

THE SOUND MACHINE PANDORA THAT LED TO THE OTHER WORLD

Abstract

The chapter unravels the deep yet mysterious connection that science and gothic elements share. Often considered as two very different spheres, “Pandora that led to the other world” showcases how one cannot exist without the other. Klaussner becomes the chain between the two world. The rationales identify the story as a work of pure science fiction, but the author attempts to bring out the other side of the coin which is present in the story i.e. how deeply rooted it is in the arena of gothic elements.

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Beyond the region where everything is defined and science, reason and rationality give an outlook of explanation of every phenomenon that is taking place there lies a spectrum where myths comes to life. Such spectrums exists near everyone of us but it is there wish when and how they choose to manifest itself before us. Their appearance or rather existence can be felt at that times but they majorly refrain from revealing themselves because the world is divided into realms and if one crosses the realm that he or she is assigned to live in then it is the destruction of the whole civilization that follows in the aftermath.

Attempts have been made in the past to look through the barriers that divide these unspoken realms but with little success. Roald Dahl's the sound machine present the very same scenario before the readers. Science is capable it shows of helping mankind to get through the realms of the unknown but is practically incapable of saving people from whatever awaits for us from that side. The intermingling of the realms could have brought about the revealing of secrets which could have shocked the entire world of humanity but even when it is about to happen, something or the other takes places which pauses the whole process which had been undertaken. Klausner the protagonist has a different mind set and being aware of it , he puts it into use revealing the unseen side of nature. In the past too such mysterious incidents have taken place which proves the fact that we might be not the only once who exists in the frame of time. In the month of July back in 1954 a mysterious person visited the Haneda Airport in Tokyo and mentioned the country where he came from as Taured. The officers were confused as no such place existed and bringing out a map they asked him to point out at the location of the place. To much of everyone's surprise he said the location where current day Andorra exists is where his country was. Placed amongst tight security the person vanished all a sudden. Many people believe that he was a someone who came from the other world and Taured would have been the name of a place there. Another such incident was of Pan AM flight 914. The plane took off from New York Airport in 1955 with 57 passengers and disappeared mysteriously but to much of a shock landed in Maimi after 37 years without any hint of anything abnormal taking place. Such stories have time and again be mentioned as the work of fiction at hand. The writer of this piece of work places no authenticity of these events but highlights the facts that such stories and many more exists which have no solution as to how and why such incidents took place.

In this critically acclaimed scientific work Gothic elements manage to carve out a distinct place for its presence. It cannot be overlooked that science along with it brings an invitation to the goth because a void is usually created to which science has no answers to and goth would have occupy the void to provide the idea as to why things were happening the way they were.

Nature which has been described as a mother and nurturer pre dominantly by the romantic writers has an unexplained eerie side to it. If it had the capability to fill a person with imagination providing inspiration to them, it also holds the power of driving a person crazy who tries to ponder upon its unseen side. Roald Dahl through this short science fiction simply does not express his love for nature but also brings to the forefront the realization that we are at the mercy of nature and the day, the supernatural exhibits itself completely that day would mark the end of the whole human race. From the strange environment that dominates the story to the stranger behavior that possess the characters in the story the presents yet another magnificent example of how goth and science can go hand in hand.

The creation of a background which gives a feeling of uneasiness is one of the key aspects of Gothic imagery. Similarly one can notice right in the beginning of the story that the first description of the black box carries with it the morbid imagery of death. There stood a black box about three feet long, the shape of a child's coffin

It can be seen as a subtle warning at hand that the device that is being used to see through what lies beyond the auditory spectrum has destruction and a note of death associated with itself. This can also be seen as the foreboding of events as if the alternate climax of the story is being presented before the readers. The description of the black box with a note of warning on it reminds the readers of the casket scene from William Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice. Out of the three caskets of gold, silver and lead. The third one had the inscription on it as Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath

The casket had eventually the portrait of Portia in it but such does not seem to be the case with the sound box which Klausner had created. The box was not only the gateway to unlock the way the other side of the spectrum but had also started to unlock that madness that was present within Klausner. He had started to converse with himself while the time he was working on the creation. The intensity and the wave of urgency he held while talking to himself along with the breathlessness that aroused from the strong suppressed excitement almost makes the readers believe that except Klausner someone else is also present in the room but such was not the case. The hints of the presence of the unseen and unheard had started taking shape right from the very beginning. Considered as a classic example of one of the best Gothic plays Hamlet by William Shakespeare's presents a similar kind of soliloquy of Hamlet which leaves the readers wondering if Hamlet is conversing with himself or the ghost of his father

To be, or not to be – that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer. The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles. And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep, No more

Soliloquy is considered as a way to unravel the inner feelings of the characters but in Gothic literature it emerges as one of the key traits to show the existence of something beyond the ordinary and similar is the case with Klausner in the text. Gothic settings are usually abandoned castles or churches which acts as a pictorial representation of the absence of God but in The Sound Machine the little wooden shed in which Klausner is working also give rise to a dingy atmosphere where suffocation can be felt. It was a little unpainted room on whose bench was scattered all the material on which he was working on. Astonishingly the room in which he is working has uncanny resemblance with the confessional present in the church. It is also described in the simplest terms as a box or stall where people confess there guilt and priests are present to redeem them of it. Drawing parallel between the two rooms if one assumes Klausner to be confessing about the machine he was working on then there must have been an unseen visitor who was listening to the words of Klausner and unraveling the thoughts he had in his mind regarding the invention he was trying to get accomplished.

In a similar situation was Fautus present in his room all along when he called upon Mephistopheles to deal with his soul. The Sound Machine opens up with Klausner moving inside the shed and working on the machine. This clearly shows that it was not the first time he had visited the shed and was working on the box. The void again presents itself if someone

was present with him in his prior visits to the shed and there is a high probability that there was someone who was present at the moment too to whom Klausner was in a conversation with but would have chosen to remain invisible when Dr. Scott appeared on the scene. It was even visible from the reaction of Klausner that he was startled by the unexpected visit of the doctor. Since he had may expected no one to be present at that hour and hence was in a normal conversation with the one who was unseen to the human eye

Suddenly he heard footsteps on the grave path outside and he straightened and turned swiftly as the door opened and a tall man came in. It was Scott. It was only Scott, the doctor. The swiftly and eager actions of Klausner shows that something was definitely a miss as if he was trying to hide something. It was surely not the box as he could not have hidden it with all its wires and dials in such a short span of time. The movement yet leaves the readers with the question that if not the box then whom exactly was he trying to hide. The abovementioned paragraph from the story has the voice of the narrator in it and it seems even he was aware about the presence of someone else in the room as he (Roald Dahl) suspiciously repeats twice that who was the person who came in the shed. The second sentence sounds much like a relief that it was just the doctor and maybe the respite is also present since the doctor is unable to see what the narrator or Klausner was trying to hide. The conversation between Klausner and Scott reveals that the former spends majority of the evenings in the shed and presents another similarity between him and Dr. Fautus. The most tricky feature of this scene is basically what if Klausner too would have dealt of his soul and in return the unseen and the unheard was providing him with the knowledge to work upon the machine that would open the gateway between the two worlds. This possibility cannot be ruled out either. Moreover he seems to be in a hurry to be left alone. Klausner's repeated urgency not allowing Dr. Scott to interfere in the work he is doing, seems like a feeble attempt on his part to not let him enter into the room. His attempts for the same can be witnessed in his urging that he is alright and in a way is denying medical help.

Horror movies such as the possession of Emily Rose and Annabelle have shown that people who are possessed have a tendency of changing voices as the devil is speaking through them. Fascinatingly Dr. Scott visits him because he had some problem in his throat. This could be a sign towards Klausner being actually possessed and yet refusing any kind of scientific help that could have actually brought him out of the paranormal situation he was struck in. The shed had an uneasy atmosphere which was even sensed by the doctor.

The doctor began to feel the tension in the room. He looked at the black box on the bench. It could be noticed very easily that the black box had something about it and even the doctor could feel it's presence as something which was not normal. At first Klausner didn't want to reveal what actually he was doing and tried to sent away the doctor as soon as possible. When he realized that Scott has sensed something when he explained the box to be a frightening looking thing. He might have realized that further beating behind the bush would be like adding fuel to the fire and chose to reveal the plan he was unto. There can also be witnessed a moment of confusion as if he was trying to put into words what exactly Klausner had in his mind. The pause he gave before answering Dr. Scott what the machine was all about gives us a hint whether it was actually the truth which was being told or was it a quick cover up on the part of Klausner. Even Scott could see the tension he was going through as if not able to express his piece of work to the doctor

The invention of the black box is being portrayed as sounds which human ear cannot hear or interpret. At this point in the story the reader is clueless which sounds are being talked about as Klausner begins his explanation by giving the examples of dogs who have a hearing capability much better than humans. Even though no scientific proof has been given to the belief, but it is popularly believed that dogs can sense and see things which humans can't. Hence the feeling of fear is again triggered in the behavior of the protagonist when it's leaving everyone puzzled as to why he wants to hear the sounds he has been so obsessed with and why is he going such an extra mile to find out something which seems a much trivial issue to the humans in general. All the while explaining this invention to Scott his behavior keeps on changing more weirdly. From a human being he starts to change into something which is scary and terrible infusing a deadly silence in the minds of those who would try to understand him at that point of time.

Klausner was becoming more animate every moment. He was a small frail man, nervous and twitchy with always moving hands. His large head inclined towards his left shoulder as though his neck were not quiet strong enough to support it rigidly. His face was smooth and pale, almost white and the Grey pale eyes that blinked and peered from behind a pair of steel spectacles were bewildered, unfocused, remote. He was a frail, nervous, twitchy little man, a moth of a man, dreamy and distracted suddenly fluttering and animated and now the Doctor, looking at that strange pale face and those pale grey eyes felt that somehow there was about this little person a quality of distance , of immense, immeasurable distance as though the mind were far away from where the body was

The aforementioned paragraph from the text shows the signs that maybe the body was of Klausner but his mind was in control of someone else. The actions were his own but the ideas to implement those actions were being generated from somewhere else. The gothic environment was already on taking on the scene of happening when Klausner mentions about another incident that leads to arousal of more suspicion. He mentions about working on the machine and suddenly noticing that the needle of the machine is turning indicating the presence of a sound while he himself was unable to hear anything. His curiosity to know from where exactly the sounds were arising from again draws parallel between him and Fautus whose curiosity for knowledge lead him to his doom.

The doctor before taking leave of Klausner could not help but glance through the black box which is time and again being mentioned as the coffin box. The machine more or less presents the scenario of being the pandora box itself. Pandora Box was the result of the curiosity of Hesiod that lead her to open the box which was left in her husband's care. The box when opened unleashed the curses which fell upon mankind. A similar situation is expected if Klausner becomes successful in creating the machine he has been so ardently working upon.

Madness takes a new turn in the story when the kingdom of night begins to spread itself. Klausner tends to become more animate by the kind of experiment he is about to carry out in his garden. He himself is aware of the fact that the area he is trying to enter is out of bound for human interference yet he chooses to venture into it. The most out of the box fact comes in the story even he realizes that before he hears the shriek which forms the main basis of the latter half of the story there is another sound which is to be heard in the machine. The origin of the curious sensation which is being mentioned is unknown but it feels as if

Klausner was well aware of the existence of such a sound as the description of his ears stretching out separate from his head gives a glimpse to the readers that he had an estimate what he was going to hear and was prepared for the same. The another realm already possess a warning which the narrator beautifully penned down as

Secret and forbidden territory, a dangerous ultrasonic region where ears and had never been before and had no right to be The shriek of the yellow rose had completely taken him aback which was natural as he had not heard any inhuman sound prior to this. The coming of the sound also becomes a very natural phenomenon as plants do have life and hence on cutting them off they are expected to make a sound. Yet the question that arises at this point of the story is whether Klausner was actually trying to figure out the sound of nature or it was that he accidentally came across it. The strange changes in his behavior continue to stay which had almost frightened Mrs. Saunders. The behavior of Klausner had always kept him in the suspicious looks of her but the episode he had created that night led her to believe that he was completely insane. Another element of Gothic fiction can be seen emerging over here as the character of Mrs. Saunders may seem to be an insignificant one to the readers but she actually emerges as the damsel in distress in the story. Gothic genre has been famous for its this representation of women other in the literary as well as the cinematic world. The most prominent example of this continues to be *The woman in white* by Wilkie Collins in the literary world while in the world of cinema the character of Lil Dagover in F.W. Murnau's *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* emerges as one which continues to live in the minds of the people forever. As Klausner continues to frighten her with his weird explanation of what was happening to the flowers her portrayal of a lady in distress continues to bloom further. When he called her for the first time in the garden to cut the roses she agrees to do so thinking it was just a peculiar humor of Klausner and further thought that cutting one rose would cause harm to no one but the conversation aggravates the madness within Klausner and its full manifestation is seen when he explains the whole theory of how much pain would the plants feel. But *how do you know, Mrs. Saunders* – and here he leaned far over the fence and spoke in a fierce whisper – “ *how do you know* that the rosebush doesn't feel as much pain when someone cuts its stem in two as you would feel if someone cut your wrist off with a garden shears? *How do you know that? It's alive, isn't it ?* “

For the first time in the text we see that our timid and frail looking protagonist takes the form of a brute psychopath who is ready to go to any extent to prove his point. This is just the beginning of his madness which later reveals itself as a major problem in the climax of the story. Even the flowers that Mrs. Saunders was cutting has a stance to add to the morbid imagery. The yellow roses, may seem like any ordinary flower but in the Greek culture it is associated with sadness. It resonates with the environment of that night which was dead with no wind and no sound. In France yellow is associated as the color of weakness which could be the indication towards the internal weakness of Klausner that could have brought him in contact with the unseen and unheard.

After scaring away Mrs. Saunders the brute and primitive behavior of Klausner was on the rise since after hearing such an inhuman shriek of the roses he did pluck the white daisy being aware of the amount of pain and torture he would cause to the little plant by plucking it. It can also be seen that rather than feeling guilty for what he has done he tries to give justification that it wasn't the pain that the plant was feeling. He started pondering upon some other term that would be given to the kind of noise that the plant was making. It seems

as if his conscious self had gone to sleep and he was finding it satisfactory to cause pain to others. The madness that was possessing him was alleviated to the next level the morning after in his decision to strike a tree with an axe just to make sure whether the sound he had experienced earlier is repeated or not. It is also felt as if he was fighting with his own self in between the whole scenario. His action of first striking the tree feels as if someone else was making him carry it because it was followed by his comforting to the tree that the wound would heal. Had he been concerned for the tree right after then he would not have taken the decision of striking it again. Dr. Scott had sensed something was terribly wrong with him when he had called him at six in the morning to come at the park. His voice becoming frantic and almost hysterical had already raised an alarm in the mind of the doctor whose first concern was to check his health as soon as he reached the venue which was given to him by Klausner. Later when the doctor had worn the earphones to test if the same sound. Then also a trifle between Klausner and his own self was visible as he was deciding upon whether to strike the tree or not. A similar tussle in the conscience was seen in the much celebrated Gothic novels after all time, Frankenstein wherein Victor was unable to decide whether to make a partner for the monster at hand or not. Conscience conflict is one of the low key elements of Gothic fiction. As was also seen in Jane Eyre that even when the protagonist of the same name knew that she had been cheated by Mr. Rochester in a way who had hidden his past from her yet for two days she stays in the dilemma whether to stay at Thornfield Park or to leave it immediately. In the tragic death of Doctor Faustus by Christopher Marlowe the basic debate right in the beginning was set as curiosity vs conscience, wherein in the case of Faustus curiosity wins and the same scenario is again repeated in the case of Klausner as well. We never know what prize he would have to pay if his obsession with sounds would have yielded results and if his machine would have made people enter the spectrum that wasn't designed for them.

In the climax of the story the readers are unaware what exactly is the reason of his anger. Whether it is actually the falling down of the tree that had made him so upset and angry or was it the destruction of the machine that had left it completely bewildered. This question comes into prominence because throughout the story his main concern was proving that his experiment was a success and nature somewhere got attached as a side theme of it. Even when his life was merely being saved by Dr. Scott his first concern rather than being thankful to him was to ask whether he had heard the sound or not because the machine being now destroyed the doctor would have stood as his only chance to prove to the world about his invention. The way he repeatedly was asking this question to him showed where actually the greater part of his concern lied which at a point even seemed to be greater than his own life. The silence which followed thereafter between the two was just not the way to express how nervous the doctor was but also brought to the forefront the frustration that filled the heart of Klausner. The way he chose to manifest it was asking the doctor to fix the tree. When doctor seemed hesitant to do it, the tightening grip on the axe made the image of his change immediately from an inquisitive young man to a gruesome primitive who was ready to resort to any means to get his work done. The doctor also wanted to run away just as Mrs. Saunders wanted to do. His anger getting reduced when the iodine was applied to the wound signified the salve being applied to the wound of his heart which was the machine being broken. The machine would have mattered to him so much because it was the only connection he had with the people from the other side of the realm. The breaking of the machine would have also set his mind free which was earlier captured within the dials and wires of the black infinity itself.

The Sound Machine by Roald Dahl is widely believed to be a fantastic work of science fiction but is actually studded with gothic and morbid imagery. The fluctuation in the nature of Klausner throughout makes the readers feel the presence of two people that were depicted through him – one was his own self and the other was the unknown. Dr. Scott in this story as the embodiment of science and stood in the clear contrast to Dr. Mortimer from the Hound of Baskerville. He was the reason in the story why Klausner did not meet his doom unlike Victor and Fautus. Hence the story carves out the space or rather the void in which the imagination can fill the space of some other world which lies beyond the comprehension and understanding of the human sphere. How and why they choose a person as a target to make their presence felt is also unknown but through this story the readers become aware that they want to interact and spread the knowledge of their existence in this world too.

After all that was the main motive of Lucifer after becoming Satan, to spread his kingdom and make it equal or greater than what God's kingdom was. That's where the story of mankind started according to Christian beliefs. The snake still lives within our society trying to find the next Adam and Eve who he can tempt into eating the forbidden fruit of knowledge. The hunger for knowledge and to know beyond our boundaries makes us an easy prey to Satan and his men. Hence even though the mankind may have faith in the existence of the world beyond, it should be only be restricted just as a faith because the realms have been kept away from one another for some specific reasons and maybe we as humans have no right to transgress them because that would lead to nothing else but ultimate doom. The ideology of both God and Devil existing within us is created so as to restrict ourselves being concerned with us and our own humanity. To travel beyond the described limits of the universe has never brought benefit for anyone. It is a gateway to doom and the most perfect bait used by the tricksters in the human world and the paranormal in the world ahead the spectrum of consciousness.