night falls in slowly. As the narrator interacted with the night softly, she overruled that it crept. Accordingly, the creeping one was not only the night but also the narrator herself, too, so that this expression implies how the narrator was remembering slowly her sad feelings. This short story has within its very short context that the night was quite mysterious and reflected the deeper iceberg that stretched within the emotional world of the narrator. Therefore, the limited wording of this short story emphasizes that there are lots of unsaid more than the saids and it is significant to reveal the unsaid throughout repetitive reading.

Keywords: Natural aesthetics, night, American short stories, mystery, dark psychology.

Kate Chopin'in "Alacakaranlık Yavaşça Yaklaştı"³ adlı kısa kısa hikâyesinde gecenin doğal güzelliklerinin kişileştirilmesi (1894)

Öz

Bu makale, Amerikan yazar Kate Chopin'in "Alacakaranlık Yavaşça Yaklaştı" adlı kısa kısa hikâyesinde olduğu gibi doğal güzellikler imgesinin bir bireyin duygusal dünyasını yansıttığını vurgulamaktadır. Anlatıcı kişi, akçağaç altında oturarak doğal güzellikleri gözlemlemek ve oracıkta düşünce dünyasına dalmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu makalede, gece doğal güzelliklerin kişileştirilmesi olduğu için makale bir psikoanalitik değerlendirmeye sahiptir. Bu durum, anlatıcının geceyi yavaşça ilerlerken anlatmasının, onun karamsar/karanlık psikolojik görüşüyle dolu olduğunu belirtmektedir. Böylece, anlatıcı ve gecenin doğal güzelliklerinin kişileştirilmesi arasında güçlü bir bağlantı vardır. Yavaşça yaklaşan gece, anlatıcının duygularını belirten iç monoloğunu yazma zamanı için bir araç olmuştur. Anlatıcı, gece ile sessizce konuşurken, gecenin çok yavaş bir şekilde

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³ The name of the article is translated into Turkish by the writer.

ilerlediğini gözlemlemektedir. Aslında, yavaşça hareketlilik içerisinde olan sadece gece değil, aynı zamanda huzursuz düşüncelerindeki değişikliklerden dolayı anlatıcının kendisidir de, öyle ki, bu ifade anlatıcının kendi içerisindeki mutsuz duygularını yavaşça hatırladığını ima etmektedir. Bu kısa kısa hikâye, kısa hikâye dağarcığında gecenin çok gizemli olduğunu ve anlatıcının duygusal dünyasında uzanan derin buzdağını yanstmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu kısa kısa hikâyenin sınırlı kelime dağarcığında, söylenenden çok söylenmeyen var olduğunu belirtmektedir ve bilinmeyenlerin defalarca okunma yolu ile ortaya çıkarılması önemlidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Doğal güzellikler, gece, Amerikan kısa hikâyeleri, esrarengiz oluş, karanlık psikoloji

1. Introduction

Atherene O'Flathery known later as Kate Chopin (1850-1904) was a feminist writer of modernism that had many short stories, novels, and short short stories. She is best known for her writings expressing inner lives of daring women such as Edna Pontellier and the narrator. Chopin writes autobiographically her own life in her literary work. She is one of America's forerunner writers and is well recognized with her novel, *Awakening* and short stories like "Desiree's Baby," "A Respectable Woman," "The Kiss," "A Pair of Silk Stockings," "The Locket," "A Reflection," "The Blind Man," "Recovery," "The White Eagle," "The Storm" as well as the "The Story of an Hour." Chopin's short short story "Night Came Slowly" is a significant literary work with its figurative language of imagery to reflect the beauty and significance of natural aesthetics. In this short short story, the narrator reflects her dark inner psychology throughout imaging natural aesthetics of the night and associating it with the darkness of her depressive psychology. She uses all her senses and feels the sense of tranquility and effective darkness of the night. All the stars, the dark colored trees, and the horrible voicelessness of the night, as well as the voice of the wind in nature at that time are a means for memorableness. The narrator associates her sense of feeling, sight seeing, and hearing with the issues that she observes in the slowly darkening night. What she sees in the dark becomes the mental pictures for herself to remember all her memories she had in her life previously (Baldick 2001: 121). The natural aesthetics of the night remind her all her memories.

Kate Chopin has specific descriptions to reveal the narrator's inner psychology. The dark night becomes the metaphor to describe her sensational feelings. Thus, the natural aesthetics of the night are vividly described and they become poetically valuable in the limited wordings of the short short story (Abrams 1999: 121-122; Childs 2006: 152). The effectiveness of the night imagery enhances her living, moreover, the imagery of the night reduces the narrator's anxiety of having a fragmented mind and prepares her for relaxing in loneliness at night. The narrator's imagery description is so vivid that the readers can imagine the whole night in their minds. They feel, see and hear as the narrator does under the maple tree. She describes the katydids' singing so lively that the readers can feel and hear it as if they are the listeners in the limited wordings of the short short story. Such a vividly described imagery is so penetrating that it becomes full of semantic value that becomes clear when repetitively read.

When Kate Chopin's life is considered in *7 Short Short Stories of Kate Chopin*, it is expressed why she became a dominant feminist writer. Feminist literature was introduced by independent daring women among whom Kate Chopin holds a high aspect. She had great suffering in her life as she indicates it in "The Night Came Slowly" and becomes a daring woman in her living process. To illustrate, when she got married to Oscar Chopin, she had six children but then her husband died by leaving the children to

her with lots of debt. Then, she went to her mother's house with her children but in the following year the mother had died, too. Chopin, was in deep anguish and went through a period of depression. Fortunately, her doctor told her to reflect her suffocated feelings in her writings so that they had been a source of income. Hence, her writing became abundant in her novels, articles, and short stories that are basically about her own life. The subject matter in her writings became the marriage procedure and the conventions and the norms of society. Chopin was predominantly interested in sensitiveness and sexual urges in her writings (Chopin 2019: 1). Such a tiring engagement in life implies that she really suffered all her life. Describing herself as a lonely person in the target short short story implies that she was left alone in the difficulties of her living environment. As she was a strong feminist writer in her literary works, thereby, she had been a female forerunner modernist.

Following her interest about female writing, Kate Chopin continued to write for the "second Wave" feminist canon. Chopin struggled in great extent for this Second Feminist Wave of Hilda Dolittle, Getrude Stein, Katrine Mansfield, Zora Neale Hurston, Willa Cather and Virginia Woolf that concerned with ahistorical subjectivity within the private world of memories and sensations as in "The Night Came Slowly" (Poplawski 2002: 108). Moreover, as her first biographer Daniel Rankin explained, Chopin considered major themes of suffering and she wrote about many things that she was affected in life, therefore, as Rankin expressed she was a woman of mysterious fascination as she reflected through her literary writings (Toth 1998: 178). So, she directly explains whom she is in her writings. Yet, despite all the suffering in her life process, she had a strong ability to be powerful in life despite her dark pessimistic psychology. To illustrate, even in her diaries, she went through her solitary soul expressing her strong feelings that she used to define in her novels and short stories (177).

2. Aim

This article aims to highlight that darkening and lightening natural aesthetics are very effective for individuals so that they simultaneously define the fragmentation and the social isolation of their individual psychology in their emotional worlds. This article will focus on Kate Chopin's short short story "The Night Came Slowly" to analyze the dark aspects of the narrator's inner psychology by concerning the natural aesthetics of the night. Chopin's melancholic meditation in her short short story can be contextualized firmly within the discourses and contexts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century modernism that tends to express the depth of the narrator's depressive psychology. It is clear that she just reflected what the narrator had in the darkness of her mind (Toth 1999: 157). As a forerunner of the Second Wave feminist perspective in modernism, Chopin described the new outlook for the consideration of the psychological situations. Thus, Kate Chopin has substantially a psychoanalytical estimation of the narrator through the personification of the imagery of the night in this article. The single effect⁴ in the target short short story of this article revolves around the case of psychological matters of fragmentation and social isolation. The single effect theory, coined by Edgar Allan Poe, directs all the short short story so that the readers are interested in reading. And the plot is constructed around a single effect that is read in a very short period in one sitting. The writer will plan the plot, characters, and the situation around this single effect theory. There is poetic language in the short short story so that when one of the words in the story will be omitted, then, the whole story will be devastated as a result of the lack of unity in the story (Özer 2018: 15). Such a structure in the story is

⁴ Edgar Allan Poe's Single-Effect Theory reflects the substantial point in a story or short short story. It concerns drawing attention of readers on specific issue in a literary study. In this article the "single effect" is that of the fragmentation of individual beings and their social isolation.

so effective that it is possible to read it in one sitting because of its shortness. Every word in the target story is so significant that they depict the narrator's psychological characteristics.

3. Methodology

Through the application of imagery in this target literary work, natural aesthetics are compared to personal qualities of the narrator and they depict the psychological changes that the narrator lived in her life. Literary terms like imagery and symbol are significantly became the focus of interest to describe her inner world and the other secondary books are used as a helping process. Quotations from the literary text are given to refer to this quality.

In its limited 295 words, this short short story has inevitably the difficulty of giving several quotations because of the shortness of this literary text. There is the necessity of focusing on the same quotations. Since the target short short story is limited approximately in haft a page, the information about the writer, her writing style and figures of speeches she uses become the subject to deal with in this article because of the limitation of the quotations.

4. The Personification of the Night Imagery

Different from her short stories such as that of previously stated, "Night Came in Slowly" invites the readers to be ready for the semantic depth in limited wordings written in a short literary context. There are many hidden and unexpected messages that include many sensational cases as the readers read them repetitively to comprehend carefully (Özer 2018: 157). Whereas short stories explain the story in a longer context, short short stories dive into subconsciousness and creates the story there (Özer 2018: 156; Özer 1999: 104-113). Moreover, in Chopin's writings, there are the depths of feminist thought that revolts against the traditional patriarchal society. Accordingly, as depicted in this short short story, the narrator rebels against men and is alone as she sits under the maple tree to look at the night spectacle profoundly. Her short short story fundamentally dives into the abundance of dark natural aesthetics that reflect the dark psychological parallelism with the narrator. Natural grandeur of the night is so powerful and grand that it becomes influential on the individual psychology. The figures of speech of imagery and symbolism in the short short story reflect this grandeur beauty of the night. Even the animal imagery of katydids that sing their nightly songs in the text happen to be significant for the narrator to rest in the tranquility of the night.

Considering the genre of the target short short story, in diving into the depth of the modernist thinking, it should thereby be reminded that Kate Chopin is interested in individual psychology. Chopin reflects that natural aesthetics of the night in this short short story express the dark emotional statements of the narrator. It was possible to compare dark psychology of the narrator to the darkness of the night observed under the maple tree. The feminist circle gained at the end of dark psychology is the case that Chopin is primarily interested in in this short short story. The night is concurrently personified and defined basically sentimental case of the narrator. The night imagery is personified so that the narrator narrates all her hidden cases signifying how she is fragmented and isolated in social life. That is, she underlines her isolation in life and reflects her suffering because of her helplessness. Accordingly, the dark imagery of the night defines the fragmentation and social isolation that occur within the narrator who unites herself with the night because of being all alone and dark as her sentimental world. Considering the genre it was written in, the case of fragmentation is quite

significant in this short short story. To explain in detail, fragmentation is a substantial psychological matter in modernism:

The observation of modern fragmentation is a constant in intellectual responses.... The two implication of social process of fragmentation, those concerning the "life world" of modern man, serve as both the object of cultural criticism and as a yardstick for the experience of modernity: moral consequences (the fragmentation of moral discourse) and social-psychological ones (the chaos of impressions and interactions. (Keunen 2007: 275)

As this quotation expresses, the fragmentation of individuals in social life is a substantial psychological matter. This emphasizes that the diagnosis of detrimental psychological cases such as fragmentation and social isolation are so significant in modernism. As depicted above, in modernism the depravity of moral discourse evolves as the interaction becomes weaker. In the target short short story, these concerns are significant and are reflected through the night imagery that falls in slowly and softly. The slow and soft falling implies that the effectiveness was significant for the narrator who was significantly influenced sentimentally from natural aesthetics. Thus, all the sentimental indications are correlated to the natural aesthetics of the night.

In most of the short short stories, all these psychological matters are depicted and as their limitation of wording necessitates, the words and expressions have depthness within themselves so that they may have several meanings that indicate semantic quality. Although they are short enough, Friedman expresses the depth of the stories so that they define many aspects in the same words. In "Microfiction: What Makes a Very Short Story Very Short?" Friedman expresses the depthness of the short short stories:

Microstories often do present a single scene or speech, but they are not normally restricted to small static actions: in fact, the typical microstory action is large, with major changes and reversals as the rule rather than the technical impossibility that Friedman expected. Rather than narrowing down steadily from large dynamic actions to tiny static states, the very short story goes through a narrative wormhole beneath a certain length, and the actions narrated pop back out to full size. (Friedman 1988: 90-91)

As the quotation emphasizes, a single effect directs all microstories, and the reading public concludes that all their interest is on that theoretical single effect. The "wormhole" in the short short story implies that there is the depthness underneath what is said. Here, the main issue is behind every word, there follows a depth of meaning as deep as an iceberg. There is abundance of the unsaid which hint at the unrevealed cases in the story. As the reading public goes on reading repetitively, they unveil the implied issues and create new conclusions themselves for the short short story. Here, the reading public guesses about beneath the surface This implies that most uninformed hidden information will be revealed throughout the interpretations at the end of repetitive reading. The hidden information will be reached as the readers go beyond what is said. Finding the hidden and haunted strengthen the story (Smith 1971: 169). The hidden creates curiosity and the literary text becomes interesting to deal with. It becomes interesting that the readers try to write new conclusions for the text as they see open-ended conclusions that are unfinished, then, the readers create new conclusions themselves. This emphasizes that there is an uncompleted explanation about the conclusion, and the readers are there to write it.

To correlate with "The Night Came Slowly," the narrator mentions about her fragmented dark psychology because of her loneliness. Chopin reveals the narrator's suffering in the target short short story as: "I am losing my interest in human beings; in the significance of their lives and their actions.

Some one has said it is better to study one man than ten books. I want neither books nor men; they make me suffer." (Chopin 1969: 366). These are very meaningful messages so that the narrator lost meaningfulness of living: This implies that she suffered because of men and even that of books mentioning about men. Chopin is using very vivid and descriptive language. It is possible to comprehend through the sensory imagery. It is directly possible to call Kate Chopin as a feminist writer in these quotations as she reflects her "loss of interest in human beings" especially in men. She mentions that she wants "neither books nor men." She feels herself totally alone. She revolts against men and she rejects reading books that concern men. This implies that she is quite disinterested in men and - their lives as well as their actions. Therefore, she is quite fragmented and isolated because of the men surrounding her. This implies that she adds depth to the words and describe her dark psychology. In this case, Chopin has lots of suffering in her previous life that she can not exactly define. In the given quotation, Chopin means that it is difficult to deal with men. Her expression that the books and the men make her suffer. She has a rejection of dealing with men as they make her suffer in her life.

Kate Chopin reflects the situation of her dark fragmented psychology in her autobiographical writings and imposes that she lost her interest in human beings especially in men. This is clear in her previous quotation expressing her disinterest towards men. Her pessimistic sensational statement reflects her revolt against mankind so she protests against them. Such an evaluation derives from her own living conditions. It is possible to evaluate Chopin's literary texts in the sentimental orientation so that night's grand power stands for a symbol for her sentimental cases to reveal the narrator's hidden inner thoughts (Fluck 1982: 152). Here, powerful imagery engages readers so that it consists of descriptive sensory language. Through the personification of the night, there is the effective descriptive imagery: the narrator is directly in interaction with the night that came slowly and defines it as a person recounting her inner feelings. She remarks that "the night is solemn and it means mystery" (Chopin 1969: 366). She expresses her sufferings to it in her target short short story. Chopin refers to men as fools and writes:

Why do fools cumber the Earth! It was a man's voice that broke the necromancer's spell. A man came to-day with his "Bible Class." He is detestable with his red cheeks and bold eyes and coarse manner and speech. What does he know of Christ? Shall I ask a young fool who was born yesterday and will die tomorrow to tell me things of Christ? I would rather ask the stars: they have seen him. (1969: 366)

This quotation implies that a man's voice, manner and speech may be detestable and she calls them "fools" so that they will disappear in her life in a short extent. She thinks that men are unaware of any moral values of Christ. This indicates that she defines them as the men who has meaningless and rude life with themselves. They are the individuals who leave women alone. Chopin, in this quotation, again let the narrator ask the stars whether they have seen such kind of men. There is imagery of natural aesthetics. She applies to attain her confidence throughout asking the stars about the men.

Fluck explains the existence of symbolism in "The Night Came Slowly." Fluck explains that through Chopin's writing, every strong and significant object or issue becomes a symbol for a great existence or the representation. For example, the darkening night is a symbol of the darkening psychology of the narrator in the target short short story. She personifies the night, giving it human characteristics. The night speaks for her like a human being. "Can one of them talk to me like the night - the Summer night? Like the stars or the caressing wind?" (Chopin 1969: 366). Here, the night becomes the symbol of a person. Therefore, the night charms her. To illustrate, the narrator feels the wind "like warm love

thrills" (Chopin 1969: 366) moving through the leaves. Moreover, the night, the stars, and the wind speak to her like no human being could speak. This emphasizes that there is a strong interaction with the natural aesthetics and the narrator. This case is clear especially when the narrator sits under the maple tree, gazing into the night and trying to define her darkening psychology. She, thereby, conveys her sentiments on life, on man, and on the night. She tries to find a meaning in the wormhole in the tranquility of the night. She is just listening to the nightly song of the katydids making meaningful of the night. Accordingly, she devotes her interest in watching the natural aesthetics of the night.

Chopin in "The Night Came Slowly" depicts the main character (the narrator) as the one who has a dramatic change of thought through the falling night which has an evolution towards darkening: the definition of the pessimistic emotional statement. Through mysterious natural aesthetics, the narrator has the expression of her inner monologue so that it is time to reveal the hidden existence in the depth of nature. This emphasizes that there are the unsaid more than the saids in this short short story implying the hidden mystery exceeding the natural aesthetics. The narrator depicts that she talks with the night that is defined as creeping: "The night came slowly, softly, as I lay out there under the maple tree. It came creeping, creeping stealthily out of the valley, thinking I did not notice" (Chopin 1969: 366). However, it is not the night creeping but the narrator herself so that she is severely affected from fluently passing time which implying that she is under the depression of the time in which she dives into her emotional world that caused her to suffer. As the short short story is read repetitively, it becomes much more comprehensive. Throughout this repetitive reading, effectiveness of natural aesthetics describe the pessimistic emotional statement of the narrator. Throughout the change of emotional statement, she has a new identity with the new aspect of sensational case in the darkness of the night.

The night is the passionate subjectivity that makes the narrator suffer: this implies that it is a persistent symbol for the passing time implying her the approaching end of life. This indicates that the night is a time of memory signifying the approaching end of living time (Dyer 1981: 216). This also reflects that the narrator finds her life meaningless when she is left alone: "I am losing my interest in human beings; in the significance of their lives and their actions" (Chopin 1969: 366). This implies that she has lost her interest in human beings. In the opening of this short short story, Chopin indicates how it is difficult to deal with a man in life: "it is better to study one man than ten books. I want neither books nor men; they make me suffer" (Chopin 1969: 366). It is clear that there is difficulty to study a man than ten books, yet, when she is willing to care neither books nor men, it implies that she gave up any meaningful case in life. To indicate the powerful night imagery, she professes that no men can speak to her as the night. Natural aesthetics are much more significant for her because "the night is solemn and it means mystery" (Chopin 1969: 366) and this hints that night has lots of meaning in itself. When it has mystery with itself, the narrator invites the readers to care for the hidden meaning in the night. As the narrator thinks that the night speaks with herself, then she reflects that she is not alone in life when there is the interaction with the night. This implies that the personification of the night does not leave the night alone. In this case, the narrator has a new identity, the fragmented and isolated narrator turned into the one who has a strong tie with the night. The narrator reveals herself from all her hidden detrimental thoughts that she had within herself and as she had a strong interaction with the not they turned into the revealed ones.

Through descriptive and figurative language, Kate Chopin has visual and auditory imagery in her short short story. To illustrate, the word "dark" is associated with visual imagery. The sound of katydids and the "wind" is that of auditory imagery. "Softness" of the night signifies sense of touch. As imagery

necessitates the aid of figures of speech like metaphor and personification, the narrator has all these means in this short short story. The imagery encourages her to observe environment insightfully. As a literary device, imagery consists of descriptive language that can function as a means to draw the attention towards five senses as in the target short short story. When Chopin describes how the night changed the feelings of the narrator, she tries to take the attention on the touch, sight, smell and sound senses so that they let the readers to be aware of the imagery. This implies that Chopin intends to make her readers to be aware of the sensory imagery.

As the night creeps slowly, the narrator watches the natural aesthetics of the night. The night unites with the skyline, the valley and its trees, from east to West: The narrator narrates that ". . .the only light was in the sky, filtering through the maple leaves and a star looking down through every cranny." (Chopin 1969: 366). So what she does is to describe the aspect of unity trait in it. The mystery of the night is quite influential and it affects the narrator. She expresses this characteristics as: "My whole being was abandoned to the soothing and penetrating charm of the night" (Chopin 1969: 366). To reflect how the night is qualified to be like human being, the narrator expresses: "Can one of them talk to me like the night - the Summer night? Like the stars or the caressing wind?" (Chopin 1969: 366). This quotation reflects that it is personified like a human being and it speaks more than everybody for the narrator.

5. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the night's charm is so penetrating that when it is personified, it is time for it to unveil the narrator's emotional darkness. Accordingly, the narrator attains a new identity through the definition of her unspoken problems for being dissatisfied in her inner world. In this case, it is the natural aesthetics that define her weaknesses clearly. The symbolism created through the night imagery is a means to signify inner world weaknesses. Throughout giving meanings to the darkness, the tranquility and the silence of the night, Chopin dives into the depths of the inner psychology. In that case, the night becomes a literary device of a meaningful figurative speech. It represents the loneliness and fragmented statement of the narrator. In this case the night had a symbolic extensive meaning for the narrator. As imagery includes figurative and metaphorical language, the night became a main figurative means of metaphor for the narrator's dark and pessimistic psychology. After she interacted with the night intensely, she became a free person away from any kind of sentimental problems. As a whole, in this short short story, there is a beautiful expression of a person's love for the night.

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