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The Sound of Silence: The Treatment of Spousal Death in Chopin's "The Story of An Hour" and Celal's "Melahat Hanim's Orderly Life"

Eşsizliğin Sesi: Kate Chopin'in "Bir Saatlik Öykü" ve Peride Celal'in "Melahat Hanım'ın Düzenli Yaşamı" Öykülerinde Eş Ölümünün İşlenişi

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Abstract: Both "The Story of an Hour" (1894) and "Melahat Hanım'ın Düzenli Yaşamı" ("Melahat Hanim's Orderly Life") (1999) take an intimate look at widows directly following the deaths of their spouses. While Kate Chopin's story reveals the inner turmoil of its protagonist through insinuations regarding the taxing quality of her marriage, it also focuses on figurative implications of life after this death through imagery contemplated outside a window. Peride Celal's story, on the other hand, similarly looks back on a challenging marriage, yet this time through the inside of the house, by focusing on the late husband's possessions. Both characters hesitatingly embrace the prospect of a new life which promises escape from the social role of a wife. Unfortunately, the characters share the same fate of not being allowed to do so as they both die at the end of the stories, and in similar circumstances. This paper wishes to explore the lingering presence of the husbands by looking at motifs and imagery inside and outside the confines of the house which restricts the promised liberty of the two women.

Öz: Kate Chopin'in "Bir Saatlik Öykü" (1894) ve Peride Celal'in "Melahat Hanım'ın Düzenli Yaşamı" (1999) öyküleri, dul kalmış iki kadının dul kalır kalmaz yeni yaşamlarını göstermektedir. Kate Chopin'in öyküsü, başkahramanın iç dünyasını gösterir ve Bayan Mallard'ın evliliği hakkındaki olumsuz düşüncelerini, pencereden gözlemlediği imgeler aracılığıyla sembolik bir şekilde aktarır. Bu imgeler, evliliği ve gelecek yaşamına ilişkin düşüncelerini ifade etmektedir. Peride Celal'in öyküsü ise, benzer olumsuz düşüncelere yer verirken, bunu evin içinden yapar ve vefat eden kocanın geride kalan eşyalarına sembolik bir boyut kazandırır. Iki karakter de yeni yaşamları karşısında tereddüt etmelerine rağmen, eş olarak büründükleri sosyal rollerden kurtulma konusunda memnundurlar. Ne yazık ki, iki karakterin de öykülerin sonunda gerçekleşen benzer ölüm şekilleri, böyle bir olanağı gerçekleştiremediklerini gösterir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, kaybedilen eşlerin ölmüş olmalarına rağmen eşlerinin üzerinde baskılarının devam edişini evlerin içinde ve dışında yer alan imge ve semboller aracılığıyla ortaya çıkarmaktır.

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Introduction

Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Peride Celal's ("Melahat Hanim's Orderly Life"[2]) both deal with newly widowed women who hesitantly yet joyously look forward to a new life without their husbands. The stories are brief accounts of a fleeting expectancy of a new life, with not much additional detail; there is no hint as to at what stage of life the women are, for how long they have been married, or even whether they have children or not. The stories concentrate on a short span of time following the news of the deaths of the husbands. The anticipation of a new life ensuing the event is thinly veiled under expressions of grief and sadly is not materialised for either character in any satisfactory sense. In fact, both protagonists are killed off before they are even given a chance to try to live outside of the constraints of matrimony. Having not been allowed a life on their own terms throughout their married years, it is only after the deaths of their spouses that the protagonists come to a realisation of these limits on their freedom, identity, and individuality. A desire for a new kind of life, one that can be lived without limitations, is only tentatively embraced, yet, the stories suggest that their husbands have permeated their lives so completely that freedom in any sense just is not possible.

The Authors

It is difficult to determine when Peride Celal's[3] short story "Melahat Hanim's Orderly Life" was first written and published, therefore it is challenging to ascertain the relationship between the stories. Even the most extensive bibliography of Celal's works, located in author Selim İleri's tribute compilation *Peride Celal'e Armağan*[4], calls itself an "attempt," mostly due to the fact that many of her stories have been lost. One reason for this is the multiple changes to her pen name in numerous newspapers and magazines, and another is that some of these periodicals were never even archived. In his brief note to the bibliography, Raşit Çavaş informs the reader that even the author herself does not recall some of her works[5]. The story "Melahat Hanim's Orderly Life" is not listed in this bibliography, but was written sometime before 1951 (when Peride Celal stopped publishing stories in newspapers) and was published as part of a collection in 1999 for the first time. Dismissed for many years as a writer of formulaic love stories and a "woman's" writer, it was during the reissue of her works by Can Yayınları[6] in the 1990s and early 2000s that readers came to the realization that much of Celal's work had been neglected unjustly. Although still not widely read in literary circles, another reissue of her works by H2O Books[7] has led to a reintroduction of her works for younger readers.

Equally prolific writer Kate Chopin (1850-1904) enjoyed greater renown (as well as controversy) throughout her lifetime, although it would be stretching the matter to suggest that she was popular. It was after Per Seyersted's monograph *Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography* (1969) that her novel and stories became internationally read and her place in feminist literature firmly established. The frequently anthologised "The Story of an Hour" is among her most well known stories. Given the gap of time between their lifespans, there is a great likelihood that Celal read Chopin's stories

[2] All translations are by the author.

[3] Peride Celal (1916-2013) was born in İstanbul, Turkey as Emine Peride Yönsel. She started publishing short stories, interviews and novels in various newspapers in the 1930s. During the first part of her career in the 1930s and 1940s, she was mainly known for publishing romance and adventure novels (İleri 13). Starting in the 1950s, she moved on to more socially critical novels where she started to investigate particularly the role of women in contemporary Turkish society. She won critical acclaim with *Üç Kadın* (*Three Women*), for which she won the Literature Prize presented by the Sedat Simavi Foundation in 1977, and with *Kurtlar* (*Wolves*) for which she received the Orhan Kemal Prize in 1991 (İleri 13). Not taken seriously for many years for being mainly a "woman's" romance author, she has only now started to be appreciated as an important novelist, thanks to the reissues of her works. Besides the two novels mentioned above, among her other well-known works are *Üç Yirmidört Saat* (*Three Twenty-Four Hours*, 1971), *Evli Bir Kadının Günlüğünden* (*The Diary of a Married Woman*, 1971), and the short story collection *Jaguar* (*Jaguar*, 1978). Her works have not yet been translated into English.

[4] Selim İleri, *Peride Celal'e Armağan* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 1996).

[5] Raşit Çavaş, "'Bibliyografya' Üzerine" in *Peride Celal'e Armağan*, ed. Selim İleri (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 1996), 40.

[6] Can Yayınları (Can Publishing House) was established by author and poet Erdal Öz in 1981. One of the largest publishing houses in Turkey, it publishes both national and international works.

[7] H2O Kitap (H2O Books) is a relatively recent Turkish publishing house that was established by Haldun Ünal and Özcan Özen in 2011. They declare on their website that "Yayınevi olarak bir yandan Türk ve Dünya edebiyatının değeri anlaşılamadan unutulmaya yüz tutmuş eser ve yazarlarını yeniden okurla buluşturmayı önemli bir misyon olarak önüne koyarken, günümüz yazarlarının yeni ve nitelikli eserlerinin yayınlanmasına ve okurla buluşmasına aracı olmayı hedeflemektedir." ("As a publishing house, we aim to be an intermediary in reuniting contemporary readers with neglected and forgotten authors in Turkish and world literature") https://www.h2okitap.com/hakkimizda/

and was inspired in her creation of women characters and criticism of the role of patriarchy in oppressive social institutions. Although there is no clear evidence for this except for the similarities of the stories themselves. The two stories analysed here are remarkably alike in their basic story arcs of two widowed women tasting freedom for the first time after their husbands' death, only not being allowed to bask in it for very long because of their own deaths.

The Loss of the Husband

Although one would assume that once the women achieve deliverance from the constraints of marriage that they would enjoy a fulfilling individual life by reclaiming (or indeed newly claiming) their personal identity, the stories seem to suggest that due to an essential internalized patriarchal sense of inferiority, even the absence of the husband impedes any such endeavour. Despite indicating hope of "freedom" initially, neither story propounds an alternative life of emancipated liberty; either because the characters are merely seen as not capable, or because they do not believe that they deserve it, or on account of their childlessness and therefore "purposelessness" in life, all of which will be discussed below. The sudden disappearance of the husband, then, does not promise a liberation, but serves to show that there is no hope of release from the constraints of the social order that confirms marriage as an oppressive institution that subordinates women. The mastery that the husband holds in the marriage, as suggested in these stories, is so strong that it persists after their deaths. In discussing the changing roles of men and women in marriage, Stevi Jackson underlines the idea that although men have enjoyed "the maintenance of individual autonomy and identity," this has been "historically denied to women" as is clearly indicated in these stories[8]. In neither story is there any evidence of quest of an individual interest before the deaths of their husbands; there is simply no existence for the woman except being a wife. Before Mrs Mallard is able to savor the nature outside her window or Melahat Hanım is able to establish a daily routine soley of her won in her house, both women die.

Despite quite a number of similar incidents in the stories, it would be erronous to suggest that the idea of a lingering presence of the husbands is given in the same way in the two stories, as the treatment of both women's glimpses of freedom is quite different, as well as the endings of the stories. The main plot arc is alike; for instance, upon the deaths of their husbands, the two protagonists react in a predictable manner. Mrs Mallard[9] is described as "weep[ing] at once, with sudden, wild abandonment"[10]. Melahat Hanim's[11] reaction is given a while after the event as, "she had cried a great deal" [12]. That something is amiss in the course of these grief scenes is indicated early on in both stories. In "The Story of an Hour," this is implied with the statement, "she did not hear the story [of her husband's death] as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance"[13]. Mrs. Mallard's immediate reaction of weeping over the death of her husband revals that she's quick to grasp the "significance" of the situation. It is as if she has no time for the stages of grief, but skips to the end and accepts immediately, ready for the next stage of her own life.

Melahat Hanim's acceptance and immediate relief, on the other hand, is clearly expressed in the expositon of the story as follows:

> The poor thing had suffered a lot because of her husband. A drunkard and a gambler, he was always an irresponsible man. Melahat Hanim had loved him. Would she have defied her family and followed him from İstanbul to İzmir if she had not? The

[8] Stevi Jackson, "Families, Domesticity and Intimacy: Changing Relationships in Changing Times" in *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*, ed. Diane Richardson and Victoria Robinson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 140.

[9] Louise Mallard is not even given a name for much of the story, the reader only learns of it through her sister toward the ending, when she is imploring her to open the door. In the first sentence of the story, she is mentioned as "Mrs. Mallard" and then on as "she" (about 23 times) throughout the course of the story before the reader learns of her personal name. This extraordinary number of the word "she" seems to signal her arduous move from "Mrs. Mallard", only identified through her husband's name as a married woman, to that of "Louise", her personal name.

[10] Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" (1894) in *The Awakening and Selected Stories* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), 213.

[11] I have chosen not to translate the use of the word "hanim" here both because it has become an accepted form of address in English and also because the dual representation of the word in its native language accentuates its significance in the story. Derived from the word "Han" (Khan) which acted as a title for both Ottoman emperors and Eastern rulers, "Hanım" refers to queen or sultan as a title for women. Considering it to have an affix at the end would make it mean "my han." Or, in common usage in contemporary Turkish it is defined by "Türk Dil Kurumu" (The Turkish Language Society) as 1- A title given to girls and women 2- Woman, wife and 3- An economically affluent woman who employs others to work for her (https://sozluk.gov.tr/). This combination of its ability to mean "woman," "wife," and "queen" simultaneously shows Melahat Hanim's fluctuation between these roles in her social as well as personal life.

[12] "Çok Ağlamıştı Ardından." Celal, "Melahat Hanımın Düzenli Yaşamı," 1.

[13] Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," 213.

first years had been sweet and effortless… the others had passed in continous struggle.[14]

Melahat Hanim thus also accepts the loss immediately, and sets about the process of dealing with his possessions and her own move back to İstanbul. As she does this, the anticipation of a free life in the future is keenly felt and she is determined to purge herself of her husband's lingering presence, felt in the material objects around her. With every item she gets rid of or replaces, her husband's hold on her seems to lift, adding to her pleasure and emerging individuality. She declares, after spending a night at her new house, "'From now on, I will live for myself' mused Melahat Hanim"[15]. The material items in the house both old and new slowly gain an essence through their connection with her late husband, and come to symbolise aspects of her marriage that made her miserable. She likens, for instance, his treatment of newspapers to how he treated her:

How she had despised the way he crumpled up the newspapers he had read, and threw them on the bed. She never wanted to touch them. It was as if he had consumed everything within them and left her nothing to read. [16]

The fact that it is the bed he throws the newspaper on is indicative of how he has consumed her throughout their marriage, discarding her when he has no further use. The newspaper here is a symbol of his treatment of her throughout their married life. The idea of consuming something so utterly and completely, leaving nothing for her, also foregrounds the selfishness of her husband, a contradiction to the idea of sharing a life, which is supposed to be the premise of a marriage.

The Promise of a Life on One's Own Terms

A major difference between these stories in terms of the woman's expectation of the future is Chopin's concentration on the exterior as opposed to Celal's on the interior. Melahat Hanim's attention is almost completely focused on the items, possessions, "things" around her inside the house. She tries to rid herself of the old things that are reminders of her past life with her husband, and, as she does so, she finds a fresh freedom in the ability to choose and buy what she surrounds herself with. Items she has replaced give her pleasure and come to manifest her future. The purchase of new red enamel pots, is just one example of this. Stating that she had tolerated for many years "the outdated house-hold items, the small kitchen, the blackened pots and pans", at the house in İzmir, she now arranged her red enamel pots and pans in an orderly fashion"[17] on the new racks in her kitchen. The next day, she has her breakfast facing these "red, enamel pots" and savours the pleasure she receives from this view of them, and the order and cleanliness around her. Each item she chooses to have in her life turns to represent her individuality and command of her new life, one that is not dictated by her husband.

The items that she concentrates on in order to create a new, orderly life are quite revealing in terms of displaying where Melahat Hanim's priorities lie. Firstly, the emphasis given in the title discloses her desire to create an "orderly" life, as opposed to the disorder the reader is supposed to assume dictated her previous life. The kitchen pots and pans mentioned above show her husband's disregard of appearances in favour of practicality, as well as his refusal to let Melahat Hanim to "order" even her own kitchen. Trapped as she is in her wifely duties inside this small kitchen, it is clear that she has no power even there. Her husband's death gives her the chance to enter the other rooms; the living room and bedroom are indicatively mentioned, and the opportunity to remove the items that do not belong solely to a kitchen that she can make her own. The broadening of Melahat Hanim's horizon, therefore, expands to other areas of the house, yet her efforts at ordering her life remains an interior effort. Mrs Mallard, on the other hand, looks through the window to the outside.

Mrs Mallard's awareness is much more subdued, gradual, and understated in "The Story of an Hour." It is the outside that engrosses her immediately; the interior objects serve more as instruments that draw her closer to her true desire. Let us consider, for example, this description of her actions after going into her room alone, following the news of her husband's death: "There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank,

[14] "Çok çekmişti kocasından zavallı. İçkici, kumarbaz, sorumsuz bir adam… Melahat Hanım onu sevmişti. Sevmese ailesinin karşı çıkmasına aldırmadan peşine takılıp İstanbul'da İzmir'e gelir miydi? İlk yıllar ballı börek… Sonrası tam bir hırlaşma içinde geçmişti," Celal, 1.

[15] "'Bundan sonra canım için yaşayacağım' diye, düşündü Melahat Hanım," Celal, 4.

[16] "Kocasının okuyup buruşturduktan sonar yatağın üstüne attığı dağılmış gazateler ne kadar sinirine dokunurdu. Eline almak istemezdi bir zaman. Sanki adam sayfaların içinde ne varsa sömürüp bitirmiş, kendisine okunacak bir şey bırakmamış gibi," Celal, 5.

[17] "Çok çilesini çekmişti köhne eşyaların, daracık mutfağın, dibi kararmış eski tencerelerin," Celal, 2.

pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul."[18] The comfortable, roomy armchair facing the window, it seems, is a statement of her married life. The prospect of freedom is right there, to be seen and observed from the window. The comfort of her domestic life —the armchair— has been like a prison for her, shielding her from the outside, the world of oppportunity, individuality, identity. Although roomy and comfortable, she "sinks" in it and is "pressed down" as if by force, in contrast to the open window that suggests a chance for freedom.

Melahat Hanim's tentative approach to a similar armchair contrasts with Mallard's blind acceptance of "sinking" into it. Soon after her perusal of the newspaper, she is described as follows: "Waiting for her friend to call, she perched gingerly on her new armchair in front of the window garlanded with flowers, as if afraid to wear it down. She then opened her newspaper."[19] In line with the declaration earlier on that she was determinedly going to enjoy her new life, her own armchair now becomes a symbol of this new life, and her tentative approach towards it reveals the fear that the dream may dissolve at any moment. The fear that she may "wear it down" reveals her own insecurity about ownership. The newspaper now belongs to her alone, it has not been disfigured in the hands of her husband, and this proprietorship of both it and the armchair is completely new for Melahat Hanim. The emphasis here is put on the armchair itself, not the window or the life outside it, as is the case in Chopin's story. Thus it is not the outside that promises her her freedom, but the inside (the armchair, the newspaper, the flowers). Her husband's aforementioned disregard of their possessions inside their house mirror his disregard of her, and her delicate treatment of her own possessions are indicative of the care she wants to show herself.

The new and unused condition of possessions around her continue to accentuate the suggestion of rebirth for Melahat Hanim, as does Mrs Mallard's contemplation of what she sees outside the window. Waking up in her own house on the first day, the narrator describes Melahat Hanim's elation stating: "it was as if there was new blood flowing in her veins, she felt so healthy and joyful"[20] . This new life is embraced by Mrs Mallard in a similar fashion. As soon as she allows herself to, she lets her lips slip the word "free, free, free," but only under her breath. Then, "Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body."[21] The exhiliration experienced by both characters upon enjoying their material and mental state of "aloneness" is clearly felt through the attention on the movement of their blood, thus life. Moreover, in Chopin's story, the coming of spring and regeneration of life is symbolic of Louise Mallard's new life. S. Selina Jamil clarifies stating: "As nature returns to life after winter, so Louise's emotions return to life after a prolonged winter of patriarchal confinement"[22]. For Mrs Mallard, the joy is accentuated by this promise of a new life that she sees from her window. Rather than focusing on objects inside the home, she directs her attention to the outside. Her "suspension of intelligent thought" as she looks out the window enables her to observe, "the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring of life," "patches of blue sky," "delicious breath of rain," "countless sparrows […] twittering" [23]. Each one of her senses is spoilt for choice by the richness of the promise of a new life.

Being Alone

This difference in focus (Melahat Hanim's on interior objects and Mrs Mallard's on exterior elements) may be due to inhabitants (or lack of them) in their houses. As Melahat Hanim is alone in her new abode, she is able to surround herself with articles of her own selection, and thus centres her attention on them. The house in İzmir will be transferred into her home in İstanbul and will become a symbol of her autonomy and therefore it is to the interior that she casts her eyes upon for comfort and peace. For Mrs Mallard, however, this is not the case. She is initially surrounded by people upon the news of her husband's death. Her sister Josephine is the one who gives her the news, and Mr Mallard's friend Richards is also in the house. Soon after the news is broken to her, her demeanor is described as, "she went

[18] Chopin, 213.

[19] "Dostunun telefonunu beklemek için gazetesi elinde, çiçekli penceresinin önündeki yeni koltuğuna eskitmekten korkar gibi nazikçe ilişip oturdu Melahat Hanım," Celal, 5.

[20] "Yeni bir kan akıyordu sanki damarlarında, öylesine sağlıklı, sevinçliydi," Celal, 4.

[21] Chopin, 214.

[22] S. Selina Jamil, "Emotions in 'The Story of an Hour,'" *The Explicator* 67, no. 3 (2009): 218.

[23] Chopin, 213.

away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her"[24]. This lifting of limitation on her freedom of movement as well as her desire to be alone evoke her awakening to the restrictions of the institution of marriage. The room thus becomes a prison from which the escape is not through the door (as her sister Josephine acts as guardian just outside), but through the open window. When she looks out, "she could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air [. . .] countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves"[25] . She sees, hears, feels, and smells these signs of spring and describes herself a bit later as "drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window"[26] . Hence, even though she is bodily inside, it seems, her soul is outside, enjoying rejuvenation of life.

An issue that needs to be addressed at this point is the fact that there is no evidence of children or even suggestion of them in either of these women's families. There is blatantly an *absence* of children in both. While neither their presence nor absence is commented on in "The Story of an Hour," the only mention of them in "Melahat Hanim's Orderly Life," is when Melahat Hanim is reading her favourite feminist's column in the newspaper. Quoting a woman who is dissatisfied with her life, she ruminates that women are seen as "maids" or "ornaments"[27]. A woman has written to the newspaper that she "just cannot satisfy her husband. Either the children are uncared-for or the food is tasteless"[28]. Melahat Hanim does not respond at all to this woman's task of looking after children or her own apparent lack of them. She comments that she feels pity for such women and concludes, "thank god she had attained her freedom"[29]. When discussing the relationship between man and wife, and seeing "freedom" as a way of escape from the confines of family life, it is traditionally often taken for granted that the domestic duties of the wife, apart from keeping her husband satisfied, is the rearing of the children. After all, the subordination of women within the institution of marriage has largely been due to her role as mother. As Gerda Lerner states, from the nineteenth century onwards, "As men institutionalized their dominance in the economy, in education, and in politics, women were encouraged to adjust to their subordinate status by an ideology which gave their maternal function higher significance"[30]. Since neither Mrs Mallard nor Melahat Hanim are biological mothers, in this sense they lose their caregiver function following the deaths of their spouses. Being childless enables them to think of enjoying an unrestrained life which would have been otherwise impossible. Thus the presence of children, biological or otherwise, could have prevented Melahat Hanim from enjoying the ordering of her new house and may arguably have prevented Mrs Mallard from looking out the window, both of which are done with the aim of initiating a new life. This new life is purely a personal one, with no responsibility outside of one's self.

The Death of the Wife

The irony shared by the stories is that unfortunately, neither author gives the women a chance to live out their newfound happiness. Both women die at the end of the stories, perhaps to suggest that even the supposed death of the husband does not allow the woman to establish or regain her individual identity, her fate is to be forever bound to his. Talking about death in connection with William Burroughs's *The Western Land*, Michael Taussig mentions that "that's what being dead is supposed to be about. Disappearance. But then there's this stuff that can't be quite contained creeping around the edges […]"[31]. The suspense in both stories gains strength through this creeping realization that it is not over, nor is anything new really beginning. The hesitancy of both characters in embracing their new lives gives away the final note that it will not last. "The Story of an Hour"[32] ends with the presumably dead husband returning home, and Mrs Mallard having a heart attack upon seeing him. The narrator sardonically concludes the story with the

[24] Chopin, 213.
[25] Chopin, 213.
[26] Chopin, 215.
[27] Celal, 6.
[28] "Gene de yaranamıyorum. Ya çocuklar bakımsız ya da yemekler tatsız," Celal, 6.
[29] "Şükrolsun kendisi özgürlüğüne kavuşmuştu," Celal, 6.
[30] Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (London: Oxford UP, 1986), 28.
[31] Michael Taussig, "Dying is an Art, like Everything Else," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 308.
[32] As the title accentuates, all this takes place within a single hour. This is an hour deserving its own story, possibly the most important hour in Louise Mallard's life. Rather than "A Story of *the* Hour," however, which would emphasize its being only Mrs Mallard's hour, it is called "The Story of *an* Hour," because it is an hour that signifies the fleeting freedom of all women within a patriarchal society with oppressive institutions, not only Mrs Mallard's. This choice then makes the title more universal and thus identifiable with women in general rather than being a unique experince for the protagonist.

claim, "When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease —of joy that kills"[33]. The "joy" mentioned here clearly necessitates the readers's recognition that the "joy" is also the unsung "it" mentioned earlier, which had been "too subtle and elusive to name"[34] yet was eventually expressed by the words "free, free, free." Therefore, the ending suggests quite the opposite of what it says, that it is in fact despair that kills Mrs Mallard, despair of losing the chance of living her own life. Lora E. Geriguis explains further, "Recognizing Louise's longing for the 'joy' of the more expansive world outside of her home renders Bentley's living body within the threshold of the front door as a metaphorical and material obstruction preventing Louise's escape to the wider natural world beyond him"[35]. Like Josephine's obstruction of Mrs Mallard's search for herself within the house by standing outside her room, Mr Mallard's physical presence within the house door reveals that she will be unable to find the "joy" outside either. In other words, just as she had become "Louise," and was ready to embrace life, she has to revert to being Mrs Mallard, and this is not an outcome that she desires.

Melahat Hanim's demise occurs in a more otherwordly and dubious fashion. The more she surrounds herself with possessions that she tries to individualise and order, the more haunted she begins to feel the ghost of her husband who persistently continues to control her life. He even invades her dreams and has sex with her, and this lingering presence causes her to have fits of tears throughout the day. "When the crying spells began, Melahat Hanim's furniture, flowers, kitchen, and even the red enamel pots and pans ceased to interest her"[36] details the narrator. Wherever Melahat Hanim looks after her initial euphoria about her new life, she comes across some evidence that her husband has not left. As Taussig states in "Dying is an Art, Like Everything Else," "It would be nice if the dead could be tucked away, far away, so there would be two worlds, one for the living and one for the dead"[37]. She sees that there would be no separate life and that throwing her husband's possessions away would not is be enough as his memory/spirit just would never leave her alone.

Her eventual death, which occurs in the last paragraphs of the story just like "The Story of an Hour," is narrated as follows:

> There were many rumours following Melahat Hanim's death. Some said it was her high blood pressure, some said it was her heart. Those closer to her suggested that she had taken one too many sleeping pills. Everyone felt sorry for Melahat Hanim. I mean, one couldn't help it. Just as soon as she had freed herself from a drunk and grumpy oaf and had put her life in order, to just die like that… [38]

Although the reader, like her close friends, is privy to the information that she had in fact been taking sleeping pills because of the dreams and the fits of weeping, there is still not adequate proof to suggest that her death is a suicide. The ending is ironic either way and it is clear that Melahat Hanim's husband has permeated her life so completely that freedom (or "order" in her case) is not possible.

In "Fatal Self-Assertion in Kate Chopin's 'The Story of an Hour,'" Lawrence I. Berkove claims that there is no sufficient evidence in the story to suggest that Louise Mallard suffered in her marriage or that it was an unhappy one, and that "[t]he simple truth is that this story is not about society or marriage, but Louise Mallard"[39]. While there is some truth in this suggestion, it is also true that the problem highlighted in this story is one that often goes unsaid. Her face, for instance, is described in the story of the one "whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength"[40]. Later on, it is clearly stated that "she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-

[33] Chopin, 213
[34] Chopin, 214.
[35] Lora E. Geriguis, "The 'It' and the 'Joy that kills:' An Ecocritical Reading of Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," *The Explicator* 78, no. 1 (2020): 5-8.
[36] "Ağlama nöbetleri başladığında eşyaları, çiçekleri, mutfağı, kırmızı emaye tencereleriyle ilgilenmez oldu Melahat Hanım," Celal, 11.
[37] Michael Taussig, "Dying is an Art, like Everything Else," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 307.
[38] "Melahat Hanım öldüğünde çok söylentiler çıktı. Kimileri tansiyondan, kimileri kaplten dediler. Yakınlarıysa yanlışlıkla uyku ilacını fazla kaçırdığını söylüyorlardı. Herkes çok acıdı Melahat Hanım'a. Eh, acınmayacak gibi de değildi. Yakınıp durduğu huysuz, sarhoş, kaba saba bir adamdan kurtulup tam yaşamını düzene koyduğu bir sırada…" Celal, 13.
[39] Lawrance I. Berkove, "Fatal Self-Assertion in Kate Chopin's 'The Story of an Hour,'" *American Literary Realism* 32, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 153.
[40] Chopin, 214.

creature"[41]. Louise Mallard's admission that "Often she had not [loved him]"[42], should be clear evidence that this story is indeed about marriage, and that it often encloses one in such a relationship that confines the woman much more, particularly in the nineteenth-century context of the story. But yes, it is of course about Mrs Mallard, it is the story of a life not lived on one's own terms, of missed opportunities, of dreams one did not even know one had.

It is not clear when exactly "Melahat Hanim's Orderly Life" was first written and published. Yet, a collection of stories that includes the story was published in 1999. There seems to be almost a hundred years between the two stories, as well as a huge geographical distance, however, Celal's story is strongly reminisicent of the former one. Melahat Hanim is far more outspoken and desirous of a new life as opposed to Louise Mallard's uncertainty towards it. She reads feminist newspaper columns and consciously compares the idyllic quality of her new life to the confined one of her marriage, where she was buried under household chores. As she reads the complaints of married women in her newspaper, she feels, "Melahat Hanım felt that both the letter writer and the columnist were kindred spirits. Thank God she herself had achieved her freedom"[43]. Similar to Berkove's claim above, Funda Bulut in "A Semiotic Look at 'Melahat Hanım's Orderly Life'" argues that Melahat Hanim's illness towards the end of the story suggests her remorse about trying to forget her husband and a yearning she will not admit to herself[44]. However, the haunting of the husband and his possessions should be read in a different manner. Throughout the story it is clearly indicated that Melahat Hanim was deeply unhappy during most of her marriage. Her inability to live her own life after his death, is due to these long years that have impaired her capacity to live without a "powerful will bending hers" as expressed in "The Story of an Hour"[45]. Her constant comparison of her recent ordered life to her past one is what alerts her to the realisation that she can not erase or make up for the past. Bulut further suggests that "Melahat Hanim gives up life because she becomes aware that she can not cope with loneliness and pain"[46], which certainly is not the case. When her doctor tells her "your nerves are shot, your subconscious is riddled with pain, regret, and yearning,"[47]. It is evident that her pain and yearning is about a life that was wasted because of her husband's presence, not about the loss of her husband.

Conclusion

"The sound of silence" that I refer to in my title signifies, in my reading of the stories, the lingering presence of the departed husbands which itself is a sign of the patriarchal constitution of the institution of marriage in these two stories. The initial reaction of the protagonists is a realisation that they had not dared to admit previously, that although they may have had a fondness towards their husbands, the marriage was an impediment on the development of their own identities. Mrs Mallard's shutting herself up in her room and looking outside for affirmation of a new life shows her turning her back on the hold that the house and the interior have on her. In a different way, Melahat Hanim strives to get rid of all evidence concerning her husband and her married life, and to replace them with new objects that signify her individuality in her new home. Unfortunately, in both cases the women are met with disappointment. Mrs Mallard dies when confronted with her husband's physical presence, and Melahat Hanim dies because she can not get rid of her husband's spiritual hold on her life. Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Peride Celal's "Melahat Hanım's Orderly Life" suggest that despite the time and place difference in the writing of these stories, the women protagonists are deafened by the sound of silence, that is, the impediments that their marraiges have brought upon them.

Extended Abstract

Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Peride Celal's ("Melahat Hanim's Orderly Life") both deal with newly widowed women who hesitantly yet joyously look forward to a new life without their husbands. The stories are brief

[41] Chopin, 214-5.
[42] Chopin, 215.
[43] "Baştan sona köşe yazarıyla ve ona mektup yazan o zavallı kadınla birlikteydi Melahat Hanım. Şükrolsun kendisi özgürlüğüne kavuşmuştu," Celal, 6.
[44] Funda Bulut, "'Melahat Hanımın Düzenli Yaşamı'na Göstergebilimsel Açıdan Bakış," *Turkish Studies: International Periodical fort he Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic* 7, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 718.
[45] Chopin, 214.
[46] "Yalnızlık ve acıyla baş edemeyeceğini anlayan Melahat Hanım, yaşamdan vazgeçer," Bulut, "'Melahat Hanımın Düzenli Yaşamı'na Göstergebilimsel Açıdan Bakış," 720.
[47] "Sinileriniz zayıflamış, bilinçaltında acılar, özlemler, pişmanlıklar…," Celal, 12.

accounts of a fleeting expectancy of a new life, with not much additional detail; there is no hint as to at what stage of life the women are, for how long they have been married, or even whether they have children or not. The stories concentrate on a short span of time following the news of the deaths of the husbands. The anticipation of a new life ensuing the event is thinly veiled under expressions of grief and sadly is not materialised for either character in any satisfactory sense. In fact, both protagonists are killed off before they are even given a chance to try to live outside of the constraints of matrimony. Having not been allowed a life on their own terms throughout their married years, it is only after the deaths of their spouses that the protagonists come to a realisation of these limits on their freedom, identity, and individuality. A desire for a new kind of life, one that can be lived without limitations, is only tentatively embraced, yet, the stories suggest that their husbands have permeated their lives so completely that freedom in any sense just is not possible.

Although one would assume that once the women achieve deliverance from the constraints of marriage that they would enjoy a fulfilling individual life by reclaiming (or indeed newly claiming) their personal identity, the stories seem to suggest that due to an essential internalized patriarchal sense of inferiority, even the absence of the husband impedes any such endeavour. Despite indicating hope of "freedom" initially, neither story propounds an alternative life of emancipated liberty; either because the characters are merely seen as not capable, or because they do not believe that they deserve it, or on account of their childlessness and therefore "purposelessness" in life.

Despite quite a number of similar incidents in the stories, it would be erronous to suggest that the idea of a lingering presence of the husbands is given in the same way in the two stories, as the treatment of both women's glimpses of freedom is quite different, as well as the endings of the stories. The main plot arc is alike; for instance, upon the deaths of their husbands, the two protagonists react in a predictable manner. .Mrs. Mallard's immediate reaction of weeping over the death of her husband revals that she's quick to grasp the "significance" of the situation. It is as if she has no time for the stages of grief, but skips to the end and accepts immediately, ready for the next stage of her own life.

The irony shared by the stories is that unfortunately, neither author gives the women a chance to live out their newfound happiness. Both women die at the end of the stories, perhaps to suggest that even the supposed death of the husband does not allow the woman to establish or regain her individual identity, her fate is to be forever bound to his. The hesitancy of both characters in embracing their new lives gives away the final note that it will not last. "The Story of an Hour" ends with the presumably dead husband returning home, and Mrs Mallard having a heart attack upon seeing him.

"The sound of silence" referred to in the title signifies, in my reading of the stories, the lingering presence of the departed husbands which itself is a sign of the patriarchal constitution of the institution of marriage in these two stories. The initial reaction of the protagonists is a realisation that they had not dared to admit previously, that although they may have had a fondness towards their husbands, the marriage was an impediment on the development of their own identities. Mrs Mallard's shutting herself up in her room and looking outside for affirmation of a new life shows her turning her back on the hold that the house and the interior have on her. In a different way, Melahat Hanim strives to get rid of all evidence concerning her husband and her married life, and to replace them with new objects that signify her individuality in her new home. Unfortunately, in both cases the women are met with disappointment. Mrs Mallard dies when confronted with her husband's physical presence, and Melahat Hanim dies because she can not get rid of her husband's spiritual hold on her life. Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Peride Celal's "Melahat Hanım's Orderly Life" suggest that despite the time and place difference in the writing of these stories, the women protagonists are deafened by the sound of silence, that is, the impediments that their marraiges have brought upon them.

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