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Voice of the Interstitial Space: A Review of Sally Rooney's Story 'Mr Salary'

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Abstract:

Rooney's short story 'Mr Salary' depicts a girl's affective perceptions about her two male guardians. She attempts to trace the remnants of their psychic presence within her own life. She intends to understand the intricate nature of the ties of identity that link her to these two masculine ends of power. As the narrator she experiences her own presence as the spatial saturation of the silent puzzles shared by the masculine symbols of subjective fall and moral stability. The story is narrated by the feminine character. She faces the normative logics of familiarity which condition an acceptable father and a lover for a girl. Frank, her father, and Nathan, her unconventional lover become experimental subjective presences to question subtly the potential demands of the hegemonic masculinity.

Keywords: masculine models of power, institutionalized detachment, failing patriarchal centre of power, affective quests.

“Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.”

Kahlil Gibran in 'Prophet' outlines pain as an ambience of liberation. Pain smoothly overcomes the restraints of the initial disturbance to be a new plain of life when it is understood organically. A real loss organizes a subjectivity to be a chain of mild shocks.

Sally Rooney's short story "Mr .Salary" posits itself amidst the affective realms of subjective reluctance and the circularity of performative losses. Sukie is the one who owns the feminine voice that orders its subjectivity's contemplation regarding her space between two male guardians. Closeness of the bodies of familiarity and the silent distortions of individualistic presences become the main concerns of the narrative. The voice of the speaker discovers peace as the regularity of internal distortions and loss as the continuity of the falls of togetherness.

Sukie, the narrator, meets Nathan at the airport. She is picked by him. The first question of the predominant male protagonist marks his ingenuity to appropriate the track of affection towards his female companion who is always intended to be guarded by his own mastery and authoritative calm. Sukie's suitcase is carried by Nathan. But he declares lightly his lack of interest to be identified as the owner of that suitcase, while they walk together. This instance establishes the disposition and the disturbed delicacy of the relationship between the male guardian and the narrator. Nathan launches his affective concerns regarding Sukie around her as the protective force of mindfulness. Sukie initially sets symbolically her broken order of subjective steadiness in the narrative. Nathan always escapes Sukie's interests to know him profoundly. To her, rightness of Nathan's interventions always marks his invasive stability.

Shortly after their meeting, in their conversation Nathan depicts an alternative pattern for his life according to the necessities of social uprightness as a joke. Nathan separates himself from Sukie's sense of security. Sukie perceives Nathan as the extension of an emancipatory reluctance of life to situate her identity among the active ends of norms. To her, an elusive order of boundary is convincingly delightful than a normal departure from the familiar social values. She experiences Nathan as the fuel for her disruptive returns to the originality of her own presence. She is really liberated within his authority's implicit manifestations. Nathan gradually becomes a retrieval of the systemic circularity of life and its unfamiliar faces of ease for the narrator. Nathan makes her to reread her own expressive elements of existence by being an answer without a rigid question at many significant turns of her narrated life. Nathan presents himself as a husband and conventional 'housekeeper' to Sukie when they meet in the beginning of the story. She is naturally led to a state of astonishment first. But the irony is soon detected. Following Nathan's comment which shows his distinguished distance from Sukie's suitcase, here also he tries to play with the incomprehensible space between him and her. Relationship between Nathan and Sukie never reaches the margins of conventional consolations of lovers. Nathan's verbal construction of an alternative space can be understood as his attempt to take him out of Sukie's subjective order of stability.

Financial constraint brings Sukie closer to Nathan. He continues to provide money for her wellbeing even after the termination of the contextual currents which make them live together. The title, Mr Salary, is attributed to Nathan in the story. Here also the symbolic functionality of financial potential and the possessiveness of certain feelings become

mingled. Nathan nurtures Sukie as a feeling which asserts his identity's moral refinement and economical steadiness.

Frank, Sukie's father, unlike Nathan, is morally unclear. He does not have adequate financial strength to meet the conventional demands of the ordinary familial contexts. He has lost his wife. But he is not interested to marry again. He in fact takes his life to the unattractive turns of solitude. He signifies the destabilized patriarchal channel of power. He is a sick person in the narrative. As the reality's paternal figure he fails to be a cultural model and falls whenever he faces the demands of the institutionalized codes of survival and masculine wellness. He too maintains a fixed distance from Sukie. She is eager to get a clear outline about her father's disease. When she addresses a moment of crisis, she intends to overpower it by taking herself to the point of factual correctness and conceptual transparency regarding the problematic situation. She tries to make fine figurative portraits of the two different masculine models of power she confronts. Physical disquiet and strangeness of feeling manipulate the connection between the two dominant masculine figures in Sukie's life. The unstable father's presence is gauged and marked by Sukie within the realms of her own unique standardizations. But her stable man's ascetic elegance affects the multiple continuities of her own selfhood. She once attempts to overcome the challenge maintained by Nathan's moral authority and invasive integrity with the imaginative articulations about her own death. With such a silent and subtle submissiveness she challenges Nathan. The nature of affection between Nathan and Sukie goes out of the standards of institutionalized values whenever the feminine part tries to define it to nourish her own sense of security. Sukie experiments with her own modes of presence to understand certain critical contexts in her life. She mixes inter personal affinity with saturations of distance between the points of concern.

Nathan's moral authority is enriched by the institutionalized detachment continued by his masculine subjectivity towards the feminine partners. Sukie knows his relationships to other women. But there she reads the discontinuous discontent of Nathan as the slippery continuity of her own absence. But there also she successfully fails to extract the definite nature of her presence within his realm of affective quests.

Frank's conversation with his daughter becomes a jolt in the narrative. As a sick man, to Sukie, Frank seems to be departed from the past that binds him to his daughter. But he addresses her future abruptly with a brutal kind of sincerity when she meets him at the

hospital. His voice is not navigated by a sick man's conventional sense of presence. Frank by being a failing paternal centre of power directly questions the accountability and romantic disinterestedness of his victorious opponent, Nathan. Sukie naturally becomes the tortured medium of that indirect confrontation between the two masculine models of power.

Sukie towards the end of the narrative decides to take a walk. This turn of context is significant as it takes her apart from the wounded reality of the past which is represented by Frank and the institutionalized detachments of Nathan. The walk metaphorically becomes the feminine distance between two masculine models of power. To Sukie, Nathan is a safe closure's consolation which is identified by her as stability. But for Nathan Sukie is a line of cumulative trials to maintain his sense of interiority as a tranquil tip of power which plays with instances of blankness and gaps between subjective spaces.

Sally Rooney's 'Mr Salary' becomes at last a feminine exploration through the inward and outward ruptures of masculine powers. Through Nathan Sukie feels the vital delicacy of identity's emancipations. But Frank, to her, becomes the abnormal growth of her clumsy past with its torturing depths. If Frank can be understood as the chain that invisibly follows Sukie, then Nathan can be identified as its music.

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