

## Introduction

There are countless stories in this world, which come with various themes. The list goes from family, survival, and friendship to war, fear, and revenge. They can be predictable and easy to read, while others can be unpredictable and difficult to digest. Some stories are lengthy and elaborate, while others are short and thrilling. Nevertheless, writing stories will always be challenging regardless of the length. Short stories can also be elaborate. Klarer (1999) states that a key characteristic that is frequently associated with short stories is their sense of unity since they can be read continuously in one sitting, unlike a novel.

Since it is restricted in length, the short story's storyline must be highly focused and usually concentrates on a point of view. A short story also connects the action through the eyes of one specific character or narrator. Because short stories are usually quite brief, it is crucial to focus on essential elements, such as plot twists, which are necessary to create memorable and impactful stories. According to Stern (1991), a plot twist is an unexpected development in the story that shocks the readers and changes the direction of the story. In a short story, a plot twist becomes even more critical since it has to be appropriately crafted to make the most impact within the limited word count.

There are four popular plot twists that are used in stories. The first one is called the red herring, which creates suspense and misleads the audience (Forster, 1927). The second one is the unreliable narrator, where a false perspective is used to trick the audience (Booth, 1961). The next one is peripetia or a sudden reversal. The last one is anagnorisis, which refers to a moment of large discovery or recognition. Both peripetia and anagnorisis were both explored by Aristotle in "Poetics."

Various short stories use plot twist to leave a significant impact on readers. Some popular examples are "The Gift of the Magi" (1905) by O. Henry and "The Lottery" (1948) by Shirley Jackson. O. Henry used a plot twist in "The Gift of the Magi" to emphasize the concept of unselfish love. The main characters, Jim and Della, exchange gifts by selling their most valuable possessions, only to find that their sacrifices made the gifts useless. As for "The Lottery," Shirley Jackson targeted societal norms by using a plot twist. The story opens with an apparently normal small-town incident that turns into a vicious ritualistic stoning. The readers' perceptions of society practices are changed by the shocking and violent turn of events, which drives them to face the dark side of tradition. The plot twists in these stories do not only surprise the readers, but they are also successful in creating lasting impressions.

Other examples of short stories that use plot twists include "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin and "Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl. The plot twists in both stories are critical for the readers to understand the female characters and the restrictions they face because of their gender at that time. Both stories fall into the anagnorisis type since the stories feature plot twists that create drastic changes and reveal new insights into the main characters. Anagnorisis was first discussed by Aristotle. Munteanu (2002) states that Aristotle defined anagnorisis or recognition as a transition from ignorance to knowledge that brings a shift in

feelings and deals with fortune and misfortune. In the short stories, the main characters' feelings transform, bringing significant changes to the plots.

Both "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin and "Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl share some similar characteristics. First, they have housewives as the main characters who have to navigate unexpected conflicts and experience internal transformations. Mrs. Mallard of "The Story of an Hour" and Mary Maloney of "Lamb to the Slaughter" face conflicts that are rooted in their relationships with their husbands. Mrs. Mallard feels oppressed by her marriage and societal expectations; she craves independence upon hearing about her husband's death. In "Lamb to the Slaughter", Mary Maloney is bound by her role as a well-mannered housewife, but she encounters a surprising shift when her husband announces that he wants to leave her.

Second, both stories incorporate plot twists that reveal the real feelings and needs of these characters. Mrs. Mallard's initial sadness changes into a sense of freedom. However, Mrs. Mallard's new sense of freedom is ended by her husband's unexpected return. Meanwhile, Mary Maloney's impulsive act of murder reflects her shock, and her cunning way to cover her crime is a strategy to protect her unborn child. Comparing Mrs. Mallard and Mary Maloney allows the readers to observe women's experiences through the perspectives of two authors: Kate Chopin and Roald Dahl. The ways Mrs. Mallard and Mary Maloney react to conflicts highlight different forms of resilience and action. While one did a dangerous action, the other found temporary freedom in imagined independence. These stories give examples of how women react to problems in situations where men's roles and desires are regarded as more important.

Lastly, by exploring these short stories using Woolf's feminist perspective (1929), this research can reveal the real feelings, needs, and capabilities of women when they are given the space to do so. By revealing the main characters' real struggles, this study may provide an idea of how literature can be used to challenge patriarchal culture, which can lead to social change. Thus, the findings of this study can present insights into how literary elements can help to promote equality.

The data in this study were analyzed using Virginia Woolf's feminist perspective (1929). Her perspective emphasizes the restrictions women face in many aspects of their social lives. First, women during Woolf's time were not allowed to get an education. For example, she was forbidden to get an education at Oxford and Cambridge universities. This information indicates that it was impossible for women to get into universities in that period. Second, women faced inequalities because of social restrictions, which limited women to their homes and isolated them from public life. Moreover, a woman was expected to take care of the children at home when her husband mostly maintained his life outside. As time progresses and societal rules change, these restrictions also change. Nowadays, women have gained more independence compared to the women in Woolf's time. However, these kinds of restrictions are still evident in daily life as well as in literary works. Restrictions to women in literary works also appear in the two short stories that are discussed in this study. Therefore, Virginia Woolf's perspective was applied to the two chosen short stories.

The perspective especially appears in *A Room of One's Own*. Her perspective was studied by Abel (1993). Abel stated that for Woolf, producing a literary work is the same as giving birth. The difference is that giving birth is part of femininity, but writing is not. Similarly, women in Woolf's writing, also did not have a choice in marriages. A woman could only dream of getting married to a man of her own choice and dedicate her life to domestic life. The two things, being a mother and a wife, do not guarantee that a woman has enough rights. Abel (1993) concluded that in that context a woman did not have a room where she could freely be herself. Abel strengthened her conclusion by quoting Woolf, "For all the dinners are cooked; the plates and cups washed; the children sent to school and gone out into the world. Nothing remains of it all. All has vanished. No biography or history has a word to say about it." (Woolf, 1929, p.75). This quotation indicates that in Woolf's case, women lost their identities within the domestic boundaries and no writing occurred for women.

In her book, *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf was excluded from Oxbridge, she wrote: "Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me." (Woolf, 1929, p.5). Marcus (2000) quoted Woolf's sentence and argued that the physical barriers also interrupted Woolf's flow of thoughts and prevented her from accessing the intellect and imagination grounds preserved for men. However, these barriers did not entirely inhibit Woolf's thoughts, but redirected them. She stated that *A Room of One's Own* was about thought and the possibilities of thought (Marcus, 2000). In other words, it is about making a room for women to think for themselves and explore their thoughts and capabilities.

Various researchers have studied "The Story of an Hour" and "Lamb to the Slaughter" separately, gaining diverse interpretations. A study argued that "The Story of an Hour" depicts the impacts of oppression and suppression under patriarchy over a woman's existence. Chopin revealed that independence is crucial for women. Mrs. Mallard shows that women must be allowed to liberate themselves from the constraints of society and marriage and to improve their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and senses. However, Mrs. Mallard's temporary freedom cannot support her dream because she cannot think of her own possessions and freedom as long as she is married (Karami & Zohdi, 2015). The second story, "Lamb to the Slaughter," has also intrigued some researchers. Tanusy (2018) analyzed the semiotic components of the story. She claimed that in the beginning, women's inferiority was emphasized. However, Mary Maloney's character is actually dominant. Her dominance does not begin when she murders her husband, and she only strengthens it when she does. Another study by Lai (2020) discovered that Dahl emphasized the contrast between the roles of men and women only to reverse the portrayals. He also related the story with radical feminism and argued that Mary Maloney experiences interpersonal and ideological oppression because she barely has any power and rights in the patriarchal society.

As for the differences in a female character's authentic self in her own room compared to her personality in public, a study by Edmondson (2012) analyzed the differences between the "private" and "public" selves of Mrs. Dalloway in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). The study challenged the popular belief

that Woolf was mainly interested in the inner selves of her characters, arguing instead that Woolf depicts a complex interaction between her characters' private and public selves. She found that by utilizing a shifting focalization, Mrs. Dalloway demonstrates how her relationships with others impact her inner self and provides readers access to both her thoughts and the perspectives of those around her.

As previously explained, various researchers have studied "The Story of an Hour" (1894) and "Lamb to the Slaughter." However, a study that specifically analyses the plot twists of both stories and how they create a "room" for the main characters to make their voices heard is still rare. Thus, based on the explanation above, a comparison of women's experiences in "Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl and "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin might give insight into women's lives. It might also contribute to women's studies in literature. With reference to Woolf and the concept of anagnorisis plot twist, this study discusses how both authors build a room for women in their respective short stories to voice their relationships with men around them, in this case, their husbands. This study formulates the following question:

- How do the two texts use anagnorisis plot twists to create a "room" for the female characters to make their voices heard?