



Understanding the Significance and Purpose of Violence in the Short Stories of Roald Dahl

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Abstract

In this article I argue for new meaning and critical importance to be given to Dahl's short story in his most successful collections *Someone Like You*, *Kiss, Kiss* and *Switch Bitch* by systematising and accounting for its portrayed violence. I first outline the history, importance and contemporary significance of Dahl's short stories. I then show that a strange puzzle attaches itself to these stories: that a number of inconsistent accounts have been attempted in order to explain the tantalisingly meaningful violence within them. I see such attempts to account for the violence and meanings of Dahl's adult writing as failures and argue that they do not critically engage with the recurring contexts and forms of the violence or Dahl's own suggestions for its occurrence. I then remedy such critical deficiencies through an application of the psychoanalytical method and more adequately reformulate the violence by uncovering its relation to unconscious processes which repress innate desires, demonstrating that psychoanalytical theories of repression can engage with and contribute to understanding the significance of the violence, which is predicated on taboo relations between son and mother. I thus rethink the meaning and architecture of the stories psychoanalytically, suggesting for them a new claim for attention.

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