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Charlie and I: Outside the Chocolate Factory

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Abstract:

A sense of awe and excitement fills in the minds of the readers – young and adult when Willy Wonka opens the gate of his chocolate factory for the lucky five children from throughout the world. “Who is lucky?” is a question that we need to find an answer to. Roald Dahl, through his “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” promotes a ‘crazy’ idea that captures the attention of young minds and gears up the imaginary world in their minds. ‘Charlie and I’ weren’t frightened nor nervous, but terrifically excited. Willy Wonka is amazing with his frequent outbursts and whacky personality. He is a hard taskmaster firing the brains with unbelievable ideas and his strict ideologies. Roald Dahl is optimistic in his underlining assertions, that fiction has a major role to play in constructing a personal and social identity and a psychological dimension in children development. Dahl is deft in chocolate coating morality and allowing children to savour it while reveling in the marvelously constructed world.

Keywords: Children's Literature, identity formation, child development, socialization, morality

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Stories are everywhere. An individual’s day is more or less consumed by varied nexus of stories- of her/his self, neighbours’ or people in general. It is human beings basic necessity to bind the activities around oneself into a coherent unit and this meaning-making process leads to stories. While the stories are generated, it has to be disseminated and thus storytelling as an activity or better put as art emerges. Every individual’s growth and development happens in a society that shares social, cultural and historic spaces. Stories that generate within this specific space is orally transmitted from generation to generation and becomes a part of their shared collective consciousness. Thus, storytelling is the basis of varied kinds of literary

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expressions. Its basic nature is to communicate and express.

Storytelling thus becomes an important conscious activity that tells, retells, educates, disseminates- morals, values, folk tales, and various other narratives. Roald Dahl is one of those gifted storytellers, who has mastered the art of storytelling. Scores of books written by him are very much animated by it. Adding to the narrative voice and the form is the illustrations by Quentin Blake that projects the author's views accurately.

Roald Dahl's scumdidlyumptious world of stories grip the readers of all ages cannot be doubted. This splendiferous author started his writing career only after 1960. Cooking up bedtime stories for his children was his first step into the world of storytelling. His *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory* (1964) achieved phenomenal success. This work has been made into a motion picture as well. A sense of awe and excitement fills in the minds of the readers – young and adult when Willy Wonka opens the gate of his chocolate factory for the lucky five children from throughout the world.

When we take into consideration, the novel *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, as a representative text for children's literature, it is Dahl-iciously significant. Dahl through his ticklingly

terrific narrative style projects a world that is whimsically magical, delicious and dangerous. His luminous, direct narrative voice showcases the actual world of Charlie Bucket, the hero. This little child's poor or rather pathetic living condition prepares the ground for the strategic development of the plot. There is no extraordinary narrative strategy but a direct and matter of fact tone throughout the novel, which is spoken by the wacky Willy Wonka that in turn suggests the serious undertone in the narrative.

Charlie is an intuitive, spirited child; there are other characters like Augustus Gloop, Mike Teavee, Veruca Salt and Violet Beauregarde who like the prodigal son return to their homes repentant. Willy Wonka pointing at the line of gigantic covered vans parked in a line nearby says to Charlie,

"Don't you remember what it said on the Golden Tickets? Every child goes home with a lifetime's supply of sweets."
(Dahl and Blake 181)

This statement by Mr Willy Wonka is very much significant and figurative that suggests that these children who otherwise were incorrigible have learnt the lessons for life and have been changed after they visited Wonka's Chocolate Factory. We don't know if they changed their greedy, selfish ways, but we can at least hope that

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they can now see how their selfish ways and bad behaviour led to this outcome.

Charlie loves to listen to Grandpa Joe tell stories about when he worked for Mr Wonka in the chocolate factory. Charlie shows respect for his grandparents by listening to their stories and spending time with them. It is young Charlie's, innocent enthusiastic dream to find a Golden Ticket more than anything. When he finally unwraps a Golden Ticket inside his chocolate bar, he feels his greatest dream has come true. With this, the idea of the dream has been exploited effectively by Dahl. Charlie is more than just happy. It's a lifetime chance for Charlie when he wins a ticket to the weird and wonderful Wonka's Chocolate Factory.

"Look, mother, look! The last Golden Ticket! It's mine! It's the fifth Golden Ticket, mother and I've found it!"
(Dahl and Blake 67)

Charlie's persistence, hope and belief finally take him up the ladder of success. His dream of visiting Wonka's chocolate factory finally comes true. Wonka too makes his dream come true by making all sorts of incredible and delicious candy treats in unimaginable ways. Charlie knows to value his grandparents and parents and the things they do for him. His station in life has made him a patient and self-sufficient boy. He values time spent

with family more than materials, unlike other children who win tickets into Wonka's factory. And all these factors put together answers the question, "Who is lucky?"

Willy Wonka is amazing with his frequent outbursts and whacky personality. He is a hard taskmaster firing the brains with unbelievable ideas and his strict ideologies. The other children who enter Wonka's factory are demanding and greedy or addicted. Their behaviours have obvious negative consequences. The aspect of punishment has been humorously dealt with in the book through the strict supervision of Willy Wonka. The punishment each child gets is also unthinkable and innovative. While Augustus Gloop goes up the pipe, Violet swells up like gum. Mike Teavee, a brat glued to television is sent in through television in Wonka's factory. The squirrels tap Veruca's (the wretched girl) head with their knuckles and declare her to be a "bad nut".

Wonka says, *"My goodness, she's a bad nut after all. Her head must have sounded quite hollow."* (Dahl and Blake 143)

Augustus gorges on food, Mike watches TV nonstop, Violet constantly chews gum, and Veruca demands whatever she desires at the moment. These children allow their vices to become part of their personalities. Roald Dahl is optimistic in

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his underlining assertions, that fiction has a major role to play in constructing a personal and social identity and a psychological dimension in children development. ‘Charlie and I’ weren’t frightened nor nervous, but terrifically excited. Charlie at the end of the novel, despite the huge inheritance, tags his family along. All the while he wished a full stomach and warm place to dwell for his grandparents and parents. The other children in contrast don’t look at the opportunities Mr Wonka is creating for them; rather they dwell on the momentary materialistic aspect around them. Mr Wonka purposely chooses Charlie from among the materialistic kids because he doesn’t want someone who will destroy the chocolate factory out of greed and desire for money.

The Oompa-Loompa’s from the strange Loompaland are hardworking imaginary creatures who love to sing and dance. Dahl makes use of these creatures as a very important device to chocolate coat moral values and good habits for both children and parents, allowing them to enjoy the sing, savouring it while correcting and mirroring their grave mistakes through their significant songs. Humorous filled, rhyming and rhythmic sing-songs teach children the mistakes they generally commit and the punishment that naturally follows.

*“Augustus Gloop! Augustus Gloop!
The great big greedy nincompoop!
How long would we allow this beast
To gorge and guzzle, feed and feast
On everything, he wanted to?”*(Dahl and Blake 104)

While Augustus Gloop’s ‘unutterably vile’, behaviour is punished, little Violet’s bad habit of chewing gum is also criticized by Oompa Loompas.

*“That chewing gum will never pay;
This sticky habit’s bound to send
The chewer to a sticky end.”*(Dahl and Blake 128)

And the punishment she receives is justified because it is easy to correct one when still young and it’s never too late.

Parents too have learnt their lessons inside Mr Wonka’s factory. Veruca Salt along with her parents was “polished off”. Roald Dahl questions through Oompa Loompa’s song,

*“Is she the only one at fault?
For though she’s spoiled, and
dreadfully so,
A girl can’t spoil herself, you
know?”*(Dahl and Blake 148)

Mike Teavee’s TV viewing habit is later corrected by his father. He’s so addicted to television that, even after being turned into

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a midget, he still wishes to watch television, to which his father replies,

“Never again! I’m throwing the television set right out the window that moment we get home. I’ve had enough of television!” (Dahl and Blake 167)

Oompa Loompa’s have a plea for all visitors and readers in general at the end of the novel through their last song.

*“Never, NEVER let
Them near you television set-
Or better still, just don’t install
The idiotic thing at all.
... They sit and stare and stare and
sit
Until they are hypnotized by it.”*
(Dahl and Blake 171)

Dahl’s concern for children and their creative imagination is reflected here. The novel gears up the imaginary world in the minds of the young readers but with a tone of concern and caution. If Dahl back then in the 1960s had to call TV as:

“... That ridiculous machine, that nauseating, foul, unclean, repulsive Television set!” (Dahl and Blake 174)

We can imagine what more nasty words he would invent to describe the present-day gadgets that the young minds have been

glued to and have become Dahl’s boot bugglers.

Wonka has a word of advice to Charlie at the end, *“mind you, there are thousands of clever men who would give anything for the chance to come in and take over from me, but I don’t want that sort of person.”* (Dahl and Blake 185)

Mr Willy Wonka finally has found a perfect heir to his factory in little Charlie.

“You see, my dear boy, I have decided to make you a present of the whole place. As soon as you are old enough to run it, the entire factory will become yours.”
(Dahl and Blake 184)

Ultimately, Dahl upholds the life of virtue and he suggests that every child inherit this value in them. He’s optimistic when he says,

“I want a good sensible loving child, one to whom I can tell all my precious sweet-making secrets- while I am still alive.”(Dahl and Blake 185)

Thus, Roald Dahl is optimistic in his underlining assertions, that fiction has a major role to play in constructing a personal and social identity and a psychological dimension in children development. Dahl is deft in chocolate coating morality and allowing children to savour it while revelling in the marvelously constructed world. Children’s literature seems to be

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delicious and lovely like that of Wonka's Inside of the chocolate factory but outside it is touching, deep, dark at times and more symbolic and metaphoric in sense.

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