

Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" has been taught and analyzed almost exclusively from a feminist perspective. As Lawrence Berkove writes, "There has been a virtual critical agreement on what the story says: its heroine dies, ironically and tragically, just as she has been freed from a constricting marriage and has realized self-assertion as the deepest element of her being" (1). In his 1909 "Futurist Manifesto," Filippo Marinetti gushes, "Time and Space died yesterday. While we don't know for certain why Mr. Mallard would have been riding a train that day, Chopin describes him later as "a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella," bringing to mind the image of a commuter returning home from a day at the office (Chopin). In Chopin's St. Louis, for example, the population had quintupled in her lifetime, as people moved away from their farms and into the cities (Gibson). The railroads, and the urbanization and industrialization that they symbolized and enabled, were changing how and where people worked. Railroads meant that where people lived and where they worked could be far apart, giving rise to the commuter lifestyle (and the word commuter) (Paumgarten).