

Twentieth-Century
Literary Criticism

TCLC

173

Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)* has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” *TCLC* “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author’s works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey on an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Thomson Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism, (CLC)* which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*.

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A *TCLC* entry consists of the following elements:

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

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- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).
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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Thomson Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Brossard, Nicole. "Poetic Politics." In *The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy*, edited by Charles Bernstein, 73-82. New York: Roof Books, 1990. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 127, edited by Janet Witlec, 3-8. Detroit: Gale, 2003.

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Roald Dahl

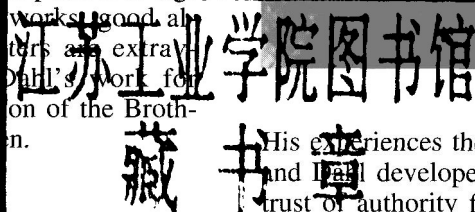
1916-1990

Welsh-born English short story writer, novelist, autobiographer, and children's writer.

The following entry presents an overview of Dahl's life and works. For further information on Dahl's career, see *CLC*, Volumes 1, 6, 18, and 79.

INTRODUCTION

Roald Dahl, best known for his imaginative and irreverent children's books *James and the Giant Peach* (1961) and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), is also well known for his dark and sinister stories for adults, collected in *Someone Like You* (1953) and *Kiss, Kiss* (1959). Recognized for their unusual plot twists, surprise endings, dark humor, and subtle horror, Dahl's stories have been compared to those of O. Henry and Guy de Maupassant. Dahl's signature macabre style carries over into his children's fiction as well, and has been the subject of considerable controversy during his career. But the somber and violent aspects of his books for children are tempered with elements of fantasy, humor, and a playful use of language. Despite the exaggerated cruelty and violence in these works, good always triumphs, and the cruel characters are extravagantly punished. In many senses, Dahl's work for children follows in the fairy tale tradition of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen.



BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Dahl was born September 13, 1916, in Llandaff, South Wales. His parents, Harald Dahl and Sofie Magdalene Hesselberg Dahl, were of Norwegian descent. Dahl's connection to Norway was strong, largely as a result of his mother's feelings of estrangement in England. She spoke Norwegian at home, read her children Norse myths and legends, and insisted the family take long trips to Norway to visit relatives. Dahl's happy childhood was interrupted in 1920 when his father died. In accordance with Harald's wishes, Roald and his siblings were educated in English schools. Dahl attended Llandaff Cathedral School and St. Peter's boarding school, both of which practiced severe corporal punishment. Dahl had little respect for his teachers, and his studies suffered. In 1929 he began attending Repton, a prestigious school, from which he graduated in 1932.

His experiences there were little better than those prior, and Dahl developed a deep disdain for rules and a distrust of authority figures. He later described his school life as horrible, and also as the inspiration for some of his more disturbing fiction.

After graduating, Dahl worked for Shell Oil Company. The company soon sent him to East Africa, where he enjoyed exploring the native culture and freedom from the strict societal rules of England. Two months after England declared war on Germany in 1939, Dahl joined the Royal Air Force. After he incurred a severe head injury during a crash landing, Dahl was sent to the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., as an assistant air attaché. During this time Dahl began writing about his experiences in the Royal Air Force, publishing an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*. After the article was favorably received, Dahl turned to writing as a serious profession and began composing short stories on the theme of flying. In 1946 these stories were collected in his first book for adults, *Over to You*.

In 1948 his novel *Some Time Never: A Fable for Superman* was published, eliciting mixed reviews. Dahl considered it a failure and returned to writing short stories, publishing them in *Harpers* magazine and the *New Yorker*. His second collection of short stories, entitled *Someone Like You*, was published in 1953. In that same year, Dahl married Patricia Neal, an American actress; the couple had three children over the next seven years. After his third collection of short stories, *Kiss, Kiss*, was published, Dahl decided to write a novel for children. He developed some bedtime stories which he had invented for his own children into *James and the Giant Peach*, his first bona fide work of children's literature. Based on the book's modest success, Dahl began work on what would become his second novel for children, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, but put the manuscript aside after his daughter Olivia died from complications with the measles. After a fourth child, Ophelia, was born in 1964, Dahl returned to his manuscript and published it that same year.

The Dahls' financial and health-related struggles were not over, however. Neal experienced a massive stroke, and Dahl wrote several screenplays to support the family while she recovered. During the 1970s Dahl wrote five books for children, including *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* (1972), a sequel to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. He also returned to writing works for adult audiences, including *Switch Bitch* (1974) and *My Uncle Oswald* (1979). Dahl continued to write during the 1980s, averaging a book a year until his death. It was during this time that he wrote *The BFG* (1982); *The Witches* (1983), which won the Whitbread Award; and *Matilda* (1988). Dahl also wrote two autobiographical works: one for children called *Boy: Tales of Childhood* (1984), and one for adults entitled *Going Solo* (1986), relating his experiences during his years in Africa. Dahl died November 23, 1990.

MAJOR WORKS

Dahl's short stories, such as the eighteen tales that comprise *Someone Like You*, explore the disturbing, manipulative, and self-destructive aspects of humanity. Many of the characters in these stories are well-educated and respected members of society, who, when tested by extreme circumstances, reveal dark and dangerous tendencies. Mary Maloney, from the often anthologized "Lamb to the Slaughter," is a seemingly normal housewife who kills her husband with a leg of lamb when he reveals he is having an affair. In a plot twist typical of Dahl, Mary destroys the evidence of her crime by cooking the murder weapon and feeding it to the investigating officer. In "Neck," similar violent tendencies are revealed in a mild-mannered man who has a domineering wife. Other stories in the collection focus on the more

self-destructive elements of human nature. For example, in "The Wish" a boy with an acute imagination emotionally suffers from the danger he pretends exists in the carpet of his home. Through careful plot twists and the subtle use of violence and horror, Dahl's short stories typically reveal the macabre and brutal potential of human beings hidden beneath a veneer of social manners and civilization.

Most of what Dahl wrote for children has a common theme and tone. The books often contain playful language, elements of fantasy, and a humorous approach. The comedy in Dahl's books, however, is tempered with a darker sensibility. The characters that represent evil often meet with violent and grisly consequences. In his most celebrated and most often discussed book, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the mysterious and reclusive Willy Wonka grants five golden ticket holders, all children, a tour of his chocolate factory. Throughout the course of the book, four of the children reveal their greed and self-centeredness and meet with consequences corresponding to their particular personalities. Of the five ticket holders, the impoverished Charlie Bucket alone reveals an innocent nature, partly because he has not indulged in the luxuries of life, and as a result he wins Wonka's contest to live in the chocolate factory. Through plot twists and vividly drawn characterizations, Dahl offers a scathing commentary on consumerism and its human consequences.

In Dahl's first book for children, *James and the Giant Peach*, Dahl's dislike for authority figures plays an even greater role. In the book, James, recently orphaned, has been forced to live with his two sadistic aunts. Through a magical chain of events, James escapes from their cruel treatment by crawling into a giant peach that has grown in their yard. Inside the peach James meets several insects who alternately care for and challenge him. When the peach is separated from its stem, it rolls over the aunts and into the ocean. James and his new friends decide they will live off of the peach and travel to New York City. Out from under the tyrannical rule of the aunts, James faces challenges and develops into a creative and capable character. Upon reaching New York City, James is ready to reenter society.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Dahl's short fiction for adults was favorably received by publishers and critics from the beginning of his career. Often depicting the darker aspects of humanity, his stories were praised for their unusual plots, surprise endings, and intricate details. His collection *Someone Like You* reached best-seller status, and Dahl received the Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America in 1954. Dahl's following collection, *Kiss, Kiss*, continued in the same dark vein and was similarly praised by most critics. Some commentators, however,

argued that Dahl was beginning to repeat himself and was in danger of becoming too formulaic. His later works of adult fiction, such as *Switch Bitch* and *My Uncle Oswald*, were viewed less favorably. Most critics were uncomfortable with Dahl's portrayal of women and his treatment of human sexuality in these works, which emphasized both the humor and tragedy of sex.

Although Dahl's short fiction received significant critical acclaim during his lifetime, it has since faded into relative obscurity. Today he is primarily discussed as an author of children's stories, though a few scholars have begun to publish thematic comparisons of his two genres. Prior to the 1980s Dahl's books for children, while extremely popular with young readers, were often deemed unsuitable, vulgar, and violent by adult critics. In a frequently quoted article published in 1976, Eleanor Cameron alleged that Dahl's work "diminishes the human spirit" and "emphasizes all those Clockwork-Orange qualities which are actually destroying the society children are growing up in: callousness, lack of any emotion but the hyped-up one of getting kicks out of the pain and misfortune of others and depicting all this as funny and delightful, full of laughs." However, by the 1980s Dahl's work for children had earned greater respect from adult readers who acknowledged both its disturbing elements as well as its literary merits. Gradually Dahl's work was universally accepted as a staple of children's literature, and in 1983 he received the Whitbread Award for *The Witches*.

Critics have continued to explore the complexities of Dahl's books. Catriona Nicholson has written that "Dahl's ability to combine with each story his distinctive brand of humor, fantastic adventure and strong measures of adult ridicule or exposure is a winning formula. His books offer children (and many adults) a unique reading experience. Through their exuberant optimism, extravagant literary devices, and the child-centered gratification of common desires, Dahl establishes a binding rapport with his readers." Some recent critics have undertaken psychoanalytic readings of Dahl, drawing out the scatological undertones of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* or the Freudian subtext of *James and the Giant Peach*. In general, recent critics have observed a strong sympathy of theme throughout Dahl's writings, children's books and short fiction alike, and have suggested that perhaps his body of work is best understood as fairy tale, in which the layers of mythical and psychological insight are essential elements rather than incidental aspects of the work.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

The Gremlins (juvenilia) 1943
Over to You: Ten Stories of Flyers and Flying (short stories) 1946

Some Time Never: A Fable for Superman (novel) 1948
Someone Like You (short stories) 1953
Kiss, Kiss (short stories) 1959
James and the Giant Peach (juvenilia) 1961
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (juvenilia) 1964; revised edition 1973
The Magic Finger (juvenilia) 1966
Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator (juvenilia) 1972
Switch Bitch (short stories) 1974
Danny, the Champion of the World (juvenilia) 1975
The Wonderful World of Henry Sugar and Six More (short stories) 1977
The Best of Roald Dahl (short stories) 1978
My Uncle Oswald (novel) 1979
The Twits (juvenilia) 1980
The BFG (juvenilia) 1982
The Witches (juvenilia) 1983
Boy: Tales of Childhood (autobiography) 1984
Going Solo (autobiography) 1986
Two Fables (short stories) 1986
Matilda (juvenilia) 1988
Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life (short stories) 1989
The Collected Short Stories of Roald Dahl (short stories) 1991
The Minpins (juvenilia) 1991
The Vicar of Nibbleswicke (juvenilia) 1992
My Year (juvenilia) 1994

CRITICISM

Hamida Bosmajian (essay date 1985)

SOURCE: Bosmajian, Hamida. "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and Other Excremental Visions." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 9 (1985): 36-49.

[In the following essay, Bosmajian describes Charlie and the Chocolate Factory as "a libidinal, aggressive, and wildly indulgent fantasy" that masks its true vision of "guilt and death," of oral greed and excrement, with the "guiltless sweet assurance" of Wonka's chocolate factory.]

An adult engaged in writing a book for children may well intend to present a life-affirming vision that communicates cultural values and traditions, but at the same time that adult may consciously or unconsciously induce, even seduce, the child to accept and repeat the neurotic discontents of culture and civilization. Works such as L'Engle's *Wrinkle in Time* or O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins* exhilarate the reader with new role

models or the breakdown of stereotypes but undermine such innovations by a displaced traditional metaphysics (L'Engle) or by reneging on the break with conventions once the character is reintegrated into cultural norms (O'Dell). Children's literature is a complicated artistic, psychological, and social phenomenon, in some ways more so than adult literature because the author projects memories and libidinal releases through forms pretending innocence.

Comedy and romance, still the most prevalent patterns of children's literature, are modes and genres that have generally established values and traditions even as they seemed momentarily to subvert them. Conventions such as the topos for poverty—"Hard by a forest dwelt a woodcutter with his wife. They were so poor that they no longer had daily bread"—have become such rigid figures that their social and historical ground is no longer perceived. A slight displacement as in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* opens up new possibilities: "The whole of this family—the six grownups (count them) and Charlie Bucket—live together in a small wooden house on the edge of a great town."¹ The ground against which the figures (conventions, symbols, characterizations) are outlined is often indistinct and obscured even though it energizes the figures. The ground of children's literature should be of special interest to the interpreter because the figures often pretend to be a part of songs of innocence or nothing but fun and frolic as in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Dahl's tale, this "Hansel and Gretel" displaced into industrial or post-industrial society, is a libidinal, aggressive, and wildly indulgent fantasy with guiltless sweet assurance, for we all simply "love chocolate," even to the extent that we cover one of our favorite laxatives with it. In the chocolate factory everything can be licked and eaten and consumed, but the orally greedy will also be swallowed, pushed down or sucked up through the great digestive system on Wonka's machinery which finally expels them in altered form. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is a clever displacement of what has come to be called the "excremental vision." In this children's book, the usual grimness of that vision is euphemistically meliorated by the structural figurations of comedy and romance and by the pleasing associations of chocolate, whose high concentration of energy-producing compounds combined with caffeine and theobromine makes it truly a food for the gods as well as for those who, like Charlie, are empty buckets of deprivation.

If we view the story through the figures of Northrop Frye's five modes of action ([*Anatomy of Criticism*] 33-52) we begin to get a sense of its complexity, a complexity paradigmatic of many classics in children's literature, and we get a sense of the ground against which the story's figures stand out:

1. In the *mythic mode* Willie Wonka is a god-like being who has created a universal empire transcendent of our experience. From this realm Wonka extends himself in power through all the chocolate-loving world.

2. In the *romantic mode* five children go on a quest through Wonka's world which is both a garden of delights and an inferno. Willie Wonka becomes here Charlie's guide, an omniscient and wise old man.

3. In the *high mimetic mode* Wonka is the childless king who seeks a successor for his kingdom peopled by the child-like Oompa Loompas. He is also the Aristophanic trickster of high comedy who exploits the greed and infantilism of the establishment and ends up, along with his heir, triumphant over the society he exploits.

4. In the *low mimetic mode* Wonka is a capitalist in our world who continually revolutionizes the means of production to make profit and to meet the demands of our never-ending oral greed. Instead of industrial pollution, his factory emits "the heavy rich smell of melting chocolate."

5. In the *ironic mode* Wonka is the *simia dei*, the devilish trickster in a world of fools and knaves. His factory does not supply daily bread (consider the different effect of a bakery) but the seductive *luxuria* of chocolate bringing lucre to its manufacturer. In a parodic inversion of little children entering the kingdom of heaven, five children are lured into the factory after they have found the golden tickets. Greed and aggression characterize the children and their adult companions; only Charlie and his grandfather have learned restraint through the necessities of poverty.

The story prepares the child reader to accept the tradition of the excremental vision in literature, prepares the child for the ground to which we react with crude obscenities or lofty visions, for ultimately the vision has to do with guilt and death.² Thus, Dante's inferno became in historical reality a metaphor for "the anus of the world" in which the concentration camp inmate found himself.³ Dante's hell is a great digestive tract of sin, where all is wind, diarrhetic tumult, or constipated paralysis within a confined and ever-filling space without the catharsis of excretion. At the center is Satan, the plug, eternally chewing but never digesting sin. In the company of Virgil, only Dante is able to quest through this cloaca and, by passing the center of gravity along the thigh of Satan, birth himself out of hell. John Osborne's Luther pictures his anal birth this way: "I am a ripe stool in the world's straining anus, and at any moment we're about to let each other go" (*Luther*], 65). Luther, striving for authenticity, refuses to be content as "a hog waffling in its own crap" (67).

Luther's experience in the tower reveals a relationship between the holy and the excremental, between aggression and salvation, between sin, guilt, and death: "He is just, therefore he punishes. But once when in this tower I was meditating on those words, 'the just lives by faith,' 'Justice of God,' I soon had the thought whether we ought to live justified by faith, and God's justice ought to be the salvation of every believer, and soon my soul was revived. Therefore it is God's justice which justifies and saves us. And those words became a *sweeter* message for me. This knowledge the Holy Spirit gave me on the privy in the tower" (Brown [*Life Against Death*], 202). Edward Taylor, the mystic Puritan, goes even further in his grotesquely sacred Meditation Eight on "I am the Living Bread" as he reflects on our sinful state:

In this sad state, God's Tender bowells run
Out streams of Grace: And he to end all strife
The Purest Wheate in Heaven, his deare-dear Son
Grinds, and kneads up into this Bread of Life.

The bread is "Heaven's Sugar Cake" dropped into the mouth of the sinful soul who is urged: "Eate, Eate me, Soul, and thou shalt never dy" ([*The Poems of Edward Taylor*], 18-19).

In the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels* the sacred and the excremental polarize into the rational Houyhnhnms, the attractively wrapped chocolate bar with the golden ticket, and the wallowing libidinal Yahoos indulging themselves like Dahl's Indian Prince "swimming around in a huge brown sticky lake of chocolate." As Norman O. Brown has shown, the Yahoos are attracted to excrement which they use for aggression and self-expression; for instance, when a Yahoo Leader is deposed: "His successor, at the Head of all the *Yahoos* in that district, young and old, Male and Female, come in a Body, and Discharge their Excrements on him from Head to Foot" (Brown, 90). Gulliver displaces his attraction to excrement to the aura that surrounds his stable-groom: "For I feel my Spirits revived by the Smell he contracts in the Stable." If horse's dung alone is enough to vitalize Gulliver, he would no doubt have transcended himself had the Houyhnhnms accepted him and thus freed him from his Yahoo nature.

In his account of Joey, the autistic boy who thought he was a mechanism living in a world of mire, Bruno Bettelheim points out that the infant "develops within a continuous flow of living, experiencing, and the building up of a personality. Each development in turn flows naturally out of the interactions of the child with the world in general" (Bettelheim [*The Empty Fortress*], 262). The oral stage precedes the anal stage which "begins at the moment the infant is cleaned after his first bowel movement, and is moved along with each later cleaning up." Negative cleanings can become destruc-

tive, as they were for Joey: "In Joey's system only machines produced things. So becoming aware of elimination posed nearly insolvable problems. If he produced feces, was this further proof of his being a machine? If, on the other hand, he was a human being and his stools were his, then how could something that was part of his body be outside his body? Where were the boundaries of his physical existence? Did this mean that his body had no limits?" (Bettelheim, 276).

Compulsively the child eats and excretes the matter of guilt and death, the threat to physical and psychological existence. In her visionary novel *Memoirs of a Survivor*, Doris Lessing projects a schizophrenic narrator who has a vision of a child's beginning involvement with a guilty world: "She was eating chocolate. No, excrement. She had opened the bowels into the freshness of the white bed and had taken handfuls of the stuff and smeared it everywhere with quick shrieks of triumph and joy. She smeared it on the sheets and blankets, over the wood of the cot, over herself, over her face, and into her hair, and there she sat, a little monkey, thoughtfully tasting and digesting." Her mother picks her up, drops her into a scalding bath, and scolds: "Naughty, naughty, disgusting, filthy, dirty" (145-46). Libidinal self-expression and aggression are tamed by punishment and channeled into orderliness, parsimony, and obstinacy—into civilization (Freud [*The Standard Edition of the Collected Works*]). God, mined from the bowels of the earth, is artfully hammered or exchanged as dirty money.

Children respond gleefully to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* not only because it is a luxurious food fantasy, but also because it is a fantasy of aggression expressed frequently in terms of bathroom humor. This sweet book is quite nasty, as one teacher was intuitively aware: "Above all the books I have read aloud, it has in greatest measure the important quality of holding and exciting a class. . . . But like many adults, I feel a rooted dislike for Roald Dahl's book" (Merrick ["The Nightwatchmen' and 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' as Books to be Read to Children"], 21). Dahl is quite aware of what he is doing. As much a trickster as Willie Wonka, his authorial voice is anything but avuncular; yet neither is he in cahoots with children, for, while pretending to delight, he is as aggressive toward them as he is toward adults.

The excremental vision of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is made explicit in the sequel *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* where the Oompa Loompas sing in the chocolate room about Goldie Pinkle-sweet who swallowed all of grandma's chocolate covered laxatives, began to explode, had her stomach pumped, nearly died, and was permanently affected by the pills:

And so the girl was forced to stay
For seven hours every day

Within the everlasting gloom
Of what we call the Ladies Room.
And there she sits and dreams of glory
Alone inside the lavatory.

(117-24)

Goldie is a grotesque comic version of Bettelheim's Joey, of the reflective Luther in the privy, and of the fall as a result of oral greed that dooms us to a world of mire within and without. The euphemism of chocolate-covered Ex-Lax is the figure on the ground of primal aggression and guilt in an artificial world where the artful euphemism of Celia's carved chest is not sufficient to hide from the obstinate Strephon "the secrets of the hoary deep" (Swift, "The Lady's Dressing Room").

Inferno to some and paradise to others, the machinery in Wonka's factory is organism and artifice as well as a sweet conversion of the factory as polluter. It is a cosmos from which Wonka has excluded his competitors Fickelgruber (cf. Schickelgruber—Hitler), Prodnose (who sticks his nose into other people's business), and Slugworth (sloth and aggression). The dynamics of ingestion, digestion, and excretion permeate the vast underground terrain. From the churning chocolate river enormous pipes extend "sucking up the brownish muddy water from the river and carrying it away . . . you could hear the never-ending-suck-suck-sucking sound of the pipes as they did their work" (66-67). Elaborately constructed machines excrete small, consumable items. The Everlasting Gobstopper machine goes "phut, phut, phut, phut, phut" and every phut emits a compact little candy for poor children who can "suck it, and suck it, and suck it, and suck it, and suck it, and it will never get any smaller" (93). The factory provides regressive indulgence to the world's ever expanding oral greed and aggression; the price for that indulgence is not only money, but also infantilism and stunted individuation.

From the vantage of our world the factory is strictly private property, anal retentive, unless its products are bought: "It had huge iron gates leading into it, and smoke belching from its chimneys, and strange whizzing sounds coming from deep inside it" (7). Only the waft of chocolate fragrance promises that this image of the industrial revolution is also an Eden whose walls no one can scale. The threshold to another world is crossed as the five children and their companions enter and "the gates closed with a clang, all sight of the outside world disappeared" (62).

Walking along a wide corridor, whose "walls were pale pink, the lighting . . . soft and pleasant," the visitors hear "far in the distance, from the heart of the great factory . . . a muffled roar of energy as though some monstrous gigantic machine were spinning its wheels at breakneck speed" (64). As the passages narrow, they re-

alize that "the place was like a gigantic rabbit warren, with passages leading this way and that in every direction." The important rooms are deep underground. Wonka explains: "Down here, underneath the ground, I've got all the space I want. There is no limit—so long as I hollow it out" (65). As ape of god, Wonka ever expands his universal kingdom, undermining the solid earth and providing, not daily bread, but daily sweets for those who can buy them. Tunneling into the bowels of the earth, Wonka fills them with chocolate-producing machinery that will bring him the lucre with which to enlarge his realm.

Aware of the sinister implications of his factory, Wonka insists on beauty and cleanliness: "I can't *abide* ugliness in factories" (66). His Chocolate Room is a displacement of the Elysian fields where humans can even eat the grass. Here the visitors discover that the factory has indeed "mystic marvellous surprises [that] will entrance, delight, intrigue, astonish, and perplex you" (54). But when Augustus Gloob scoops chocolate from the river with his hands, Wonka cries in dismay: "You are dirtying my chocolate!" The pure brown stuff must not be infected with the human hand's stench of mortality.

A completely edible "fantastic pink boat" takes the tourists down the brown river and past many doors which announce but hide sweet secrets. A sinister fillip comes at the end of tempting promises: sweet creams are followed by HAIR CREAM and STOREROOM NUMBER 71 holds WHIPS—ALL SHAPES AND SIZES, for "whipped cream isn't whipped cream at all unless it's been whipped with whips." One room holds the beans—CACAO BEANS, COFFEE BEANS, JELLY BEANS, AND HAS BEANS (90). Sentimental sweetness covers up cruel aggression in Wonka's factory, even in rooms that appear enticing such as the chocolate room, the inventing room, the nutroom, and the TV chocolate room, for here the obnoxious children receive punishments appropriate to their obsessions, just as Dante's sinners were permitted to wallow in the extremity of their sins. Beneath all the rooms is a huge garbage disposal system "which carries garbage from every part of the factory" and funnels toward "the great fiery incinerator."

The factory is a structure of downward transcendence but it also transcends horizontally whenever a certain level has been reached. Wonka, however, can also transcend upward by means of his Great Glass Elevator that can be manipulated in any direction. In this claustrophobic but translucent space, this upright Snow-White's-coffin-gone-beserk, Wonka elevates himself aggressively as he bursts with Charlie and Grandpa Joe through the roof of the factory, crashes into the Buckets' house, and ascends again with the entire family. By intensifying the uplift or downdrop pressure experi-

enced by an elevator rider, Dahl mimics the effortless rise of Dante into the heavenly spheres: "The elevator shot right through the roof of the factory and was now rising into the sky like a rocket, and the sunshine was pouring into the glass roof. In five seconds they were thousands of feet up in the sky" (150-51). As Mircea Eliade argues, "the fundamental mystical experience—that is, transcending the human condition—is expressed in a twofold image, breaking the roof and flight" ([*The Sacred and the Profane*], 175). The elevator is Wonka's appropriation of the qualities and condition of the spirit. Indestructible, the elevator is a diamond-like crystallization of subterranean matter and, as ultimate escape vehicle, it transports the Bucket family from poverty into a world of abundance. But, appropriate to the trickster Wonka, the elevator remains a mechanical operation of the spirit!

Roof-top transcendence is not in store for the four greedy children whose golden tickets gain them entrance into the factory. Augustus Gloob and Veruca Salt are the first two finders. The euphemism *august* covers the undifferentiated *gloob* of the boy whose obsession is indiscriminate eating, a dream come true for his mother whose alternative to oral greed is "being a hooligan and shooting off zipguns" (25). This infantile incorporator falls appropriately into the chocolate river whence he is sucked up, swallowed and digested by the pipe system that, through an anal birth, metamorphoses him into a boy "thin as a straw." Veruca Salt, daughter of a peanut factory owner (salty peanuts) surrounds herself with objects and defines herself by what she accretes. Wonka tells her that he always thought the name Veruca "was a sort of wart on your foot," but her name also suggests *verrückt* (crazy), for she finds her nemesis in the "nut room" where dozens of squirrels, after she seized one of them, attack her, find her a bad nut, and shove her down the garbage chute. Her parents follow her—apparently Wonka cannot bear fellow capitalists and all three emerge at the end covered with garbage, the final result of consumerism—waste.

The next two finders, Violet Beauregarde and Mike Teavee, are obsessed with the incorporation or emission of words and images. A chewing gum addict, Violet indulges in mouth motion, chewing and talking simultaneously. Without regard for others, her logorrhea deludes her with self-importance until Wonka's magical chewing gum inflates her into a giant blueberry in need of de-juicing. Mike (microphone) Teavee is a television addict whose oral greed is displaced into the absorption of electronic images and words to such an extent that he wishes to be swallowed up by "the tube." Exactly this happens to him in the Chocolate Television Room where electronic transmission reduces him to a miniature (tee-vee). He has to be severely stretched again so

that he can emerge tall and thin at the end of the book. Wonka promises that every basketball team in the country will want to engage him in active play.

If the four children form a quaternity of oral greed and object libido, Charlie Bucket, the fifth finder of the golden ticket, is the quintessence of the deprived empty ego and, therefore, a colorless docile hero, an uninteresting simpleton, a Charlie who will not threaten Wonka's egocentric trickster-self. Wonka wants an heir who is willing to listen and learn without having opinions of his own: "So I have to have a child. I want a good sensible loving child, to whom I can tell all my most precious candy-making secrets—while I am still alive" (155). Charlie's ego is a bucket, willing to receive, but a bucket also suggests a receptacle for human waste. After Mr. Bucket loses his job in a toothpaste factory (brush after eating candy), Charlie becomes the poorest of the poor and wastes away until he is close to death and ready for the underworld. At the edge of extremity "his face became frighteningly white and pinched. The skin was drawn so tightly over the cheeks that you could see the shapes of the bones underneath" and with "curious wisdom . . . everything he did now, he did slowly and carefully to prevent exhaustion" (43-44). This image is not a topos of poverty in children's literature; rather it seems an extreme aggression against a child's developing ego—Charlie must not only be a good listener, but he must almost be invisible.

Close to death this "special child" finds a green dollar bill which allows him his one indulgence in oral greed. After gobbling down one chocolate bar, he buys another which contains the golden ticket. Up to now Charlie always wanted to share his treats, but entrance to Wonka's eden can only be gotten through oral greed, and, therefore, Charlie needs that one lapse to get his ticket.

Accompanied by Grandpa Joe, the quester Charlie encounters no obstacles, needs no heroics, for poverty, ego-lessness, and passivity are his virtues. At one point Wonka dips a mug into the chocolate river and offers it to the pair for whom chocolate truly becomes food for the gods: "The warm rich creamy chocolate ran down his throat into his empty tummy, his whole body from head to toe began to tingle with pleasure and a feeling of intense happiness spread over him" (86-87). That food which is not needed for basic sensible sustenance becomes the food fantasy of the deprived and impoverished. Chocolate assures that all is well.

While Charlie becomes the savior child for his indigent family, the world at large remains unredeemed. His parents may be dull to his specialness, but Charlie always provides the spark of life for his grandparents—George and Georgina, Joseph and Josephine. The couples are well over ninety and lie in one bed "shrivelled as

prunes, and bony as skeletons. . . . Dozing the time away with nothing to do." They are waste people affected by the apathy of poverty and old age as they wallow passively in bed or in their food fantasies. But they can also be seen as mythopoeic figures of prime matter or of the subconscious that Wonka will insist on activating at the end and in *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*. Inert as they are, they are in touch with the depths, for no one knows as much about the factory as they, especially Grandpa Joe who, after Charlie finds the ticket, resurrects at ninety-six-and-a-half from the bed with one "fantastic leap": "His eyes were wide open, shining with joy, and in the center of each eye, right in the very center, in the black pupil, a little spark of wild excitement was slowly dancing . . . an explosion seemed to take place inside him" (51). This agility aligns him with Wonka, though he relapses into passivity once he is inside the factory. In its regressive apathy and existence in the womb-like bed, the quaternity of grandparents contrasts with the quaternity of the obnoxious children and suggests an appropriate subconscious to Charlie's empty ego. All of this is a negative configuration and quite counter to the usual quest patterns in children's literature.

In contrast to the passive Buckets, Willie Wonka is all activity and aggression. He is singular, unattached, a charlatan, fool, Hermes figure, trickster, an elfish businessman, simply "an extraordinary little man" whose surface seems all fun and frolic, but whose laughter hints at the sinister: "Covering his chin, there was a small neat pointed black beard—a goatee. And his eyes—his eyes were most marvelously bright. They seemed to be sparkling and twinkling at you all the time. The whole face, in fact, was alight with fun and laughter" (60). With his jerky movements he is "like a quick clever old squirrel from the park." The goatee associates him with the devil or a kobold Pan whose Arcadia is the Chocolate Room, though goat and squirrel also point to the animal characteristics of the trickster. Like all tricksters he is cunning and foolish, calculating and heartless, amoral and hyperbolic.

Wonka says he is mortal, but seems to have been always both child and old man, hence his attraction to Charlie and Grandpa Joe. Paul Radin sees the archaic trickster as "*speculum mentis* wherein is depicted man's struggle with himself and with a world into which he has been thrust without his volition and consent" ([*The Trickster*], x). Jung argues that the trickster is a collective personification, "the product of a totality of individuals and is welcomed by the individual as something known to him, which would not be the case if he were just an individual outgrowth" (in Radin, 201). Wonka is the collective representation of an acquisitive consumer society, an infantile capitalist, all greed, aggression, and self-indulgence. Yet, he also has the parsimony and cleanliness of the capitalist's money world even as he

shares the excremental exuberance of the primitive trickster who creates life out of filth, as does the Winnebago trickster discussed by Radin. Even the classical baby Hermes, eventually the god of businessmen and thieves, "let go an omen, a bold and servile messenger from the belly, a hearty blast and right after it he gave a violent sneeze" when Apollo lifted him (Morford and Lenardin [*Classical Mythology*], 176). Not only the devil, but the trickster as well is related to underground. Crossing thresholds, Hermes guides the souls to Hades while the Winnebago trickster leaves the world and goes underground to take charge of "another world." Wonka is god and king of his sweet underworld from whence he extends himself through his products into our world, and he is prince of the air in his Great Glass Elevator. As capitalist he channels anality into money. Mythic creator of a monopoly that satisfies the world's orality, Wonka is a Lord of Misrule who undermines our solid ground and has fun at our expense as he keeps the world infantile.

It is therefore no surprise that Wonka's industrious poor, the Oompa Loompas, are childlike and work for him because he stills their craving for cacao beans. If Charlie's grandparents are the subconscious to his passive ego, the Oompa Loompas are not only Wonka's answer for totally dependent workers, they act out his aggressions as well. Only the Oompa Loompas, who were black Africans in the first edition, have drawn attention to the subversiveness of the book. An Oompa Loompa "was almost pure black and the top of his fuzzy head came just above the height of Mr. Wonka's knee." After the charge of racism,⁴ Dahl made the Oompa Loompas come from Oompa Loompa land, gave them blue eyes, rosy white skin, and long golden hair—made them into little Tarzans. But the African sounding name Oompa Loompa stuck, though it was now quite irrelevant. The trickster-author seems to imply with aggressive playfulness that one stereotype may just as well replace another. What social commentators, however, have not noticed is the association of the cacao-living black Oompa Loompas with the excremental imagery of the book; the racist figuration dominated the ground. The word *chocolate* defines a black person "as often as an endearment as for derogatory purposes. . . . Literally, a black person one would like to eat, unless used just as a euphemism for *nigger*" (Clifton [*How to Hate Thy Neighbor*], 154-55). In the rock musical *Hair*, for instance, a choral duet sings of pretty white boys as being like milk and pretty black boys being like chocolate. Today's children still know of a chocolate or licorice candy called "nigger babies."

The name Oompa Loompa links the impish workers with the aggressive anality of the book as the sound of the first syllable is contracted and expelled in the reiterated -pa. Only at first glance are the Oompa Loompas childlike and cheerful; soon we see them conspiratori-

ally winking at Wonka or breaking into convulsive laughter over the eccentricities of the visitors. Whenever one of the children is punished, the Oompa Loompas sing a cautionary but aggressive ballad, in the case of Augustus Gloob, for instance, who "was so unutterably vile / So greedy, foul, and infantile / He left a most disgusting taste / Inside our mouths" so that he had to be put through the fudge machine whose "cogs begin to grind and pound / a hundred knives go slice, slice, slice; / We add some sugar, cream, and spice" until August is turned figuratively into "a luscious bit of fudge" that everybody loves. The master-slave relation between Wonka and his workers is sweet. He is dependent on their mass and energy for the execution of his will. They, unable ever to leave the factory, are like Dante's gargoyle demons in a busy, but in their case childlike, underworld.

The aggressive cautionary tales the Oompa Loompas sing about their victims are diversionary tactics that project only an apparent support of conventionally approved behavior. Actually, they allow the characters and the child reader to indulge all the more amorally in this liberating and libidinal satiric fantasy. The author's satiric voice is in cahoots with those child readers who with pre-conscious awareness gleefully get the author's joke and are allied with him as the winking Oompa Loompas are allied with Wonka. Those who do not get the joke are, if children, the author's innocent dupes or, if adults, remain rigidly restricted in the disease of civilization which disapproves of jokes and the unconscious.

We have to admit that *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is a very ambiguous if not sinister tale about fools and knaves, but the range of children's literature is large enough to contain such a tale. The bookshelf must not be purged of it! Through the amoral relationship between jokes and the unconscious, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* releases a child's anxieties about bodily functions, physical injury, and death.⁵ For the adult perceiver it projects through its excremental vision the meanings and problems of an acquisitive consumer society, though such a rhetorical aim may well be unimportant to the author. The sugar and chocolate coating of these meanings and problems is finally not thick enough for the careful reader-interpreter. That reader will recognize the significance of the chocolate factory's ground even as she observes with trickster delight how eagerly the child turns the pages.

Notes

1. Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, 3. The critic can consult four editions of the book: the British and American first editions where the Oompa Loompas are black and the revised editions where they are white.
2. For a discussion of the "excremental vision," a phrase coined by John Middleton Murry, see Brown, chapters 13 through 15.
3. See my *Metaphors of Evil*.
4. For example, see Bouchard.
5. For an analysis of the psychological development of the sense of humor in children see Wolfenstein.

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