



## Confronting Child Abuse through Magical Realism in Roald Dahl's Matilda

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### Abstract

Fantasy and reality are combined in a prominent postmodern literary theory known as magical realism. In magical realism, fantastical events are portrayed in a realistic manner, and the setting is a normal world populated by genuine characters. Not everything is fantastic or unreal. In fact, there is no singular definition of magical realism. Critics define Magical Realism in their own way, as Magical Realism is defined differently by each critic. This paper seeks to examine magical realism in children's literature by analyzing its fundamentals in Roald Dahl's "Matilda". This paper is divided into two sections. The first section is an introduction. It addresses magical realism, its characteristics, and its connection to children's literature. Section two examines how child abuse damages the lives of children and how children who get abused from adults confronting these abusive behaviours through magical realism that Dahl used in order to make his child protagonist have the brave to confront.



### 1.1. Introduction: Magical Realism

One of the most well-known postmodern literary theories, magical realism blends fantastic elements with realistic ones. Fantastical events are realistically depicted in magical realism, and the setting is a real world with real people. There are some things that just can't be fantastic or unbelievable. Lois Zamora and Wendy Faris state that "Magical Realism is a mode suited to exploring...and transgressing boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic...facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds...that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction" (Zamora and Faris 5-6). Hence, Zamora and Faris have explained Magical Realism as the term which goes across several boundaries from political, ethnic, ontological, and realist to imaginative ones. It generates an imaginary environment in addition to the existing realistic one. Furthermore, The term magical realism is used to works that deal with reality in a fantastic manner. These works present a blurry depiction of the distinction between the real and the fantastical worlds. However, Mathew Magical Realism, according to Stretcher, occurs when a highly detailed, realistic scene is infiltrated by something too strange to believe. (Stretcher 267). Moreover, Magical realist works make us think of the ordinary events or issues we come across daily in a different perception of reality. Scott Simpkins says that, apart from presenting the supernatural in a normal way, the ordinary objects through the process of "defamiliarisation" become unrealistic and magical. The interaction between the supernatural and the ordinary makes Magical Realism as a unique narrative technique (Simpkins 150).

Faris and Zamora mentioned in their book *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* that Franz Roh defines Magical Realism as simply painting, in which genuine forms are mixed in a manner that does not correspond to daily reality (Faris and Zamora 102). Roh metaphorically associates Magical Realism with paintings that consist of realistic objects and these objects are blended with something that is not found in daily life, something extraordinary.

In addition, a further definition of Magical Realism is given by Wendy Faris in her book *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*. Magical Realism is described by Faris as

the term Magical Realism, coined in the early twentieth century to describe a fiction, now designates perhaps the most important contemporary trend in international fiction ... Magical Realism combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them (Faris 1).

In her book, Maggie Ann Bowers characterizes Magical by two opposing viewpoints, one based on a reasonable interpretation of reality and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as mundane reality (Bower 20). To put it in another way, Bowers indicates that



Magical Realism can be described by having two opposing viewpoints, one describing the supernatural as a prosaic reality, and the other centered on a rational perspective on reality. Mathew Stretcher agrees with Bowers that Magical Realism is something that happens when arealistic, highly detailed settings are invaded by something too strange to believe (Stretcher 267). These two settings are opposite to each other but in the Magical Realism concept, the two are mingled together. As a result, Magical Realism has been discussed by more than one notable critic and writer. However, all of these definitions of the specific term have the same idea and meaning.

In addition to the above mentioned, there are other elements of magical realism like the capability of inducing a kind of narrative style that is strong and imaginative, that can instill reality with the unanticipated and indecipherable that incorporates elements of fairy tales, stargaze, mythology and fantasy and that can blend it with the mundane. The genuine reason for mixing the elements of magic in a realistic environment is to interpret the principles of reality and to distinguish between fantasy and reality (AbJabbar and Tripathi 6197). As a result, the writers of majestic text incorporate these elements of magical realism to reflect their society and culture towards the universal appeal, and this is what Dahl did when he wrote his novels which are based on magical realism in order to reflect a serious problem such as child abuse which has speared and increased day by day. The relationship between Magical Realism and Children's Literature become stronger. in recent years, much of children's literature in the English language has adopted the concept of Magical Realism. Bower argues that Magical Realism provides a perfect means for children to explore the world through their imaginations without losing connection to what they recognize as the real world (Bowers 99-100). Magical Realism is adventurous and exciting genre. Moreover, it contains some of the most accomplished authors and some acclaimed books. Nowadays, Magical Realism becomes a popular narrative mode because it offers the writer a space or a will to criticise any social or political phenomena. Due to its ability to offer the writer an opportunity to criticize any social or political phenomenon, Magical Realism has become a popular narrative mode.

### 1.2. Abused Children: Struggle in *Matilda*

It is the responsibility of parents to look for their children, ensuring that they are safe from injury, not subjected to abuse, and treated with respect. Neil Postman poignantly observed that "children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see" (Postman 293). Therefore, Parents consider themselves as having unlimited control and power over their children; children, in turn, have few rights to protect and defend themselves from these abuses practiced under the veil of discipline; that is what Hacking attempts to prove when he states that "Child abuse is the worst of evils" (Hacking 253). Because of this, in her home, Matilda faces a series of emotional and psychological abuse, primarily by abusing her verbally; she is continuously called stupid by her parents "She resented being told constantly that she was ignorant and stupid when she knew she was not" (Dahl 1988 23). As a case in



point, Donald Sturrock made the following observation regarding adults in Dahl's novels: "Sometimes, the enemy is parents themselves ... but more often they feature as a negative force that the child must learn to endure, evade or subvert" (Sturrock 53). Based on the previous statements one can find out that Matilda is neglected and emotionally abused at home.

Like Dahl's other novels, Matilda highlights the theme of abuse against children. Dahl puts children at the centre of his writings and that is the reason behind why most of the protagonists are children; these children endure a series of events that cause them to suffer in a world where adults rarely act as caregivers. In contrast, adults subject them to aggressive and harsh treatment. Matilda is an example of a story of a girl who is active, brilliant, rebellious and competitive, but she is subjugated by her parents and later by the school principal Miss. Trunchbull.

Therefore, the current study investigates child abuse in Roald Dahl's Matilda. Child Abuse is broad and complicated issue and requires a relentless effort to inspect one of the essential terrible dangers facing children who have been abused. For most of the novel, the author uses a third-person and omniscient point of view to tell the novel's events. The novel also features the abusive behaviour since Matilda's father mishandles her because she is "only" a little young girl. Moreover, instead of "applauding her" they call her "a noisy chatterbox" and they tell her that young little girls "should be seen" and "not heard" (Dahl 5). This is a kind of silencing and subjugating children and it is regarded as aggressive treatment.

Further, Dahl's volumes do not begin with a description of joy; the author puts children, in extreme situations, in the turmoil of life, on the border between desires and a disappointing world. Jacob Held speaks of a common theme in Dahl's novels: "our lives speak to the absurdity of human existence, the fact that there is an unbridgeable gulf between what we demand of this world and what we know to be true" (Held 2). The painful thing is that "Matilda longed for her parents to be good and loving and understanding and honorable and intelligent. The fact is that they were none of these things" (Dahl 1988 43). There is no doubt that Matilda wishes for her parents to have these qualities, but they do not. Also, this wish shows Matilda's good qualities as a clever, kind hearted girl.

On top of that, Dahl's children characters struggle between life's fantasies and the realities of their situation, causing disappointment and suffering. Held adds that Dahl's characters face a difficult and dark life. Not only because life is challenging but also because adults do not play a positive role in children's lives. They are careless and abusive. These children find that life is different from the one they dreamed of. They are presented with the "divorce between our desires and a disappointing world" (Held 2), which can be shown when Matilda wishes for her parents to support her in her educational journey and respect her. However, they are the opposite.

Matilda is the story of a five-year old small girl who is extremely advanced for her age with extraordinary and magical power. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wormwood, are coarse,



uninterested parents, oblivious of her ability and do not appreciate her intelligence. They prefer to watch television, and what little parental encouragement they do show is directed at Mike, Matilda's brother, who is destined to follow Mr. Wormwood into his crooked secondhand car business. Matilda, meanwhile, begins secretly to visit the library while her mother plays bingo. Mrs. Phelps, the kind librarian, oversees Matilda's reading; Matilda reads all of the books in the children's section. Despite her father's opposition, Matilda finally attends school after he prevents her from doing so. In school, Matilda faces another abusive figure, the headmistress of her school, Miss. Trunchbull, who always punishes kids in school for breaking her strict rules. She hears many stories of how Miss. Trunchbull is an evil person who kicks, hits and hangs children and has no mercy toward children because, as she once states, she hates children.

However, Silviya Florance and Raichel Sylus mention that Sunita Sinha, in her Book *Canons of Children's Literature*, states that:

Though most of his child characters are fun-loving and carefree yet, at the same time, they are brave, daring, and at times prove to be more wise and intellectual than adults or their guardians. Moreover, one finds them independent, hardly relying upon the elders for their problems (Florance and Sylus 171).

When Miss. Philips, the librarian, offers to help Matilda in finding a book or suggesting any book for her: "Would you like me to help you find a nice one with lots of pictures in it? No, thank you," Matilda said. "I'm sure I can manage" (Dahl 1998 7). Matilda refuses politely and chooses books by herself. This shows that though Matilda is a small child, she refuses the librarian's offer to suggest books for her from the library. As mentioned above, the Roald Dahl's characters have distinctive characteristics: they are independent and do not rely heavily upon the elders.

Later on, it appears that Matilda is a superpower girl. She is a genius and has telekinetic power. After witnessing Miss. Trunchbull's ill-treatment, she decides to take over the situation. She does not let Miss. Trunchbull torture the students anymore. Since Trunchbull's abusive power seem to appear at school, then Matilda decides that she must be banished from the school.

Furthermore, becoming of a child is dependent on the "being of the adult"; Owain Jones recognises that "adult agenda seek to colonise and control childhood," as well as determine "what children are and what they should be" (Jones 196). The word "colonisation" itself suggests imposition through force, such as that of a strict teacher who treats the otherness of the child as something needing to be fixed or corrected. There is no doubt that adult constructions of childhood often influence the nature of relationships between adults and children. The headmistress of the school is "something else altogether. She was a gigantic holy terror, a fierce tyrannical monster who frightened the life out of the pupils and teachers



alike” (Dahl 1988 61). She is an unfair and inhuman person who dominates the whole school, and she is “more like a rather eccentric and bloodthirsty follower of the stag-hounds than the headmistress of a nice school for children” (Dahl 1988 77).

In her article Child Mistreatment: Child Abuse Alice Miller denotes that "Humiliations, spankings, and beatings, slaps in the face, betrayal, sexual exploitation, derision, neglect, etc. are all forms of mistreatment, because they injure the integrity and dignity of a child, even if their consequences are not visible right away" (Miller 1). Matilda and the children in the school receive all kinds and forms of maltreatment and humiliation by Miss Trunchbull, when Trunchbull orders Amanda to cut her pigtails, she describes them as "filthy pigtails" and also says, "you look like a rat with a tail coming out of its head," then orders her to cut her pigtails and throw them "in the dustbin" and calls Amanda's mother as "a twit" (Dahl 1988 108). Additionally, the headmistress directs a series of verbal violations toward a child called Bruce Bogtrotter; she calls him "the clot," "black-head," "foul carbuncle," "poisonous pustule," "disgusting criminal," "A thief," "A crook! A pirate! A brigand! A rustler", "miserable little gumboil," and "suppurating little blister" just because she doubts that he had eaten her own cake (Dahl 1988 114).

In the fields of childcare, family, and child development, many individuals are often surprised to learn that child neglect has the same consequences as physical abuse, sexual abuse, and witnessing domestic violence. However, the significance of child neglect should not come as a surprise, given that a lack of parental care and nurturing poses one of the greatest threats to a child's healthy development (Hildyard et al. 680). Above all kinds of abuse, Matilda suffers from neglect from her parents. At the novel's very beginning, the narrator states that Matilda's parents look upon Matilda as nothing but "a scab," and they wish the time to pick Matilda up and "flick her" far away. The narrator adds that no one will notice even if “Matilda comes into her house with a broken leg” (Dahl 1988 4). When the school headmistress abuses the children inside the school, Matilda says that no one can complain to their father about Miss Trunchball because “simply he would not believe you” (Dahl 1988 111). This shows how the children are neglected, the families send their children to a school that looks like a prison, and if their children complain about it, their parents will not believe them.

Humiliation is also a form of abuse that took many different shapes, which leads to each other; for example, Miss Trunchbull, the school headmistress, uses food as her weapon and a metaphor for power by forcing Bruce Bogtrotter to eat “an enormous round chocolate cake” and it is “fully eighteen inches” because she thought that he had eaten her own cake (Dahl 1988 118). Miss Trunchbull insists that Bruce should eat the whole enormous cake and threatens him in case that he does not eat the whole cake, he will be punished and sent directly to the chokey. Firstly she accuses him of doing something that he did not do; secondly, she forces him to eat the whole cake threatened; and finally, she threatens him that if he does not do what she orders him, he will go straight to the chokey (Dahl 1988 122).



After that, when the boy eats the whole cake forcefully, Miss Trunchbull “grabbed the large empty china platter on which the cake had rested. She raised it high in the air and brought it down with a crash right on the top of the wretched Bruce Bogtrotter’s head” (Dahl 1988 127). One can see the humiliating behaviour toward the little boy in front of the children.

Furthermore, some fathers may deliberately try to undermine the relationship between a child and their mother, for example, by humiliating the mother in front of the children (Harne, 2011). In a very bad situation confronted Matilda’s father, Miss Wormwood tells her husband that it must be superglue that he uses in his hat, which is why his hat is stuck to his hair, Mr. Wormwood replies to her angrily that he did not use any glue and calls her, "you stupid witch" (Dahl 1988 27). This shows how Mr. Wormwood humiliates his wife by calling her "stupid" and "witch" in front of their daughter and son.

To conclude, there is no distinction between physical, emotional, and verbal abuse throughout the novel. The only thing that differentiates one form of abuse from another is the manner in which the abuser abuses the child, a fact that ultimately causes the victim’s mental and emotional health to be destroyed. “Abused children often experience a number of emotional disturbances. Low self-esteem and depression are common, as well as emotions of anger, hostility, fear, humiliation, and an inability to express feelings, all of which impact children and young people’s mental health. The emotional consequences can be devastating” (Day, Hibbert and Cadman 29).

The second kind of abuse is physical, which can be defined as "being hit on the part of the body other than the bottom with an object" (Emery and Laumann-Billings 124). Physical abuse can be categorised as the most obvious form of abuse that results in physical damage to a child; it may take the shape of punching, beating, flogging and blowing, biting, burning, hair pulling, and snapping. In Matilda, Matilda and other children suffer from all of these kinds at the same time.

Held states that :“sent to a school where education looks strikingly like a punishment” (Held 3). All physical abuse in Matilda is received from the school headmistress. She does not regret when using her power as a school headmistress and damaging children physically and emotionally. Her hatred is incomparable. When Miss Trunchbull catches a child named Julius, she picks him up and kicks him out the window: “Trunchbull caught a boy called Julius Rottwinkle eating Liquorice Allsorts during the scripture lesson and she simply picked him up by one arm and flung him clear out of the open classroom window” (Dahl 1988 104). The boy gets few bones broken and this is clear evidence that he is physically violated. In the text, a ten year old girl called Hortensia tells Matilda and Lavender about Miss. Trunchbull and how much she hates children, especially the ones who are like Matilda’s age, and tells them about her physical abuse toward those children “She hates tiny children. She, therefore, loathes the bottom class and everyone in it. She thinks five-year-olds are grubs that have not yet hatched out” (Dahl 1988 96). Hortensia adds that many of those children who face



physical punishment “don’t survived” and if they survived; they mostly carried out on stretches (Dahl 1988 96).

Matilda and other children are beaten, snapped, scolded, forced to eat, and humiliated through various forms of dehumanisation and abuse. "Abusive physical punishment consists of beating, kicking, punching, scalding, and otherwise inflicting bodily injury on a child" (Baumrind 177). Hortensia says, "I suppose you know the Trunchbull has a lock-up cupboard in her private quarters called The Chokey? Have you heard about The Chokey?". She asks Matilda and her friend Lavender about “the chokey”. She describes the chokey to them by saying that is “It’s pitch dark and you have to stand up dead straight and if you wobble at all you get spiked either by the glass on the walls or the nails on the door”(Dahl 98). Moreover, she tells them that Miss Trunchbull sends the children to that place in order to punish them. she tells them that she experiences physical abuse, and she adds that when she was in her first term, Miss Trunchbull banished her and sent her to the chokey about six times “My first term I was in there six times, Hortensia said, twice for a whole day and the other times for two hours each. But two hours is quite bad enough” (Dahl 1988 98). Based on her description of the chokey, it is a tiny room that is too small to sit down in; the walls are covered with nails, so children have to stand very straight while they are inside. In addition to that, Miss Trunchbull grabs a child named Amanda from her pigtails and lifts her from the ground; she starts to swing her a round faster while she was screaming, then “the Trunchbull let go of the pigtails and Amanda went sailing like a rocket right over the wire fence of the playground and high up into the sky” (Dahl 1988 109). This is another remark about how the school headmistress uses her power to hurt the children physically, once by throwing them through the window and another by pulling a child from her hair and throwing her far away.

Based on the above quotation, there are some things that the author mentioned in this novel are real and happen in daily life, such as the abusive behaviour against children or ignorant parents, even the violating school teacher like Miss Trunchbull, but there are other things that the author mentioned that is not real, and it is impossible to happen in real life, the quotation above shows how the headmistress grabs the pigtails of Amanda, and she starts to “spinning round and round” which make the children watch Amanda but not clearly they saw her “blur” because she was turning “so fast”, then Miss. Trunchbull let Amanda’s pigtails and Amanda “high up into the sky” and when she landed on the ground, she “bounced three times”.

To conclude, nobody denies that childhood represents one of the essential stages in our life. Therefore, children have the rights to be protected, sheltered, and grow up safely. Matilda, who is depressed and continues to be bullied, finally she is transformed into a mature and powerful person. It is oblivious that all the abusers and aggressors in Matilda are adults and relatives, such as Matilda’s parents, and authoritarian figures, such as teachers and principals. Matilda spends some time thinking about why these aggressors have such misconduct. Matilda struggles to ignore, to forgive her parents and Miss Trunchbull's





misbehavior until she can no longer bear the burden. Eventually, Matilda starts to think of how to confront all kinds of abusive behaviours that she and other children face in the novel from adult abusers.

### 2.1. The Impact of Roald Dahl's Childhood Suffering on His Work

Roald Dahl was a British novelist, short-story writer, poet, screenwriter, and a fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force during World War II. He was born in 1916 and died in 1990. His name is inherently connected with children's literature, and he is regarded one of the most proficient authors of the twentieth century. Critics such as Mark West writes in the foreword of his book that Roald Dahl is a successful author "he achieved tremendous success both as an author of adult stories and as an author of children's books" (West ix). Nevertheless, Dahl's children's births nourished him with the chance to tell them bedtime tales, a routine that helped the author to heighten his awareness of the types of stories children wanted and enjoyed.

In fact, much of Roald Dahl's novels are encouraged, inspired, and based on his own childhood experiences when he was a young child. Dahl in his autobiography, *Boy: Tale of Childhood*, talks about his childhood when he was just nine years old. He mentioned his prep-school teacher and his colleagues. He also mentioned that he was away from home, his mother and sister, he was under the mercy of unjust and cruel adults. This explains why the children protagonists in his novels are subjected to the same circumstances that Dahl faced when he was a child (Dahl 98-100). It is worthy to say that Dahl was a victim of abuse when he was young. He witnessed and experienced the power of abuse by authoritarian adults like teacher and headmaster in his school at St. Peter's and Repton. All the memories remain, as he says in his autobiographical book *Boy: Tales of Childhood*:

By now, I am sure you will be wondering why I lay so much emphasis upon school beatings in these pages. The answer is that I cannot help it. All through my school life I was appalled by the fact that masters and senior boys were allowed literally to wound other boys, and sometimes quite severely. I couldn't get over it. I never have got over it...It left another more physical impression upon me as well. Even today, whenever I have to sit for any length of time on a hard bench or chair, I begin to feel my heart beating along the old lines that the cane made on my bottom some fifty-five years ago (Dahl 174).

The caning at Repton was very severe, indeed. The Boy who named Michaelas Dahl mentions was caned and instructed to lower his pants and kneeled at a sofa. The headmaster flogged him, then stopped for some seconds to lecture him about sin and wrongdoings, then continued to flog him for the second round and then stopped and continued for the third round (Dahl 174). Those school years have marked Dahl's life with cruelty and sadism and make him create the worst attitude towards authorities who do not mind torturing small boys for the violation of the school rules and discipline.



Furthermore, Jonathan Gottschall argues that the story has transformative power. Stories can deliver morals, attitudes, and personality of each individual. "Story --whether delivered through films, book, or video games-- teaches us facts about the world, influences our moral logic, and marks us with fears, hopes, and anxieties that alter our behaviour, perhaps even our personalities" (Gottschall 148). Through his children's heroes/heroines, Dahl heals himself from the traumatic past and delivers his message for a better future for children.

As a result, through his children's heroines and heroes, Dahl recovers himself from the traumatic past and conveys his message for a better future for children. Writing about one's past experiences is considered an outlet for the suppressed feelings. It is also a way to highlight the awful life lived by the writer when he/she was defenseless and fragile.

## 2.2. Confronting Child Abuse through Magical Realism in Matilda

According to Donald Sturrock, many of Dahl's books are a kind of imaginative survival manual for children about how to deal with the adult world around them. They offer the vision of an existence freed from parental controls, a world full of imagination and pleasure, where everything is possible (Sturrock 42). This can be shown in the text when Matilda suffers from parental unjust control, and the other children also face all sorts of abuse by their school headmistress. Therefore, critics regarded his work with trepidation. As depicted in Matilda and other novels, he is also accused of being a snob for siding with children against grownups (Petzold 85). Another element in Dahl's world is his style. In Dahl's works, language is more than a means to express meaning. It is a device for transmitting and simultaneously dissecting the message underlying his work, which is obscure and enigmatic and even contradicts moral and societal order. However, the language in Dahl's work is also used as a tool for social criticism; it is rich with multiple meanings that reveal the intricacy of his characters and stories. His literary style, however, is characterized by simplicity; his stories describe unique and extraordinary occurrences, all of which are presented in extremely basic terms. Also, the settings of his novels are exotic.

Dahl is able to have his characters employ magic without building an entire illogical fabulous world to deal with the adult world; for instance, in Matilda, Dahl gives his heroine magical power and to use it just in order to confront the abusers and their abusive attitudes. That is why there is no need to create a whole fantastical world. He uses a fascinating way as the use of a narrative technique called magical realism. In this theory, magical elements emerge with reality. Hence, merging the real world with magic is one of the features of magical realism. According to Faris, "Merging realms is the merging of two worlds", and it combines together (Faris 21).

On this account, in Matilda, Dahl merges magical power in a realistic world. Throughout the novel, all chapters except the last ones tackle the life of Matilda; she was psychologically and emotionally abused by her parents, then the chapters move to tackle the lives of Matilda and other children in Crunchem Hall Elementary School and how they get abused by the school headmistress. So far, everything is totally realistic, but when it comes to the last



chapters of this novel, one can see how Matilda acquires her first magical power, since then the writer merges magical elements with the previous realistic chapters to make a novel that merged realistic and magical elements. According to Luis Leal, “The magical realist does not try to copy the surrounding reality (as the realists did) or to wound it (as the Surrealists did) but to seize the mystery that breathes behind things” (Leal 123). Based on the foregoing, Matilda is a novel that Roald Dahl does not either fully copy reality as it is or draw an imaginative world just like the fantastic works, once one can see the elements of magic are merged with real life. In the novel, however, it is not until the last chapters that supernatural events begin to happen; in other respects, the story world is somewhat realistic, and it is far away to be called a novel of fantasy.

Accordingly, magical realism has its stress upon realism and recognition of the lived world and creates magical or supernatural events by the characters in the story. The narrator uses such vocabulary to indicate such extraordinary things as when he calls Matilda an “extraordinary” girl (Dahl 1988 4). Then he makes a comparison between Matilda and her brother Michael. The narrator says, “Michael was a perfectly normal boy” (Dahl 1988 5). In his description of Michael, the narrator says that he is a “perfectly normal boy” an indication that he has realistic normal characteristics that everybody in the real world has, but in his description to Matilda, he says “the sister, as I said, was something to make your eyes pop” (Dahl 1988 5). This indicates that there is something in Matilda that is different from other children but rather, it could be something abnormal or extraordinary. Following this, he mentioned the things that “make your eyes pop” because “by the age of one and a half her speech was perfect and she knew as many words as most grown-ups” (Dahl 1988 5). Based on the foregoing quotation, it is an impossible and abnormal thing that a child in the age of one year and a half can speak like grown-ups but Matilda “the extraordinary” girl does. Dahl’s novels deal with children who certainly represent the child having increasing cognitive and physical capabilities; in the closure, his children characters are always agential, that is, they have the power to effect changes in their world. “In some cases, Dahl’s child characters have extraordinary competencies in the real world” (Alston and Butler 106). Based on the foregoing, Matilda, as the narrator calls her “extraordinary” girl has extraordinary competencies that differentiate her from the children of her age in our real life. When Matilda was three year old, she “taught herself to read by studying newspapers and magazines that lay around the house. At the age of four, she could read fast and well, and she naturally began hankering after books” (Dahl 1988 5).

In the representation of Miss Trunchbull, it is true to say that Miss Trunchbull; has a form of sadism that, when removed from its humorous context, is deeply disturbing. The brutality inflicted on Miss Trunchbull's students in Matilda is sometimes characterized as unreal, yet the novel is also shattered between the sinisterly realistic and the hilarious grotesque. (Alston and Butler 129). One who reads the events that happened to Amanda in the playground and Bogrotter in the assembly hall can understand that these events are not real. They are made



up by the writer, who inserts an unrealistic and magical touch to describe the strength and the sadist behaviour of the Trunchbull and to deliver a message that how the children are abused and violated by adults. Even if the events he wrote about are not real, at the end of the day, the author wants to achieve his goal and deliver his message. Furthermore, children can rise up against those who are in power, no matter how small they are. Matilda rebels against her evil school headmistress and abusive parents to live happily ever after. However, Matilda cannot do so on her own but with the assistance of her magical powers.

Ann Alston and Catherine Butler, in their book state “Dahl’s revenge against the unpleasant teachers he recalls in his own memoirs takes the form of the negative way in which he portrays them in his writing” (Alston and Butler 78). In light of the above, the school headmistress is “a gigantic holy terror, a fierce tyrannical monster” (Dahl 1988 61). The evil headmistress confesses, “I wish to heavens I was still allowed to use the birch and belt as I did in the good old days!” (Dahl 1988 83). Moreover, In default of the usual means of corporal punishment, Miss Trunchbull replays her Olympic career of throwing the hammer by launching across the playground a child whose hair is too long and dangling the boy in the air by his hair while he recites, “Two sevens are fourteen” (Dahl 1988 134). She admits to her own dislike of children even though she denies ever having been small herself when Miss Honey tells her “Oh, but you must have been a little girl once” Miss Trunchbull denies it and says “Not for long anyway .... I became a woman very quickly” (Dahl 1988 80). Thus showing herself incapable of empathy with her pupils, based on the foregoing quotations, Trunchbull, or as the narrator calls her, “monster”, gets her comeuppance at the end of the novel through Matilda and her magical power. Additionally, she wants to rise up against those who mistreat her and the other children. In Matilda, confronting child abuse seems to be the significant reaction chosen by children who have been abused, such as Matilda, Lavender, and Hortensia. It is noticeable that the children who are abused in Matilda tend not to accept the oppression imposed on them passively. Responding to the adults’ abuse, neglect, and maltreatment, the child protagonist and other child characters in Matilda choose to retaliate or confront their adult antagonists aggressively.

It appears that physical aggression is perceived by parents as a means of disciplining their children, but it can actually cause problems such as emotional instability and oppositional behaviour, which peak later in the years of preschool (Larzelere, Amberson, and Martin 195). By mentioning "oppositional behaviour and emotional instability" one can notice that abuse and the oppression that Matilda got from her ignorant parents led Matilda to be emotionally unstable and have oppositional behaviour and a desire to confront these abusive behaviours and she knows that the only way for her to confront her parents is by rebelling against them. In the text, the narrator states that she reaches the stage where her blood got boiled.

The anger inside her went on boiling and boiling, and as she lay in bed that night, she made a decision. She decided that every time her father or her mother was beastly to her, she would



get her own back in some way or another. A small victory or two would help her to tolerate their idiocies and would stop her from going crazy (Dahl 1988 22).

Dahl creates child characters from sad households; their lives are difficult, but they become agents of change, and they are active to eliminate the harsh behavior of horrible adults. Some of them, like Matilda, are critical from the beginning. But in order to prosper and cope with life, people must, suffer, struggle, and find a solution. Dahl begins with the premise that life is chaotic and frequently cruel; it is not as it should be, but this is the reality, and a succession of circumstances forces them to suffer through many stages, trials, and emotions. In this sense, “the only coherent way to break through is revolt” (Held 4). Matilda is a child like other children who suffers from child abuse, and she has to confront the child abuse actions that the adult practice toward her and other children, but the problem is that she is just only a little child, how does she confront the abusive actions by adults. Roald Dahl, in this novel, gives his heroine a magical power. She can use it to confront the abuse that she and the other children face.

Based on the above, When Matilda is falsely accused of placing the newt in Miss Trunchbull's glass, her sense of injustice causes her to develop telekinetic abilities that appear supernatural and calling her a “little cockroach!” and “little filthy maggot!” (Dahl 1988 155). As a result, Matilda's anger at being falsely accused and her desire for vengeance cause her telekinetic power to be activated, causing the glass to tilt over and water and a newt to splash upon Miss Trunchbull. Matilda's anger at being falsely accused and her desire for vengeance cause her telekinetic power to be activated, causing the glass to tilt over and water and a newt to splash upon Miss Trunchbull. (Alston and Butler 129).

On this account Matilda's telekinesis is the result of her rage at adults who abuse their authority to oppress and silence others. Matilda's skills do not manifest until the last quarter of the novel, when she pours a glass of water on Miss Trunchbull after the headmistress unjustly accuses her of placing a Newt in the water pitcher. (Alston and Butler 145). As a result, Matilda's first act of telekinesis is when she toppling the glass over by the help of "millions of tiny little invisible arms with hands on them were shooting out of her eyes" (Dahl 1988 159), the reason behind this act purely done to revenge Miss Trunchbull because she “accused of a crime that she definitely had not committed” (Worthington 129). Matilda's supernatural powers first show up when Matilda is “so unbearably angry that something was bound to explode inside her very soon” (Dahl 1988 158):

She pushed harder still, willing her eyes to shoot out more power. And then, very very slowly, so slowly she could hardly see it happening, the glass began to lean backwards, farther and farther back, until it was balancing on just one edge of its base. Moreover, there it teetered for a few seconds before finally toppling over and falling with a sharp tinkle onto the desktop. The water in it and the squirming newt splashed out all over Miss Trunchbull's enormous bosom” (Dahl 1988 160).



Matilda with her telekinetic power, makes chalk “hovering near the grey-black writing surface of the blackboard” (Dahl 1988 213-214). Then she makes the chalk and writes specific sentences on the blackboard in front of Miss. Trunchbull which makes her fall on the floor and faint. The next day, she disappears and gone forever. Matilda’s heroic action saves all the children at her school. Miss Trunchbull is a deterrent and escapes out of town. The situation became well for Matilda and the other children. Hence, Miss. Trunchbull is finally defeated by Matilda, who makes the Trunchbull scared to death.

It is true to say that a lot of children in real life suffer from aggressive treatment and bullying by their peers as well as adults because they are easy and weak targets for such psycho persons. What really hurts is that they cannot defend themselves. They are unable to get rid of the mischief fallen upon their soft bodies and delicate souls. They only dream of strength or adventures where they can payback their abusers. In Matilda, Dahl creates a girl with superpower to enable her pass the difficulties of her life with careless parents and abusive teacher.

## دراسة لمواجهة العنف ضد الاطفال من خلال الواقعية السحرية للروائي رولد دال "ماتيلدا"

### المخلص :

معلوماتهم	الباحثين
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	الكلمات المفتاحية: الواقعية السحرية ، إساءة معاملة الأطفال ، رولد دال ، ماتيلدا ، أدب الأطفال .

يتم الجمع بين الخيال والواقع في نظرية أدبية بارزة لما بعد الحداثة تُعرف بالواقعية السحرية. في الواقعية السحرية، يتم تصوير الأحداث الخيالية بطريقة واقعية، حيث يكون المكان و الزمان كما هو في العالم الطبيعي. لا يوجد تعريف واحد للواقعية السحرية، يعرف النقاد الواقعية السحرية بطريقتهم الخاصة، حيث يتم تعريف الواقعية السحرية بشكل مختلف من قبل كل ناقد. بالإضافة إلى ذلك. انخرط النقاد في نقاش مطول حول هذا المصطلح، حيث قدم كل منهم تعريفه الخاص، لكن كلٌ منهم يدور حول نفس المعنى. يتناول هذا البحث الواقعية السحرية في أدب الأطفال من خلال تحليل رواية "ماتيلدا" لروالد دال ، تطرح هذه الدراسة أيضا كيف تصبح إساءة معاملة الأطفال قضية عالمية مما جعلت دال يكتب عدداً من الروايات التي يواجه فيها أبطالها الأطفال سلوكيات مسيئة. تقسم هذه الدراسة إلى قسمين. القسم الأول هو مقدمة عن نظرية الواقعية السحرية وخصائصها وارتباطها بأدب الأطفال. اما القسم الثاني يتناول موضوع الإساءة الى الأطفال وكيف اثرت طفولة دال القاسية على كتاباته، بالإضافة الى مواجهة الإساءة ضد الاطفال في رواية دال "ماتيلدا" حيث رسم دال في هذه الرواية الأطفال الذين يتعرضون للإيذاء من البالغين يواجهون هذه السلوكيات المسيئة من خلال الواقعية السحرية التي استخدمها لجعل طفلة قصة الرواية البطلة تنتقم من مضطهديها.



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