The Story of an Hour

The title of the short story, “The Story of an Hour” could refer to the urgency of the theme, or issue, that Kate Chopin is addressing. It could describe the story’s brevity, as the time that passes between the news of Mr. Mallard’s supposed death and his sudden reappearance was depicted as a short amount of time in the story. The title of the movie, “The Joy that Kills” most likely reflects the shift in tone and telling of the original story. The short story was more of a topical outcry of the culture and society of the era, while the movie’s interpretation is more aligned with that of a Greek tragedy. The aforementioned ‘Joy’ seemingly refers to the emotions that Mrs. Mallard feels when it is revealed that Mr. Mallard survived his ordeal and is ironically the killing force that Mr. Mallard was attempting his whole life to avoid. Mr. and Mrs. Mallard share a marriage of convenience, where the two have ulterior motives for being together rather than out of love or commitment as written in the line, “the face that had never looked save with love upon her” ( Page 2, Paragraph 5 ). In the movie, Mr. and Mrs. Mallard share a loving, intimate, but strenuous relationship, where they do express their love for one another frequently though various activities when the two are together. This is hampered heavily by Mrs. Mallard’s heart condition that results in Mr. Mallard becoming a controlling, overprotective, fearful man that puts his wife’s safety above her enjoyment. Mr. Brently Mallard is a controlling, or domineering, man in both the short story and the movie, however his motivations for being this way are different between both depictions. His choices and fears impact the entirety of his wife’s life from what she is capable of doing each day, for the foreseeable future, how she is permitted to interact with others, and ultimately what spells her doom in the story’s conclusion. The flashbacks in the movie of Mrs. Mallard’s father show the building of a trauma that would carry on into her adult life. It appears that Mrs. Mallard’s mother was lost early in her childhood and the affected how Mrs. Mallard’s father would raise her moving forward into a similar nature to that of her future marriage. Irony is primarily present in the movie adaptation’s final scene. The entire movie and the character of Mr. Mallard is building up to this conclusion by having him be a man in constant fear for his wife’s health and doing everything in his power to avoid the inevitable. The irony comes into play when Mr. Mallard returns home smiling to greet his wife and the resulting joy that this brings her causes her fatal heart attack. Where Mr. Mallard attempted to be her savior, he is ironically the cause of her demise. This whole scene in the movie is the reason behind the title of, “The Joy that Kills”. The book, however, has the joy come from a different source due to it’s topical nature in that the ‘Joy’ is not the joy of seeing Mr. Mallard again, but instead the joy that is ripped from her heart when it is made clear that the freedom she just experienced is ripped from her life.

“Hector”

Hector Apostolou is a forty-year-old man, lightly graying brown hair that prefers to dress in either business attire, or business casual. Hector is seen to be quite dissatisfied with how his life has turned out, both in business and family life. He doesn’t receive the promotion to deputy commissioner despite his education, experience, drive, etc. which affects his overall sense of self-worth. His attitude towards his homelife ranges from simple avoidance and dryly going through the motions, to lashing out at his wife verbally during any contention he may have to deal with and for a brief time Hector performs acts of infidelity with the family babysitter Connie. Hector is a man that is opposed to any sort of conflict in his life and will attempt to placate others that are easier to talk to rather than stand up where he knows he morally should. Despite his best efforts, it’s clear that he is also very poor at talking to others about certain difficult subjects and tends to exacerbate problems that he would otherwise want resolved then and there. Hector perceives himself as having either not having done enough in life for someone in his position and is willing to entertain certain actions in order to do what he feels he should’ve already done, or he feels that he is owed more in life and that others have received better treatment in comparison that he sees as an injustice. While Hector’s wife Aisha has called him, “The last good man in New York” it is apparent to me that Hector doesn’t feel the same way given his ongoing affairs and daydreaming of a life away from her. He is only just able to regain some sense of what other’s see in him by severing his current hidden relationship with Connie later confesses to this to Aisha as some form of penance. While I can fault him for his past actions in comparison to my own life, I can’t exactly fault him when comparing Hector to the rest of his circle. The entirety of this gaggle of miscreants has far since surpassed Hector and his somewhat morally gray actions. When Hector takes Harry over to the home of Rosie, Gary, and Hugo, he is attempting to avoid additional conflict that he may have to deal with, as well as he is trying to protect Harry from this situation if it’s allowed to fester. There is some inklings that he is doing this for Rosie’s sake as well given what could happen if the lawsuit is allowed to continue. Hector feels disappointed in himself for not being able to do what he feels is the best for all parties involved, as well as exasperated by the fact that Hector knows this is only going to get worse now that this one chance has slipped by. Hector is almost subservient to his parents, as he is likely used to doing what he’s told from them, partaking in the close-knit nature of the Greek family, and how stubborn his immediate family can be and so finds Aisha the easier of the two to deal with. While Hector is initially the only one to be seen as dissatisfied with their marriage, it is revealed that the strenuous relationship between the two has caused the same for Aisha when she nearly engages in adultery with a former colleague. I would characterize Hector as a troubled man who lack of discipline results in several of the problems in his life, and that he still needs guidance in his life from wiser folk. Hector intended to be able to meet with Connie during his birthday, while he wanted to see her romantically, he instead breaks all ties to her at the party.

“Harry and Rosie”

Harry and Rosie differ greatly in the way they perceive how the world should work and how they decide to interact with the world as well. Harry is very much of the mindset that the anger he feels and expresses is his primary source for the energy and drive that has given him the financial success that he enjoys. His worldview is that one of determination, willpower, and old Greek mindsets, that also expand into his actions and excuses for what he does at points. Rosie on the other hand isn’t as angry as Harry, nor does she use her anger for her pursuits, but she is far more emotional than Harry is and arguably equally as expressive given how Harry was able to maintain himself for a time during their later apology meeting where Rosie seemingly cannot. They have diametrically opposed viewpoints on how to raise a child, and how they view their children despite them being similar in how protective they are of them. Sometime Harry sees himself as a self-made man in a world that has permitted him to rise from just a poor immigrant to the wealthy man he is today, but he has also lashed out at the world when he feels betrayed by it, in allowing the “Rosie’s, Gary’s, and Hugo’s of the world” to do such an injustice to him. This is further elaborated on by his wife who tells Aisha that, “No matter how successful he gets, no matter how much money he has, he will always feel like the poor Greek immigrant…” explaining he has a deeper resentment towards himself. His home by the water is described to be in the style of his parents home villa in Greece, as well as having his own personal strappings of success added on. This does reflect his love of his parents, his Greek heritage, his love for his wife and son, and how he wishes to ensure that the world is aware of this fact as well as his economic success to which he mentions often. As mentioned previously, he still retains some of the Old Greek mentalities that were patriarchal focus, and this coupled with his extravagant wealth has given him the capability and excuses to himself to practice infidelity behind his wife’s back. There are a few lesser moments where he attempts to solve situations by using said wealth to either convince others to do what he wants or make problems go away and assumes that his wealth is the primary issue people have with him. This behavior, while completely alien to me, is seemingly very typical of the undisciplined circles of the higher economic echelons of society. Harry’s anger has served him well in his mind as measured by the results of his aspirations. He is well off financially, doing what he loves each day, he has the family he has always wanted, and most problems that arise are solved by the drive and energy that his anger has provided. Harry is an adulterer, but even with that said he still feels an unshakable sense of protection and care for his family as he explains to Rosie when she attempts to end the suit. Rosie is a very free-spirited and emotional similar in some respects to Harry that she believes the world is out to get her and has mistreated her in the past, which causes her to believe the same will happen to Hugo if she drops her guard for even a second. She is very hesitant to blame herself for the problems with either her son or her life, and instead chooses to see guilt in those around her including her own husband that she lashes out at regularly. Rosie’s home erratic and her clothing is what I can only describe as non-conforming, preferring to live a life eschewing normal decorum and behavior. Gary is seen as a part of the family based on Rosie’s mood at the time, where she will act as a loving partner one moment and in another where he disagrees with her worldview, or actions, he is treated with hostility. In my opinion, I see Rosie as someone who is mentally disturbed, possibly from past trauma that she has associated her son Hugo and Harry with as some sort of parallel. Rosie sees parenting in a very doting free manner, where she allows Hugo to do as he pleases and rushes to his defense and care at the slightest provocation as she did when she breastfed Hugo after he was maltreating Hector’s records.