

SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSE OF VIOLENCE IN THE SHORT STORIES OF ROALD DAHL

Mr.Japneet Kaur¹ ,Dr. Dinesh Kumar Sharma²

^{1,2}Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo

Abstract:

Dahl's short storey assortments, Someone Like You, Kiss, Kiss, and Switch Bitch, were striking for being blockbusters in a market overwhelmed by books and journals when they were at their top in the last part of the 1940s and 1950s. Dahl's accounts seem to have sold all around the world in an assortment of dialects, and they seem to have acquired him a superstar (Howard 2004). Some of them were even adjusted for the little screen by Alfred Hitchcock, who released them as Tales of the Unexpected to a worldwide audience. The stories were definitely influential, according to Philip Howard, who sees them as "trendsetters of the popular 1960s black comedy genre" (Howard 2004). Other notable works of the period bear their imprint, such as Ernest Bloch's Psycho, which has striking similarities to Dahl's short storey 'The Landlady' and includes the type of surprising ending Dahl favoured.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The short-story form did not develop steadily in Britain, but Katherine Mansfield, Oscar Wilde, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Graham Greene, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Thomas Mann, and others will be remembered for their contributions. Each represented a distinct literary school and experimented with the form. Conrad's sea stories, Wilde's fairy stories, Kipling's animal stories, Joyce's Dublin stories, Mansfield's autobiographical stories, and a slew of other collections infused short stories with grandeur. Several techniques and ideas were tested, including the stream-of-consciousness method, psychological approaches, catholic views, aestheticism, and others. Short stories, on the other hand, had to fight for survival as writers focused more on novels and plays. Latin American writers began to publish stories as well. Their stories were built on their history, heroes, national mythologies, political persecution, religious indoctrination, and struggle for independence. Realist and naturalist themes began to infiltrate the form during the second part of the nineteenth century, while scientific themes began to infiltrate the form by the end of the twentieth century. In the periodicals that took an interest in publishing short descriptions of diverse communities and regions, the rising writers portray Latin American literature. The short storey rose to prominence with Esteban Echeverria's "The Slaughter House." Ri, chardo Palma was a pivotal role in the evolution of the form's style and organisation. Horacio Quiroga and Romulo Gallegos were the first to achieve international renown, with the latter being the first to improve on modern stories. Jorge Luis Borges was a well-known Latin American author because his stories are philosophical puzzles that favour violence. The short storey by Gabriel Garcia Marquez ushered in a new genre known as

Magic Realism. Others have left an indelible mark on the history of short stories through their names and works. The great ideologies of Franz Kafka and Albert Camus were the meaninglessness of modern man's existence, as well as his fears and loneliness. After the two world wars, German short stories progressed significantly. The short-story authors learned unheard-of realities from the battles. They wrote from a place of hatred and despair for life. Almost all prominent writers, such as Henrik Boyle, Else Eishinger, and Martin Bower, have written on the wars' aftermath.

2. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF CRITICAL ACCOUNTS OF DAHL'S VIOLENCE

"(T)his is the archetypal Dahl storey: quick, satirical – and savage," notes Alan Warren in his analysis of Dahl. Warren (1988, p. 10) "Roald Dahl's stories always have a horrible sting in the tail," says John Grigsby (Grigsby 1994: 47). As has been well recognised, Dahl's 'brutality,' or envisioned viciousness, is a significant part of his brief tales. Nonetheless, this equivalent savagery has intrigued and astounded commentators, and Dahl seems to have tried not to stand up to requests about it to keep up with the center secret of the accounts. Along these lines, or maybe as a result of it, a great deal of endeavors have been made to represent the savagery in Someone like You, Kiss, Kiss, and Switch Bitch, thus to rationalize the gathered stories. Nonetheless, I am sceptical about the veracity of these tales. I'll explain why I believe such reports are incorrect, but first I'll explain what they claim.

The most popular critical analysis of Dahl's violence, it appears to me, is that it is ultimately moral. "These are truly moral tales," writes Naomi Lewis of *The New Statesman* of the stories. If something goes wrong, you'll end up with some strange deserts" (Warren 1998: 10) J.D. O'Hara, writing in *The New Republic*, says:

Our Supreme Master of Wickedness lacks sufficient knowledge on the matter. He isn't evil or even appealing. In three of *Switch Bitch's* four stories, the villains receive their comeuppance, so he's not even titillating. He is no longer willing to leave the reader with a sense of triumphant nastiness (O' Hara 1974: 23).

Dahl's viciousness has been viewed as the regular aftereffect of self-centeredness and self-centredness (West 1992: 48), which makes characters lose their ethical course (West 1992: 37). As indicated by Mark West, Dahl's accounts' brutality is established on an investigation of "abnormal kinds of reckless way of behaving" (West 1992: 35). Dahl's "mercilessness is seldom unwarranted; it is utilized to delineate a person's awful nature, and it is generally reimbursed in kind or more awful, "as indicated by Robert (Carrick 2002: 40). Notwithstanding, there has been a second part of scrutinize that has made sense of Dahl's viciousness "as cruel, standoffish, and misanthrope" in striking difference to these last readings, which have been most lenient in regards to Dahl's objectives (Howard 2004). The "freakishly surprising" part of Dahl's viciousness (Warren 1985: 121) has made this school of analysis upset its restoration into an ethically determined, reprisal based structure. Somebody like you, for instance, had "veritable story keenness" yet in addition "dismalness and a

specific flippant fierceness," as per an anonymous commentator in *The Times Literary Supplement* on June 11, 1954. (Carrick 2002: 40). The stories of *Switch Bitch*, according to Victoria Glendinning of *The New Statesman*, are "violent and pure erotic fantasies about women" that adopt a veneer of virtue to appease "lechers" (Glendinning 1974). Two more reactions to Dahl's work have come from the difficulties of reading morals into his work. Some commentators have simply claimed that "Dahl, at least in his adult fiction, is unconcerned with morals" in their work (Warren 1998: 10). Dahl was hailed as "no moralist, no profound seer-but a great craftsman" by Malcolm Bradbury in the *New York Times Book Review* (Warren 1998: 10). Pundits have described Dahl's brutality as focused on style more than purpose. A part of scrutinize has set Dahl's brutality in his own encounters and perspective, focusing on the aimless person of Dahl's viciousness yet finding esteem in this very unconventionality of savagery. Dahl's point of view on life, informed by horrible chance occurrences, is described by the unpredictability of the violence. Michael Billington, for example, makes educated assumptions.

Mr. Dahl's fascination with revenge and sadomasochistic relationships stemmed from his exposure to lashing and other forms of sanctioned cruelty while a student at an English private school (Billington 1990).

According to John Grigsby,

"the key qualities of Dahl's worldview and consequently his fiction originate from horrific, horrifying experiences, thus it is not strange that the fiction is bizarre, fantastic, and even disgusting to some" (Grigsby 1994: 41).

As a result, the viciousness has been classified as moral, horrible and hostile to social, exclusively stylish, or tumultuous and existential. Up to this point, four significant and particular, while perhaps not profoundly incongruous, clarifications of what Dahl's brutality implies - assuming that it makes a difference by any means - have emerged. Dahl's violence appears to have been sufficiently comprehended and explained. However, such accounts, in my opinion, do not appear to stem from a meaningful engagement with the work, but rather from the author's own prejudices. This is mirrored in criticism's seeming failure to understand the situations in which Dahl's violence occurs, as well as the sources from which it arises in the accounts. Dahl's viciousness, for instance, is obviously portrayed by "some sort of vengeance, typically of man or lady or lady on man" (Vannatta 1985: 86). Aside from the sexist analysis of Dahl's work, none of different areas of analysis have tended to the subject of brutality coming about because of existing orientation relations.

Even though these are important issues, many reviewers haven't paid much attention to Dahl's own theory of his work. They think he's not a good reader of what he's written, or that he doesn't know how important it is. Dahl, on the other hand, appears to be very important in understanding the meaning of his short stories. So far, this kind of conversation has not been very common. In an early interview, Dahl said that Ambrose Bierce's short story "The Death of Halpin Frayser" "profoundly captivated and undoubtedly inspired" (Wintle and Fisher

1974: 111) his writing. This storey is about a young man who goes home for a few weeks, despite his mother's gloomy prediction. It's told in an indirect way with a few obtuse investigators and a disorganised narrative. Her throat is slit by another guy while he is away, and she dies. Halpin seeks vengeance on her and subsequently lives as a vagabond. The next sentence demonstrates that the unconscious tension "innate" incestuous urges and "traditional" understandings of the relationship between a mother and a son are at odds with each other gives substance to the storey:

The most perfect sympathy existed between [Halpin] and his mother... She'd always been careful to keep her flaw hidden from everybody but those with whom she shared it. Their shared remorse in this matter constituted a further link between them. If Halpin's mother had 'spoiled' him as a child, he had undoubtedly contributed to his spoiling. As he grew into manhood, his bond with his lovely mother grew stronger and tenderer each year. The supremacy of the sexual element in all life relationships, strengthening, smoothing, and beautifying even consanguinity, was manifested in a striking fashion in these two romantic natures. They were nearly inseparable, and strangers who saw their demeanour usually mistook them for lovers (Bierce 1926: pp 14-15).

Dahl reveals his obsession with this short storey, which uses violence to reconcile a perverted relationship or want between a mother and her child. For sure, he admits that it has propelled his work, inferring that the viciousness in his brief tales may likewise assist with settling a child's yearning for a mother, a cultural untouchable and, from a post-Freudian viewpoint, an obvious objective for constraint.

3. PSYCHOANALYSING VIOLENCE IN DAHL'S SHORT STORY NARRATIVE

a) Narrative and Repressed Violence in *Someone Like You*

The two short stories 'Skin' and 'Man from the South' in a violent act against a body in Dahl's first three major collections, and the one that marked him breaking away from realistic, war-based short stories in *Over To You*, is found in all of them. It's easy to show that this violence is well-known, and it doesn't take long. If a boy has a relationship with a mother, at least one of these stories talks about it in some way, whether it's very clear or not at all. If you look at "Skin," for example, you see that the boy is Soutine, an artist. The mother is the wife of the man who helped him get started. He comes from the U.S., and he's a young American. The maternal figure is the nasty old man's wife.

If you look at the stories that link violence to symbolic incest and the issue of control in a symbolic son-mother relationship, I think you will start to see a trend. The son's movements are limited around the powerful, all-powerful mother in "Skin," the storey of fleecing and being fleeced, the storey of "hide and seek" that tells the wolf from the sheep, and the storey of Drioli, the former art patron, who was killed and skinned for the valuable tattoo on his back. Violence may have been caused by the father taking advantage of his son, the young

painter Soutine, for Drioli's wife, Josie. "Knew that he only had to name his wife, and the youngster's thick brown lips would start to droop and move" (CSS 522). When a child is too dependent on his mother, his desire for her, as well as his state of intoxication or altered consciousness, is important to the creation of the taboo, which depicts a picture of the mother's head. This turns Drioli into a human "coin" through the son's exploitation.

A weak, voluntary, and superficial act of symbolic violence is what Soutine, the painter, does to Drioli, who is the object of his desire. Soutine tattoos the image of the maternal figure, which is the object of his desire, on his flesh. What does Drioli say? "The needle flies and pierces your skin, and then you're there." This is what he says to people who come to see him (CSS 523). It looks like tattooing the sexual act under the father's control is a "cultured stab," or a "weak, repressed phallic hatred of the dependent son against the canvas of the powerful father who stands in the way of prosperity and a relationship with the mother." Cultural artefacts that are "twisted, tortured," as CSS 525 puts it, are the result of violence, lunacy, and misery. They are hidden on the hide and reconcile the body to culture. The storey says that this repression of desire and violence must happen in the father's home, which is Drioli's. But when Drioli, a vagrant widower, enters an art gallery filled with the spirit, the aura of Soutine through his work, the place where the son's power appears absolute, unlimited, he can't help but feel the son's power. Drioli is completely a slave to another person's desire and w
Repressed: The painting of the mother's body, which is now covered, squiggled on the form of the father (CSS 527) - in other words, hidden away - comes back to life in an uncanny way.*in the hide comes outof hiding*, Drioli submits to the son's desire and will of violence and mastery.

The significance Some of the violence that isn't explicitly shown is shown by how the storey ends. It turns out that Drioli, the sacrificial animal or "lamb to be slaughtered," turns into an infant at the end of the storey. He becomes like the son when the son thinks he can take over his mother's body and power. The painting the mother did comes to be owned by the famous artist and not the father. In CSS 531, Drioli's wife thinks about how Soutine's lips were slack and wet when she thought about him. Drioli's figure now shrinks while Soutine, who is likely dead, is brought back to life and gains the stature of fame and achievement (CSS 527). Drioli is now the one who has to depend on, be a victim, and be a sheep. His hunger makes him have to sell himself to satisfy it, so he ends up becoming its prey, Drioli is the coin that must be spent or bought in order to be worth anything. Indeed, the skin must be peeled off his back, or he will be "ripped off." So, the person who pays for the art becomes the person who is paid for. The person who takes advantage of others becomes the person who is taken advantage of. Drioli is built up as a victim of Soutine, the son who has become the father, though through the help of a disguised art dealer and ambiguous innuendos in the reader's mind. It isn't clear that Drioli is dead; it is only very plausible. Soutine, the son as the father, appears to have seen Drioli as useless flesh that took up the place of the son's mastery - his artistic fame and wealth as a symbol of his symbolic possession of the mother's body and the creative resources that flow from it. This is despite the ambiguity it - near the end of the

storey. Indeed, the posthumous skinning of the sheep-son-father by the son-father-shepherd reveals a muddled fictional stance of (Christian) God-like authority.

4. NARRATIVE AND REPRESSED VIOLENCE IN *KISS, KISS*

The stories During Dahl's next collection of short stories, *Kiss, Kiss*, he gets more and more into violence. As we'll see, this violence takes on a new form, but it still follows the directions of a mother's chase and control. Many violent stories are in this book. An example: In "Parson's Pleasure," a son cuts the legs off a chest and then "fiercely attacks the legless carcass of the commode" (CSS 69) at his father's command, stopping a fraud that would have been otherwise successful. 'Pig' is one of the stories in the collection. Lexington, an orphaned 17-year-old, is introduced to the pleasure of eating meat, which is a metaphor for cannibalistic, consumerist sexuality, when his maternal substitute dies. Lexington is then exploited in the city until he is presented for consumption or cannibalism himself, served up or sacrificed to the father's hostile, capitalistic world as nothing more than fleeing. 'The Landlady,' on the other hand, is the only short storey in the book that shows a specific act of violence against a body that seems to be linked to a specific relationship.

In the short storey "The Landlady," Billy Weaver, a nervous 17-year-old boy, is the person who is being identified. The storey talks about a game of peek-a-boo between Billy and his mother, as well as the aggression of the look and how it can be used to sexually excite people (CSS 3). Billy is afraid of women because he thinks they are sexual "tyrants."

He had never been in a boarding house before, and to be honest, he was a little afraid of them. The term alone evoked up ideas of...aggressive landladies (CSS 4).

In the text, Billy Weaver deviates from the father's path, which is symbolised by Mr He meets Greenslade at the Head Office in London (CSS 3). He enters a ruined house, which is probably his mother's body. He thought that by defeating the body, he had won the game. Billy is dragged deeper and deeper into the seductive bondage of the angry, hungry eye, which is the hypnotising symbol of the mother's vagina. As he moves from being the father's servant to living with the unnamed Landlady, he loses even his own identity because the mother has forgotten about him. The landlady, who looks like a mother. "just like the mother of one's best school-friend welcome one into the house to stay for Christmas vacations" (CSS 5), lures him into this trap of visual violence:

He was about to take a step back and look away from the window when his attention was drawn to the small notice that had been placed there in an odd manner. It said BED AND BREAKFAST, it said. BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST. Each word was like a large black eye staring at him through the glass, holding him, compelling him, forcing him to stay where he was and not walk away from that house, and the next thing he knew, he was moving across the window to the front door, climbing the steps leading up to it, and reaching for the bell (CSS 4).

Billy finds the bed and breakfast, the Landlady's (sexual) comfort and nourishment, and the Landlady's body all too appealing. Billy is now fully immersed in the role of the overly reliant child, while the Landlady is now playing the role of the overly anxious or overprotective mother who can't let her son leave her home and see the outside world. Because of the resources that Billy can get from his mother, it looks like the mother is able to do a lot of powerful magic on him through the large, controlling black vaginal eye."(t)he compulsion or, more accurately, the desire to follow her into the house was extraordinarily strong" (CSS 5 The result is that Billy is now part of a domestic scene, the mother's "nest" (CSS 5), where she has total power. Take a look at Billy. He looks like a real person. He is made into a sexual object, and his mother looks at his body from head to toe, sexualizing and violently observing him. The mother talked about possible incestuous, illegal relationships, or "lawbreaking" (CSS 6). There is a transitional site where Billy knows that the mother, a serial killer or a serial temptress, has already led two other boys to the "heaven" of the third floor. As the storey goes on, it looks like Billy's mother is drugging or poisoning him, taking back control of his biology, and feeding and ushering him through an altered state of consciousness into the real world. The web of the mother's eye, which includes her vagina, magic, nourishment, and sexuality, is hidden, enticing, and lethal in this other world, but it is still there. It's at this tense moment in the storey that the violence, or the threat of violence, surges into the storey conclusion, prolonging rather than releasing any tension.

5. CONCLUSION

Another important point emerges from Dahl's short storey study. As revealed by its climactic position, repression and the ritual (re)creation of the self, repressed violence seems to have an important symbolic role. People who are repressed seem to form their (conscious) "self" based on how often they "consume" or "eat" a liberated, imaginary, or fictional (unconscious) "self" that is seen as a threat to a stable social identity. In "The Last Act," the child is always eaten by the repression plot, even if only in a very indirect way. This shows that the repressed self-perpetuates itself in the unconscious act where one tier of unconscious mental processes, signifying "adult," "sexually normal," and "individualised" selfhood, consume and thus eliminate the "infantile," "sexually aberrant," and "dependent" (or non-autonomous) self-

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