

# Analysis of tropes in Roald Dahl's short stories

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá analýzou trop ve vybraných povídkách britského spisovatele Roalda Dahla. Tato práce zkoumá povídky *Prase (Pig)*, *Skopec na porážku (Lamb to the Slaughter)*, *Bytná (The Landlady)*, *Farářovo potěšení (Parson's Pleasure)* a *Jirka Sirka (Georgy Porgy)*.

Teoretická část se věnuje spisovateli Roaldu Dahlovi, jeho charakteristickému stylu povídek a také vysvětluje a rozebírá vybrané tropy.

Praktická část se zaměřuje na rozbor povídek Roalda Dahla z hlediska trop, zejména nadsázkám, ironii, metaforám, oxymoronům, přirovnáním a zmírnění.

Klíčová slova: povídky, analýza, tropy, Roald Dahl, nadsázka, ironie, metafora, oxymoron, přirovnání, zmírnění.

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor thesis deals with the analysis of tropes in selected short stories of British author Roald Dahl. This thesis examines short stories *Pig*, *Lamb to the Slaughter*, *The Landlady*, *Parson's Pleasure*, and *Georgy Porgy*.

The theoretical part treats the author, Roald Dahl, his distinctive writing of short stories, and also explains and construes selected tropes.

The practical part is focused on the analysis of short stories of Roald Dahl in terms of selected tropes, especially hyperboles, irony, metaphors, oxymorons, similes and understatements.

Keywords: short stories, analysis, tropes, Roald Dahl, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, oxymoron, simile, understatement.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the British writer of Norwegian origin Roald Dahl is in principle labelled as an author of children's literature, the task of my bachelor thesis is to show him as a master of short stories. The purpose of this thesis is to identify, analyze and evaluate the importance of selected tropes in some of the short stories written by Roald Dahl.

There has been as yet no systematic analysis of tropes in Roald Dahl's short stories. Research in this area has been largely limited to the question of exploration of work of Roald Dahl in the context of children's literature.

Very little has been written about the dilemma of tropes in the work of this significant British author. But this thesis may reveal the importance of analysis of selected tropes in specific short stories.

The effect of tropes on Roald Dahl short stories has not been examined in detail, and therefore my analysis can help to fill the gap in the research related to this topic.

This analysis allows us to see more clearly the way Roald Dahl wrote his masterpieces in terms of short stories. This bachelor thesis deals with analysis of short stories *Pig*, *Lamb to the Slaughter*, *The Landlady*, *Parson's Pleasure* and *Georgy Porgy*.

One can better understand his distinctive style of writing by the examination of tropes; especially hyperboles, metaphors, irony, oxymorons, similes and understatements.

This thesis may stimulate the debate over the usage of tropes in Roald Dahl's short stories.

My bachelor thesis is going to deal with the relevance and importance of the selected tropes in selected short stories by Roald Dahl.

## **I. THEORY**

## 1 ROALD DAHL – MASTER OF BRITISH SHORT STORIES

Roald Dahl was talented British writer, especially of children's literature, but he also masters in literature for adults. His secret of achievement embodies in his unique and yet distinctive style of writing. He excels in unexpected punch lines and plots that reveal new direction of short stories. This idiosyncrasy is also achieved by using of adult themes and satirical description of modern society.

From the publication of *James and the Giant Peach* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in the 1960s to his death in 1990, Roald Dahl became the most successful children's author in the world. Nearly twenty years later, a fresh generation of children seeks out his work with instinctive fanaticism. His creations endure - through Hollywood movies, theatre adaptations and musical works, but still most potently of all through the pure magic of his writing upon the page.<sup>1</sup>

Children's literature, represented by masterpieces as *James and the Giant Peach*, *the Chocolate Factory*, and *Matilda*, guarantee the author's immortality among young readers. However, not only children are target group for Roald Dahl.

Roald Dahl was not only the bestselling children's author of his time, he was also one of the most accomplished writers of adult short stories. His macabre contes cruel have been reprinted many times, and were successfully televised in 1979-80 as *Tales of the Unexpected*. They are among the most memorable written by a British author over the past half-century. Noel Coward hit the nail on the head when he wrote in his diary, after reading Dahl's second collection, *Someone Like You*, forty years ago: "The stories are brilliant and his imagination is fabulous. Unfortunately there is, in all of them, an underlying streak of cruelty and macabre unpleasantness, and a curiously adolescent emphasis on sex."<sup>2</sup>

The uniqueness in Roald Dahl's short stories is attained by imaginative and creative plots with realistic portrayals of strange characters and crazy involutions. The author does not avoid significant themes such as violence, murder, sex, vegetarianism, life of middle class, religion and lot of others. His satirical view of society from all social classes produces something challenging and revolutionary and this may be the reason why his production is still, twenty years after his death, so popular as well as reputable. This also explains why young readers appreciate so much his literary work.

Roald Dahl (1916-1990) - British writer, famous for his ingenious short stories and macabre children's books. Dahl's taste for cruelty, rudeness to adults, and the comic grotesque fascinated young readers, but upset many adult critics. Dahl's stories have

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<sup>1</sup> "Roald Dahl", <http://www.penguin.co.uk/nf/Author/AuthorPage/0,,1000008184,00.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Kristine Howard, "Book and Magazine Collector (April 1994) Article", <http://www.roalddahlfans.com/articles/bmcapr94art.php>.

unexpected endings and strange, menacing atmospheres. The principle of “fair play“ works in unconventional but unavoidable ways.<sup>3</sup>

The following passage reveals another view on Dahl’s talent for short stories. It is not surprising, that some features of his work remain the same. Dahl is always able to create exceptional and bizarre worlds full of remarkable stories that take breath away.

A writer of both children’s fiction and short stories for adults, Roald Dahl (1916 – 1990) is best known as the author of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Dahl’s works for children have been praised as skillfully crafted, with fast-paced plots, captivating detail, and onomatopoeic words that tempt themselves to being read aloud. His adult oriented short stories are noted for their dark humor, surprise endings, and subtle horror. Whether writing for juveniles or an adult audience, Dahl has been described as a master of story construction with a remarkable ability to weave a tale. Praised by commentators as well crafted and suspenseful, Dahl’s stories employ surprise endings and shrewd characters who are rarely what they seem to be.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most significant British linguists J. A. Cuddon describes way of Dahl’s writing of short stories in his book *Penguin Dictionary Of Literary Terms And Literary Theory*.

Roald Dahl’s immensely successful collection *Kiss, Kiss* (1959) was followed with *Switch Bitch* (1974). These two collection, plus his first (*Someone Like You*, 1954), contain some of the best of modern short stories: clever, witty, macabre and sardonic.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Petri Liukkonen, “Roald Dahl (1916-1990)”, <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/rdahl.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Anne Marie Hacht and Dwayne D. Hayes, *Gale Conceptual Encyclopedia of World Literature* (Detroit: Gale Cengage, 2009), 437–438.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms And Literary Theory*, (Penguin Books, 2000), 823.

## 2 ANALYSIS OF TROPES

For proper understanding and analysis of a theory of tropes, this bachelor thesis deals with various approaches from various linguists to this dilemma. To elaborate it correctly, I use more than one reference.

Trope - in rhetoric, a term for figurative language that changes the meaning of words. Derived from the Greek word for “twist” or “turn,” the term refers to the turning of the meaning of a word or phrase away from its literal meaning. Contemporary theorists argue that tropes exert a profound influence on many forms of thought and experience. The theorist and critic Kenneth Burke has argued that there are four “master tropes,” metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, which help to shape all of human thought. An entirely different sense of the term is found in liturgical drama, in which a trope is an elaboration of a liturgical text.<sup>6</sup>

Rhetorical tropes are devices of figurative language. They represent a deviation from the common or main significance of a word or phrase (semantic figures) or include specific appeals to the audience (pragmatic figures).<sup>7</sup>

A rhetorical figure has generally been defined as an alteration of or swerve from “ordinary” usage; for instance, “My love is a rose” uses rose to mean not the flower but something beautiful and precious (this is the figure of metaphor).<sup>8</sup>

These four master tropes – metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony – are used by the historian Hayden White to analyse historical explanation or “emplotment” as he calls it: they are the basic rhetorical structures by which we make sense of experience. The fundamental idea of rhetoric as a discipline, which comes out well in this fourfold example, is that there are basic structures of language which underlie and make possible the meanings produced in a wide variety of discourses.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.1 Hyperbole

To understand what trope called hyperbole means, two possible meanings are expressed. In layman's terms, hyperbole is a way of describing something in exaggerated form. The usage of hyperboles is quite often, for instance “this book weighs a ton“.

The figure of speech, or *trope*, called hyperbole (Greek for “overshooting”) is bold overstatement, or the extravagant exaggeration of fact or of possibility. It may be used either for serious or ironic or comic effect. Iago says gloatingly of *Othello* (III. iii. 330 ff.):

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Quinn, *A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, (Checkmark Books, New York, 2000), 428.

<sup>7</sup> Stephanie Lethbridge and Jarmila Mildorf, *Basics Of English Studies: An Introductory Course for Students of Literary Studies in English*, (Freiburg, Freiburg University, 2003), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory – A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), 70.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory – A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), 72.

Not poppy nor mandragora,  
 Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,  
 Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep  
 Which thou ow'dst yesterday.<sup>10</sup>

Hyperbole - exaggeration for the sake of emphasis in a figure of speech not meant literally. An everyday example is the complaint 'I've been waiting here for ages.' Hyperbolic expressions are common in the inflated style of dramatic speech known as bombast, as in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* when Cleopatra praises the dead Antony:

His legs bestrid the ocean: his reared arm  
 Crested the world.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2 Metaphor

Metaphors are one of the most common and the most important tropes. To explain it in a simple way, metaphor means a symbol, that applies quality of something to something else, for instance phrase “a sea of troubles“.

Traditionally, the most important figure has been metaphor. A metaphor treats something *as* something else (calling George a donkey or my love a red, red rose). Metaphor is thus a version of a basic way of knowing: we know something by seeing it *as* something. Theorists speak of ‘metaphors we live by’, basic metaphorical schemes, like ‘life is a journey’. Such schemes structure our ways of thinking about the world: we try to ‘get somewhere’ in life, ‘find our way’, ‘know where we’re going’, ‘encounter obstacles’, and so on. Metaphor has been treated as basic to language and the imagination because it is cognitively respectable, not inherently frivolous or ornamental.<sup>12</sup>

In its narrow sense, a figure of speech in which something (A) is identified with something else (B) in order to attribute to A quality associated with B. In the phrase “Life is but a dream”, for example, the idea of a transient illusion or unreality traditionally associated with dreams is carried over to the subject “life.” In its broader sense, the term serves as a general category for all figures of speech, such as simile, metonymy, and synecdoche. This is the sense of the term employed when we speak of language as either literal or metaphorical.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Thomson Learning, 1998), 120.

<sup>11</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), 119.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory – A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), 71.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Quinn, *A Dictionary of Literary And Thematic Terms*, (New York: Checkmark Books, 2000), 257.

### 2.3 Oxymoron

The trope oxymoron represents combination of words or concept, that put together things with opposite or contradictory meanings, for instance “white blackness”. The oxymorons are easy to observe, and are often intensify with the usage of paradoxes.

A contradictory term, such as Milton’s “darkness visible,” employed to highlight an ambiguous condition. In the first act of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Claudius employs a number of oxymora to explain his hasty marriage to Gertrude so soon after the death of Hamlet’s father:

Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,

The imperial jointress to this warlike state,

Have we, as ’twere with a defeated joy,

With an auspicious and a dropping eye,

With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage

In equal scale, weighing delight and dole,

Taken to wife.<sup>14</sup>

Oxymoron - a figure of speech that combines two usually contradictory terms in a compressed paradox, as in the word bittersweet or the phrase living death. Oxymoronic phrases, like Milton's 'darkness visible', were especially cultivated in 16th- and 17th-century poetry. Shakespeare has his Romeo utter several in one speech:

Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,

O anything of nothing first create;

O heavy lightness, serious vanity,

Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,

Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,

Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Edward Quinn, *A Dictionary of Literary And Thematic Terms*, (New York: Checkmark Books, 2000), 309.

## 2.4 Irony

Irony can be described in many ways and forms. To simplify it, it means for example use the words that are opposite or different of what someone mean in order to create enjoyable effect. This is the reason why the irony is often accompanied with humor. Example of irony is a phrase “he is extremely funny” when telling it about someone who is on the contrary really boring.

Irony a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance. In various forms, irony appears in many kinds of literature, from the tragedy of Sophocles to the novels of Jane Austen and Henry James, but is especially important in satire, as in Voltaire and Swift. At its simplest, in verbal irony, it involves a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant, as in its crude form, sarcasm; for the figures of speech exploiting this discrepancy, *see* antiphrasis, litotes, meiosis. The more sustained structural irony in literature involves the use of a naive or deluded hero or unreliable narrator, whose view of the world differs widely from the true circumstances recognized by the author and readers; literary irony thus flatters its readers' intelligence at the expense of a character (or fictional narrator). A similar sense of detached superiority is achieved by dramatic irony, in which the audience knows more about a character's situation than the character does, foreseeing an outcome contrary to the character's expectations, and thus ascribing a sharply different sense to some of the character's own statements; in tragedies, this is called tragic irony. The term cosmic irony is sometimes used to denote a view of people as the dupes of a cruelly mocking Fate, as in the novels of Thomas Hardy. A writer whose works are characterized by an ironic tone may be called an ironist. For a fuller account, consult D. C. Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic* (1982).<sup>16</sup>

Irony juxtaposes appearance and reality; what happens is the opposite of what is expected (what if it rains on the weather forecaster's picnic?).<sup>17</sup>

There are various types of irony. First, verbal irony, that is usually characterized by the opposite meaning of what was said, like “he is so skillful”, while he is amateurish. Dramatic irony represents a situation, where the reader know about the future intentions of the author, while characters not. For example, in short story *Pig*, the vegetarian ends up as a meat. Cosmic irony is depicted when something ends up exactly the other way round that is expected or desired. For example, in short story *Parson's Pleasure*, false clergyman is happy to obtain intact piece of furniture almost for free, but at the end he gets only legs of this Commode. American literary critic M. H. Abrams describes various types of irony:

Verbal irony (which was traditionally classified as one of the tropes) is a statement in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed. The ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with

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<sup>15</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), 179-180.

<sup>16</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), 130.

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory – A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), 72.



indications in the overall speech-situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation. ... Some literary works exhibit structural irony; that is, the author, instead of using an occasional verbal irony, introduces a structural feature that serves to sustain a duplex meaning and evaluation throughout the work. One common literary device of this sort is the invention of a naive hero, or else a naive narrator or spokesman, whose invincible simplicity or obtuseness leads him to persist in putting an interpretation on affairs which the knowing reader - who penetrates to, and shares, the implied point of view of the authorial presence behind the naive persona - just as persistently is called on to alter and correct. ... Dramatic irony involves a situation in a play or a narrative in which the audience or reader shares with the author knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant; in that situation, the character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or expects the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store, or says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that the character intends. ... Cosmic irony (or "the irony of fate") is attributed to literary works in which a deity, or else fate, is represented as though deliberately manipulating events so as to lead the protagonist to false hopes, only to frustrate and mock them.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.5 Simile

The simile compares and contrasts two things by using words "like" and "as", for example "as white as a snow".

Simile - a comparison between two dissimilar things, usually connected by the words *like* or *as*. In this respect a simile is very close to metaphor, with which it is frequently paired. "My love is like a red, red rose" is a simile; "My love is a red rose" is a metaphor. Both simile and metaphor aim to provide a vivid description and clarity of meaning, as in Lord Byron's line "She walks in beauty like the night."<sup>19</sup>

Simile - (L. neuter of. *similis*, 'ilite') A figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, in such away as to clarify and enhance an image. It is an explicit comparison (as opposed to the metaphor, q.o., where the comparison is implicit) recognizable by the use of the words 'like' or 'as'. It is equally common in prose and verse and is a figurative device of great antiquity. The following example in prose comes from Graham Greene's *Stamboul Train*:

The great blast furnaces of Libge rose along the line like ancient

castles burning in a border raid.

And this instance in verse from Ted Hughes's poem *February*:

The wolf with its belly stitched full of big pebbles;

Nibelung wolves barbed like black pine forest

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<sup>18</sup> M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Thomson Learning, 1998), 135-137.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Quinn, *A Dictionary of Literary And Thematic Terms*, (New York: Checkmark Books, 2000), 389.

Against a red sky, over blue snow. . .<sup>20</sup>

## 2.6 Understatement

The understatement represents type of a trope, that uses not strong enough expressions that it should, for example “to say it was expensive is an understatement”, meaning it was extremely expensive. In the literary theory, there is more than one name for the understatement, for example litotes, meiosis, lessening or paradiastole, but the meaning remain the same.

The contrary figure is understatement (the Greek term is meiosis, “lessening”), which deliberately represents something as very much less in magnitude or importance than it really is, or is ordinarily considered to be. The effect is usually ironic—savagely ironic in Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*, “Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse,” and comically ironic in Mark Twain's comment that “The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.” Some critics extend “meiosis” to the use in literature of a simple, unemphatic statement to enhance the effect of a deeply pathetic or tragic event; an example is the line at the close of the narrative in Wordsworth's *Michael* (1800): “And never lifted up a single stone.”<sup>21</sup>

Meiosis (Gk 'lessening') A figure of speech which contains an understatement for emphasis: often used ironically, and also for dramatic effect, in the attainment of simplicity. In everyday speech it is sometimes used in gentle irony especially when describing something very spectacular or impressive as 'rather good', or words to that effect. In *King Lear*, the old king, having suffered the most dreadful disasters, says 'Pray you undo this button.' Meiosis may even pervade the tone and a manner of a work. A particularly good example is Auden's *The Unknown Citizen*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> J. A. Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms And Literary Theory*, (Penguin Books, 2000), 830.

<sup>21</sup> M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Thomson Learning, 1998), 120.

<sup>22</sup> J. A. Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms And Literary Theory*, (Penguin Books, 2000), 501.

## **II. ANALYSIS**

### 3 PIG

#### 3.1 Plot of the short story

A boy named Lexington is born in New York City, but he soon becomes an orphan when his parents are accidentally shot by the police. At the age of thirteen days his aunt Glosspan takes care of him. She is peculiar old lady, who keeps strict vegetarian diet. She teaches at home and encourage his talent for cooking various vegetarian meals. Aunt Glosspan suddenly dies when Lexington is seventeen year old and he leaves to New York to meet her lawyer. This lawyer cons him and instead of 500 000 dollars that his aunt left him, he gives him only 15 000 dollars in cash. Lexington starves and visits nearby restaurant, where he for the first time in his life eats pork. He tries to find out more about this meal and to make sure this is really pig. The chef tells him that it could be a piece of human flesh. Young Lexington then leaves to packing-house to see how the meat is prepared. He visits shackling area and all of the sudden he is caught and carried to the sticker, who jugulates him. Young vegetarian ends as one of the pigs.

#### 3.2 Examples of tropes

*Once upon a time, in the City of New York, a beautiful baby boy was born into this world, and the joyful parents named him Lexington.*<sup>23</sup>

Irony/hyperbole – In terms of the plot of this short story and the fate of the protagonist, this topic sentence is the prime example of irony as well as hyperbole. The perception of irony is increased by the fact, that similar phrases are used in the fairy tales.

*There they each ate a giant lobster and drank a bottle of champagne between them, and after that, they went on to a nightclub, where they drank another bottle of champagne and then sat holding hands for several hours while they recalled and discusses and admired each individual physical feature of their lovely newborn son.*<sup>23</sup>

Hyperbole – The author exaggerates and moreover mocks the way parents talk about their new born child. This long sentence overemphasizes the manner parents are celebrating birth of their son.

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<sup>23</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 183.

*Her baby was imprisoned in this place, she told herself.*<sup>24</sup>

Hyperbole – The baby was not a hostage, his parent just were not able to enter their house, and hence they fear for his safety.

*Thus, when he was no more than twelve days old, little Lexington became an orphan.*<sup>25</sup>

Irony – In the context of the plot, this simple sentence is bitter irony.

*Everybody declared an enormous, almost irresistible desire to look after him, and would have done so with the greatest of pleasure were it not for the fact that their apartment was too small, or that they already had one baby and couldn't possibly afford another, or that they wouldn't know what to do with the poor little thing when they went abroad in the summer, or that they were getting on in years, which surely would be most unfair to the boy when he grew up, and so on and so forth.*<sup>26</sup>

Irony – This long sentence proves the irony and also mockery of relatives that want only pecuniary benefits, not a burden in form of a little child.

*She was as sprightly as a woman half of her age, with a small, wrinkled, but still quite beautiful face and two lovely brown eyes that sparkled at you in the nicest way.*<sup>27</sup>

Simile – Cogent description of aunt Glosspan, where the author compares her to a younger woman.

*She was a strict vegetarian and regarded the consumption of animal flesh as not only unhealthy and disgusting, but horribly cruel.*<sup>28</sup>

Hyperbole – The author focuses on the philosophy of vegetarianism and its strict values and by doing this, he seems to exaggerate this lifestyle.

*Little Lexington drank his milk and belched and yelled and slept exactly as good baby should, and Aunt Glosspan glowed with joy whenever she looked at him and showered him with kisses all day long.*<sup>29</sup>

Metaphor – in the first part of the sentence, the author achieves comic effect by repetition of activities children do, and in the second part the attention is shifted towards aunt Glosspan, who becomes happier when she has to take care of little Lexington.

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<sup>24</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 184.

<sup>25</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 185.

<sup>26</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 185-186.

<sup>27</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 186.

<sup>28</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 187.

<sup>29</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 187-188.

*By the time he was six years old, young Lexington had grown into a most beautiful boy with long golden hair and deep blue eyes the color of corn flowers.*<sup>30</sup>

Metaphor – The author suggests that Lexington is perfect and the most beautiful child, and also compares his physical appearance, eyes, to the color of corn flowers.

*She loved him so much now that it would kill her to be parted from him any length of time.*<sup>30</sup>

Hyperbole – The author uplifts love of aunt Glosspan to Lexington to a higher level when she detests any separation from him. It would not kill her in literal sense, but she would miss him badly.

*“Aunt Glosspan,” the boy said, “what do ordinary people eat that we don’t?” “Animals,” she answered, tossing her head in disgust. “You mean live animals?” “No,” she said. “Dead ones.” The boy considered this for a moment. “You mean when they die they eat them instead of burying them?” “They don’t wait for them to die, my pet. They kill them.”*<sup>31</sup>

Irony – Dahl puts these questions to the mouth of little Lexington and when you put it in this way, it sounds extremely strange and ironic. The practice of not eating meat is in a way ridiculed.

*He could handle his pans like a juggler.*<sup>32</sup>

Simile/hyperbole – Comparison of the art of cooking with pans to the profession of juggler can be also seen as an exaggeration of Lexington’s talent.

*But she was proud as proud could be, all the same, and predicted a brilliant future for the child.*<sup>33</sup>

Hyperbole – Aunt Glosspan perceives Lexington as flawless human being and predicts him only outstanding future.

*He had a violent urge to create.*<sup>33</sup>

Hyperbole – By choosing this words and putting them together, the writer achieves comic effect.

*“You will make history!”*<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 188.

<sup>31</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 188-189.

<sup>32</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 189.

<sup>33</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 190.

Hyperbole – Visionary prediction is yet again exaggerated

*“Old Glosspan?” the doctor said. “My God, is she dead?” “Certainly she’s dead,” the youth answered. “If you will come back home with me now I’ll dig her up and you can see for yourself.” “How deep did you bury her?” the doctor asked. “Six or seven feet down, I should think.” “And how long ago?” “Oh, about eight hours.” “Then she’s dead,” the doctor announced. “Here’s the certificate.”<sup>34</sup>*

Irony – The author attacks the feelings of a reader by this ironic but yet quite amusing conversation between Lexington and the doctor about the possibility that aunt Glosspan still lives.

*In his luxurious office, he shook Lexington warmly by the hand and congratulated him upon his aunt’s death.<sup>35</sup>*

Irony – Another prime example of irony is created by contradictory choice of words – nobody congratulates anybody upon someone’s death.

*“The whole world is before me!” our hero cried as he emerged into the street.<sup>36</sup>*

Irony/hyperbole – Naive wish of Lexington can be seen as irony, in the context of the plot, but also as a hyperbole because he is so young and inexperienced.

*“What a revolting smell,” he said, sniffing the air.<sup>36</sup>*

Hyperbole – The protagonist comes into contacts with the meat for the first time in his life and he is shocked by its smell.

*“But first, I’ve simply got to have something to eat. I’m starving.”<sup>36</sup>*

Hyperbole – Lexington is not dying because shortage of the food, he is just hungry.

*“I haven’t the foggiest idea what it is,” Lexington replied, “but I should love to try it. You see, I am writing a cooking-book and...”<sup>37</sup>*

Hyperbole – Another interesting usage of words signifying not know at all.

*“But this is absolute heaven!” he exclaimed. “What an aroma! It’s tremendous!”<sup>37</sup>*

Hyperbole – These two sentences imply great surprise when discovering meat is absolutely delicious by exaggerating its qualities.

<sup>34</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 192.

<sup>35</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 193.

<sup>36</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 195.

<sup>37</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Pig*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 196.

### 3.3 Summary

Short story *Pig* presents itself as short in length, but deep in the impact on the emotions and extremely disturbing plot full of hyperboles that in the end imply the irony.

Tragic irony can be demonstrated since the beginning of the short story, for instance when Lexington is born and his parents loves him, but they are killed in wildly ironic situation, and he becomes an orphan. Another example of irony or rather child's look on this world is illustrated when aunt Glosspan explains him how and why people eat animals and little Lexington asks: "*You mean when they eat them instead of burying them?*"<sup>30</sup>

The plot as such exceeds in irony – Lexington, talented vegetarian chef, discovers meat and this revelation costs him life.

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## 4 LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

### 4.1 Plot of the short story

Mary Maloney, a pregnant wife of a police officer Patrick Maloney, expects her husband come home from work. Everything in their house looks nice and cosy, all duly neat. Husband comes and the couple silently sits and drinks whiskey. The readers sense strong tension between the spouses. Then Patrick makes a speech and by doing that he reveals he wants to leave his wife. Mary gets the shock of her life, but after a moment she fetches a huge frozen leg of lamb for the dinner. She punches her husband by that lamb leg and by that she kills him. After this crime she tries to conceal the murder. She gives the lamb in the oven and goes to store to buy some vegetables. After she returns home from her journey for her alibi, she calls the police. The police has no suspicion of Mary killing her husband. Colleagues of the victim tries to find a deadly weapon, most likely it is a large apathetic object. When the search after the murder's weapon is over, Mary treats police officers with the dinner – roasted lamb leg with potatoes and peas. The story ends when police eats the evidence against Mary.

### 4.2 Examples of tropes

*When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tires on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock.*<sup>38</sup>

Irony – Even the beginning of this short story points to the routine life of middle class spouses. By itself it can be seen as a mockery of the stereotypical middle class. The irony strengthens by using phrase “*punctually as always*”.<sup>38</sup>

*For her, this was always a blissful time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house.*<sup>38</sup>

Hyperbole – The routine life becomes “*always*” extremely happy for the protagonist when her husband comes home from work. Mary symbolizes dedicated housewife, who overestimates her relationship with Patrick, her husband.

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<sup>38</sup> Roald Dahl, *Lamb to the Slaughter*, American Literature, <http://www.americanliterature.com/Dahl/SS/LambtotheSlaughter.html> (accessed March 3, 2010).

*She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel - almost as a sunbather feels the sun – that warm male glow that came out of him to her when they were together.*<sup>37</sup>

Simile/hyperbole – This sentence represents both usage of hyperbole and simile. One hyperbole is used in the beginning – Mary likes to relax with her husband and she enjoys feeling of pleasure (“warm male glow”) in his presence. Simile appears in the comparison “as a sunbather feels the sun” and suggests something nice and relaxing.

*She couldn't feel anything – except a slight nausea and a desire to vomit.*<sup>38</sup>

Irony – Two discordant statements constitute irony – on the one hand, she is feelingless, on the other hand she wants to retch.

*All right, she told herself. So I've killed him.*<sup>38</sup>

Irony – Another example of two contradictory statements. First, the protagonist tries to calm down and then she realizes and confesses she committed a murder.

*That's the way, she told herself. Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all.*<sup>38</sup>

Irony – The protagonist and the murderess in one is thinking how to conceal her crime. Her thoughts and grounds draw conclusion replete with irony.

*All the old love and longing for him welled up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him, and began to cry her heart out.*<sup>38</sup>

Metaphor – The protagonist kills her husband, but she recalls old love and she becomes extremely sad and cry unceasingly.

*They were exceptionally nice to her, and Jack Noonan asked if she wouldn't rather go somewhere else, to her sister's house perhaps, or to his own wife who would take care of her and put her up for the night.*<sup>38</sup>

Hyperbole – Just one word makes this sentence overstated, adverb “exceptionally”, meaning outstandingly.

*No, she said. She didn't feel she could move even a yard at the moment.*<sup>38</sup>

Hyperbole – This clear overstatement reflects inclination of the author towards smart, but also overrated propositions.

*“Get the weapon, and you've got the man.”*<sup>38</sup>

Irony/understatement – This understatement and also the irony comes from the context. The police thinks when they find weapon, it will lead them to a murderer. One of police officers says this remark while eating the actual murder's weapon and this shows the irony.

*“Here you all are, and good friends of dear Patrick's too, and helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terrible hungry by now because it's long past your supertime, and I know Patrick would never forgive me, God bless his soul, if I allowed you to remain in his house without offering you decent hospitality. Why don't you eat up that lamb that's in the oven. It'll be cooked just right now.”<sup>38</sup>*

Irony – Submissive woman of murdered police officer offers investigators a dinner, that happens to be the lethal weapon. She prompts them to eat this lamb, even refers to the god, and wants them to satisfy their hunger. It is the irony of fate, because she, a murderess, forces police officers to destroy all evidence against her.

*“Probably right under our very noses.”<sup>38</sup>*

Metaphor – Similar case as the previous trope. The police officers do not notice the murder's weapon because they eat it.

### 4.3 Summary

This shocking short story overflows with irony as well as black humor. The choice of some elements can be seen as a reference to the religion. Pregnant protagonist called Mary can allude to Mary, the mother of Jesus, that according to the Christian faith raised her child without his true father, God. Protagonist kills her husband by the leg of lamb, and lambs are associated with faith, for instance Lamb of God.

Grotesque but entertaining short story reveals the life of middle class housewife, a devoted wife that at the end kills her own husband and makes a virtue of necessity. This is the prime example of irony and everything else just unspools of this matter of fact. The author tries to unfold severe world of adults in *Lamb to the Slaughter*.

## 5 THE LANDLADY

### 5.1 Plot of the short story

This short story concentrates on a seventeen year old Billy, who arrives in Bath and seeks for a place to stay. He happens to be present at a Bed & Breakfast notice that mesmerizes him to check in this boarding house. The landlady treats him extremely nicely, but she also seems to be a bit spooky. Young Billy discovers that only two guests have been in this hotel and he recalls these two names to be familiar. The landlady tells him about these two guests while serving Billy a cup of tea. She soon confesses that she stuffs all her pets. The reader realizes that she stuffed her parrot, dog and also these two previous guests and that Billy is her next victim.

### 5.2 Examples of tropes

*But the air was deadly cold and the wind was like a flat blade of ice on his cheeks.*<sup>39</sup>

Simile – This sentence presents metaphor “*deadly cold*“ and also a simile when the author compares wind to a flat blade, both tropes are used for the description of the weather.

*He had never stayed in any boarding-houses, and, to be perfectly honest, he was a tiny bit frightened of them.*<sup>39</sup>

Irony/understatement – The author refers to the coming chain of events that lead to the death of young Billy. Understatement is achieved by the usage of the hedge “*a tiny bit*”.

*The name itself conjured up images of watery cabbage, rapacious landladies, and powerful smell of kippers in the living room.*<sup>40</sup>

Metaphor/irony – An idea is not able to create an actual image, but in this case of the metaphor, the name reminds the protagonist several images of mocking prejudices against landladies. In a way it shows ironic image of landladies and association between them and boarding houses.

*Each word was like a large black eye starring at him through the glass, holding him, compelling him, forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house,*

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<sup>39</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – The Landlady*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 9.

<sup>40</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – The Landlady*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 10.

*and the next thing he knew, he was actually moving across from the window to the front door of the house, climbing the steps that led up to it, and reaching the bell.*<sup>41</sup>

Simile – Fitting simile compares words to the black eyes and ascribes them qualities of a human being. The author reaches point of tension by this engaging description of the notice Bed and Breakfast.

*But this dame was like a jack-in-the-box. He pressed the bell – and she popped!*<sup>41</sup>

Simile – Very creative simile compares the landlady to the toy, and in the next sentence this idea is even expanded by her movements, that remind the protagonist this toy.

*The compulsion or, more accurately, the desire to follow after her into that house was extraordinarily strong.*<sup>41</sup>

Hyperbole – Invisible but inevitable energy forces Billy to enter this house. The usage of words “*compulsion*” and “*desire*” signifies exaggeration.

*“But the notice in your window just happened to catch my eye.”*<sup>41</sup>

Metaphor – The established metaphor used when something catches an attention.

*It was fantastically cheap.*<sup>41</sup>

Hyperbole – It is enough to say “it was cheap”, but by using adverb “*fantastically*”, the statement is grossly exaggerated.

*She seemed terribly nice.*<sup>42</sup>

Oxymoron – The landlady acts extremely freaky, but the author depicts her as “*terribly nice*”, that is an contradictory connection of words.

*The old girl is slightly dotty, Billy told himself.*<sup>42</sup>

Irony/understatement - Billy starts to think the landlady is little bit crazy, but in fact she is insane. This statement abounds with irony in the context of the plot.

*“I shouldn’t thought you’d be simply swamped with applicants,” he said politely.*<sup>42</sup>

Hyperbole – This collocation implies that there should be a lot of guests. But, there is no one except the landlady and Billy.

*“But the trouble is that I’m inclined to be just a teeny weeny bit choosy and particular – if you see what I mean.”*<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – The Landlady*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 11.

<sup>42</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – The Landlady*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 12.

Understatement – This appealing word construction adverts to a strange character of the landlady. The author shows that the other way round – she should be seen as someone “*terribly nice*”, but in the end, she is just crazy person, who follows her own intentions.

*“And it is such a pleasure, my dear, such a very great pleasure when now and again I open the door and I see someone standing there who is just exactly right.”*<sup>42</sup>

Hyperbole – Landlady speaks almost like a mentally ill person. She overestimates her feelings of pleasure when a potential guest comes to the boarding-house.

*Now, the fact that his landlady appeared to be slightly off her rocker didn't worry Billy in the least.*<sup>43</sup>

Understatement – The landlady is obviously not “*slightly*” out of her mind like Billy thinks. On the contrary, the author gives straight message that she is crazy indeed. The author denotes this by using informal collocation “be off rocker”, meaning be crazy.

*It rings a bell.*<sup>44</sup>

Metaphor – The idiomatic expression ring a bell means that it reminds something.

*She was holding it well out in front of her, and rather high up, as though the tray were a pair of reins on a frisky horse.*<sup>44</sup>

Metaphor – Another comparison of landlady's property to the equipment, that commands a horse.

*“But they were extraordinarily handsome, both of them, I can promise that.”*<sup>45</sup>

Hyperbole – Another usage of exaggeration that makes reader think that landlady is out of her mind.

*“How time does fly away from us all, doesn't it, Mr. Wilkins?”*<sup>45</sup>

Metaphor – Stable metaphor that compares time to the fly means that something passes very quickly.

*“As though then were both famous for the same sort of thing, if you see what I mean – like...like Dempsey and Tunney, for example, or Churchill and Roosevelt.”*<sup>45</sup>

Simile – This sentence likens two former guests to famous person to show that they were really well known.

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<sup>43</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – The Landlady*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 13.

<sup>44</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – The Landlady*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 14.

<sup>45</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – The Landlady*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 15.

*“They’re not as good as they look,” Billy said.*<sup>46</sup>

Simile – Simple comparison of the quality.

*“Good gracious me,” he said. “How absolutely fascinating.”*<sup>47</sup>

Hyperbole – Strong emotions create this powerful hyperbole that intensifies reader’s reception of Billy and his feelings.

### 5.3 Summary

In this particular short story the author focuses on creation of suspension especially by choosing esoteric metaphors and similes. He uses other types of tropes as well, for instance hyperboles and oxymorons. In addition, the elementary but sententious ending attained desired effect of the short story – to shock readers.

The author exceeds in creation simple and sagacious short story. The reader does not expect anything sinister and this is achieved solely by the excellent style of writing Roald Dahl shines at. The reader sense foreshadowing of something wrong not until Billy enters the boarding house and this place is empty. Then the story culminates when Billy recalls two names of guests, and finally when he feels his tea tastes of bitter almonds.

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<sup>46</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – The Landlady*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 17.

<sup>47</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – The Landlady*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 18.

## 6 PARSON'S PLEASURE

### 6.1 Plot of the short story

Mr. Boggis, an antique dealer, runs a small shop and makes a profit on distinct pieces of furniture. To make even more money, he begins to dress up as a clergyman and go around English farmhouses to search out rare and significant pieces of furniture. After some time he discovers a famous Chippendale Commode. In order to make a fortune, he tries to convince three men, the owners, that this Commode is valueless and he wants to buy only the legs of this Commode. This purchase goes well, he gains the whole Commode for only twenty pounds. He leaves to get his car and these three men cut the legs off the Commode to please a parson and eventually they destroy it all. The story ends before the return of the parson.

### 6.2 Examples of tropes

*And the hawthorn. The hawthorn was exploding white and red along the hedges and the primroses were growing underneath in little clumps, and it was beautiful.*<sup>48</sup>

Hyperbole/metaphor – Dahl focuses on banal things to foreshadow the place and the situation. In this case, the author hyperbolizes the amount of the hawthorn blooming near the hedges.

*Down below, the countryside was spread out before him like a huge green carpet.*<sup>48</sup>

Simile – Representative example of simile, where the author uses preposition “like” and equates countryside to a carpet.

*His premises were not large, and generally he didn't do a great deal of business, but because he always bought cheap, very very cheap, and sold very very dear, he managed to make quiet a tidy little income every year.*<sup>49</sup>

Understatement/hyperbole – This whole sentence overflows with understatements as well as with hyperboles. The author uses negative forms (“not large”, “he didn't do”) or he repeats adjectives (“cheap, very very cheap”, “very very dear”) to compose an ironic situation. The bottom line of this statement (“quiet a tidy little income”) detects strong understatement.

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<sup>48</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 61.

<sup>49</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 62.



*In spite of this rather clownish quality of his, Mr. Boggis was not a fool.*<sup>49</sup>

Irony – This sentence structure first suggests that Mr. Boggis is quite outlandish, but second part clarifies that he is not crazy. Yet, the conviction of Mr. Boggis being fool outlasts.

*They were definitely not for sale, but just out of curiosity, just for fun, you know, how much would you give?*<sup>50</sup>

Irony – This biased inquiry indicates, that first there is no possibility of selling this, but by using adverb “just” and by using informal phrase “you know” to emphasize the statement, the author manifests real possibility of sale.

*Why shouldn't he comb the countryside?*<sup>51</sup>

Metaphor – Figurative meaning of phrase “comb something” means to search a place thoroughly.

*A dear old clergyman and a large station-wagon somehow never seemed quite right together.*<sup>52</sup>

Irony – Throughout the incompatibility features are mixed together in this sentence – reputable picture of old parson and a large car for transportation of furniture. This connection therefore achieves mocking and ironic tone.

*The face was round and rosy, quite perfect for the part, and the two large brown eyes that bulged out at you from this rosy face gave an impression of gentle imbecility.*<sup>52</sup>

Irony – The physical description of clergyman leads into remark that the parson appears to be an idiot.

*A Tory in riding – breeches, male or female, was always a sitting duck for Mr. Boggis.*<sup>53</sup>

Metaphor – “Tory” means name of supporter of certain political philosophy and collocation “sitting duck” stands for an easy target.

*At the moment they were all thinking precisely the same thing – that somehow or other this clergyman who was certainly not the local fellow, had been sent to poke his nose into their business and to report what he found to the government.*<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 64.

<sup>51</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 65.

<sup>52</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 66.

<sup>53</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 67.

Metaphor – The collocation “to poke nose into something” means to concern about someone’s affairs to find something unusual. The metaphor is intensified by the context – for instance, the parson is strange, not local.

*Mr. Boggis saw it at once, and he stopped dead in his track and gave a little shrill gasp of shock.*<sup>55</sup>

Hyperbole – The overstatement of parson’s shock is depicted by metaphor “*he stopped dead*”.

*“How on earth can you be so mighty sure it’s a fake when you haven’t even saw what it looks underneath all the paint?”*<sup>56</sup>

Irony – By the usage of “*how on earth*” and informal accentuation of phrase “*so mighty sure*”, the author establishes an impression of caustic humor.

*“My experience tells me that without the slightest doubt this wood has been processed with lime.”*<sup>57</sup>

Hyperbole – This exaggeration overestimates parson’s experience by declaring no possibility of a mistake.

*“The time and trouble that some mortals will go to in order to deceive the innocent!”*  
*Mr. Boggis cried.*<sup>58</sup>

Hyperbole – The hyperbole is achieved by untraditional choice of words – first the author uses “*mortals*”, common sacred word, and then the phrase “*to deceive the innocent*”, that again evokes tongue of parsons.

*The men were staring at this queer moon-faced clergyman with the bulging eyes, not quite so suspiciously now because he did seem to know a bit about his subject.*<sup>59</sup>

Irony – This sentence shows contradictory approaches – the men think the parson is weird, but they are not so wary as they were when they first met him.

*“I do hope I haven’t been a terrible old bore.”*<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 69-70.

<sup>55</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 71.

<sup>56</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 77.

<sup>57</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 77-78.

<sup>58</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 78.

<sup>59</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 79.

<sup>60</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 81.

Hyperbole – The polite phrase is shifted when parson uses phrase “*a terrible old bore*”, that as not usual tongue for clergymen.

*But the habit of buying cheap, as cheap as it was humanly possible to buy, acquired by years of necessity and practice, was too strong in him now to permit him to give in so easily.*<sup>60</sup>

Understatement/simile – The author retraces to the beginning of this short story, and again he uses understatement and simile together. The both tropes are introduced by the witty phrase “*cheap, as cheap as it was humanly possible*”.

*“I’ll be back in a jiffy.”*<sup>61</sup>

Hyperbole – The parson leaves to get his car and the reader knows he will not be back very soon. However, in order to deceive these men, he asserts otherwise.

*He found himself giggling quite uncontrollably, and there was a feeling inside him as though hundreds and hundreds of tiny bubbles were rising up from his stomach and bursting merrily in the top of his head, like sparkling-water.*<sup>61</sup>

Hyperbole/simile – The usage of simile with hyperbole reminds previous tropes, that combines for instance simile with understatement. By this particular usage is attained interesting effect of catching the attention of the reader. Hyperbole is depicted by phrase “*hundreds and hundreds of tiny bubbles*” and simile is displayed in phrase “*like sparkling-water*”.

*Historic occasion.*<sup>62</sup>

Hyperbole – Another distinctive use of hyperbole, simple but overestimated significance of the event.

*“Exactly! And now listen to me. I’ve got an idea. He told us, didn’t he, that it was only the legs he was wanting. Right? So all we’ve got to do is to cut ‘em off quick right here on the spot before he comes back, then it’ll be sure to go in the car. All we’re doing is saving him the trouble of cutting them off himself when he gets home. How about it Mr Rummins?”*<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 82.

<sup>62</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson's Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 83.

Irony – This “idea” reveals the whole point behind this plot. Once again, the author achieved deep irony precisely by this statement.

*“All they’ve got usually is piddling little Morris Eights or Austin Sevens.”<sup>63</sup>*

Irony – This sentence shows mockery of parsons’ small cars and it is ironic because the protagonist is not an actual clergyman.

*“A parson’s just as cunning as the rest of ‘em when it comes to money, don’t you make any mistake about that.”<sup>63</sup>*

Simile – All parsons are compared to someone who deceives people in order to obtain or save money.

### 6.3 Summary

Short story *Parson’s Pleasure* abounds with hyperboles and metaphors. The usage of hyperboles shapes especially Mr. Boggis and his greedy character, it also reveals the direction in which this short story proceeds. By using hyperboles, similes, and metaphors the author reaches prime example of irony.

However, not only verbal irony is presented. The whole plot indicates a situation, that has different effect than protagonist, Mr. Boggis, desires. It denotes cosmic irony or irony of fate and this is also reason why this short story excels in wittiness and braininess.

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<sup>63</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Parson’s Pleasure*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 84.

## 7 GEORGY PORGY

### 7.1 Plot of the short story

George, a young vicar with a small parish, has problems with women. Although he is a vicar, women excite him. These feelings are mixed because of his memories of mother. She was free-thinker, for instance she took him to see their rabbit give a birth. But this rabbit ate new born children. He ran away, her mother chased him but she was hit by a car and died on the spot. Adult and well-educated George is afraid of spinsters in his parish because they stalk him. One of his spinsters gets him drunk and tries to kiss him. At the end, he goes mad.

### 7.2 Examples of tropes

*Without in any way wishing to blow my own trumpet, I think that I can claim to being in most respects a moderately well-matured and rounded individual.*<sup>64</sup>

Irony – The protagonist asserts he is fully grown and balanced person. This topic sentence of the whole short story represents irony, because as the story progresses, it is obvious the vicar is not mentally alert because of his childhood memories.

*Skin touching skin, my skin, that is, touching the skin of a female, whether it were leg, neck, face, hand, or merely finger, was so repugnant to me that I invariably greeted a lady with my hands clasped firmly behind my back to avoid the inevitable handshake.*<sup>64</sup>

Hyperbole – This statement either comes from the person that is not sane and suffers paranoid fears, or it is an example of enormous disgust. In both cases, it hints at gross exaggeration.

*If a woman stood close to me in a queue so that our bodies touched, or if she squeezed in beside me on a bus seat, hip to hip and thigh to thigh, my cheeks would begin burning like mad and little prickles of sweat would start coming out all over the crown of my head.*<sup>65</sup>

Simile – This statement shows vicar's unreasonable fear of women, the exemplification is trope "my cheeks would begin burning like mad".

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<sup>64</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 131.

<sup>65</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 131-132.

*There were scores of them in the parish, and the unfortunate thing about it was that at least sixty per cent of them were spinsters, completely untamed by the benevolent influence of holy matrimony.*<sup>66</sup>

Irony – Ironic picture is achieved by using figure of ungracious old ladies, by using old-fashioned word “*spinster*” and also by mocking tone when stated they are strange because they are single.

*I tell you I was jumpy as a squirrel.*<sup>66</sup>

Simile – Elementary comparison of feelings to restless animal, a squirrel.

*I am so sleepy I can hardly see to walk, but my mother takes me firmly by the hand and leads me downstairs and out through the front door into the night where the cold air is like a sponge of water in my face, and I open my eyes wide and see the lawn all sparkling with frost and cedar tree with its tremendous arms standing black against a thin small moon.*<sup>67</sup>

Simile – Comparison of the air to sponge full of water signifies something that can wake everybody immediately.

*It conjures up the vision either of a stringy old hen with a puckered mouth or of a huge ribald monster shouting around the house in riding breeches.*<sup>68</sup>

Metaphor/hyperbole – The phrasal verb conjure something up means that something brings a picture to someone’s mind. The following part of the sentence is pejorative and also full of exaggerations. The author visualizes the word “*spinster*” as an scrawny hen or as a lascivious freak.

*For now, instead of sniping at me sporadically from far away, the attackers suddenly came charging out of the mood with bayonets fixed.*<sup>69</sup>

Hyperbole/metaphor – The ironic hyperbole is also an excellent metaphor, Dahl masters play with words.

*All I can tell you is that when that arm of hers came sliding in under mine, it felt exactly as though a cobra was coiling itself around my wrist.*<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 133.

<sup>67</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 136.

<sup>68</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 138.

<sup>69</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 139.

<sup>70</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 140.

Simile – Comparison of woman's movement to a coiling cobra has pejorative meaning when equate this woman to a dangerous snake.

*“Dear me, what a hungry look you have in those eyes of yours.”*<sup>70</sup>

Metaphor – Metaphorical description of look, that is eager to swallow a human being.

*I became a nervous wreck. At times I hardly knew what I was doing. I started reading the burial service at young Gladys Pitcher's wedding. I dropped Mrs Harris's new baby into the font during the christening and gave it a nasty ducking.*<sup>71</sup>

Irony – This situations exemplify disturbed condition of Georgy. Nevertheless, described state of affairs overflow with wit.

*Nothing stimulates them quite so much as a display of modesty or shyness in a man.*<sup>71</sup>

Hyperbole – The protagonist is terrified of any contact with women and he overstates the situation he sticks in.

*I loved the smooth white look of a bare arm emerging from a sleeve, curiously naked like a peeled banana.*<sup>71</sup>

Simile – Pertinent simile suggesting something exposed, bare and vulnerable.

*I felt as buoyant as a bubble, and everything around me seemed to be bobbing up and down and swirling gently from side to side.*<sup>72</sup>

Simile – Dahl creates imaginative metaphors. For instance thinking about a bubble, everyone imagines something tender swaying in the air – and this is exactly what the author manifests.

*I think I would probably have fainted. I might even have died. But there I was now, the same old me, actually relishing the contact of those enormous bare arms against my body! Also – and this was the most amazing thing of all – I was beginning to feel the urge to reciprocate.*<sup>73</sup>

Hyperbole – The young vicar finds himself in a state of panic when he should be in touch with any woman. Actually, he thinks he could die just by touching a woman. But after one woman gets him drunk, he loses inhibitions and all of the sudden he starts to feel strong desire to render this physical contact.

*This roused her to such a pitch that she began to grunt and snort like a hog.*<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 141.

<sup>72</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 149.

Simile – Another comparison of human sounds to an animal.

*A gang of witches like that is a very dangerous thing to fool around with, and had they managed to catch me in the summerhouse right then and there when their blood was up, they would as likely as not have torn me limb from limb on the spot.*<sup>74</sup>

Metaphor – In the context of the plot and the opinion of protagonist towards women, the metaphor “*gang of witches*” is totally fitting.

### 7.3 Summary

This short story reflects the author’s talent in choice unique and idiosyncratic tropes. Nontraditional similes and metaphors intensify the reader’s sensation of the short story and purvey traditional feeling of Roald Dahl’s imagination.

Another obvious trope is the irony – George as a vicar lives in celibacy and still women excite him, however he is afraid of them. His mother wanted him to be open-minded and free-thinker, but he happens to be a vicar shattered with problems with women. While he is being drunk, he wants to touch a woman, however he becomes insane because of his memories of his mother.

*Georgy Porgy* is disturbing short story that shows lot of contradictions.

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<sup>73</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 150.

<sup>74</sup> Roald Dahl, *Kiss, Kiss – Georgy Porgy*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 152.



## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this bachelor thesis was to analyze selected tropes in several short stories by Roald Dahl. The tropes, namely irony, metaphor, oxymoron, simile, hyperbole, and understatement, are an integral part of Roald Dahl's humorous and frequently grotesque method of writing. Therefore, short stories create a single chapter in the work of this author.

The short stories *The Landlady*, *Lamb to the Slaughter*, *Parson's Pleasure*, *Pig*, and *Georgy Porgy* signify diverse modes of how to influence readers. To analyze usage of the tropes, this thesis tries to understand why, where, and for what purposes the author uses the tropes and what is his intention in doing so.

All the short stories have something in common, for instance creation of suspense, deep irony, and shocking twists replete with drama. None of these features could be possible without carefully sorted tropes that are all highly sophisticated and inventive.

The study of tropes in Roald Dahl's short stories signs the importance of understanding the author's work. This subject matter should be explored in more detail and in extended scope for better insight into the author's production.

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