

**Chocolate Bars And Tesserae: Representations of Oppressive Systems in Children's and
Young Adult Literature**

by

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Introduction

Children's literature is commonly conceptualized simply as "literature written for children". However, as Merah Gubar points out in her article "On Not Defining Children's Literature," many authors deny that they are writing novels specifically for children, and many famous examples of "children's literature" (such as *Peter Pan* or *The Little Prince*) "aimed to attract mixed audiences" (209). This is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to define children's literature, as attempting to piece together a definition based on any one or a few recurring traits of novels typically seen as 'children's literature' is damaging to the study of children's literature overall. In addition, defining children's literature, in its nature, requires defining children and the childhood experience, and argues that children have a way of thinking that is fundamentally separate from that of adults. The concept of what a "child" is has differed throughout history, and thus the definition of children's literature reflects the different ways that adults view children at a particular moment in history. In his article titled "The Hidden Child in *The Hidden Adult*," Perry Nodelman responds to criticism of his book, *The Hidden Adult*. He writes that "the adults who write, publish, and purchase books for young people do so because they perceive young people as needing a special literature they cannot produce themselves" (267). This idea of a separate, special literature only serves to other children from adults. It attempts to define children's literature as inherently separate from 'adult literature', and defines adult literature as anything that is not meant for children.

Though children's literature may be impossible to accurately define, or define at all, Gubar argues that it "does not mean that it does not exist or cannot be talked about" (212). To define a novel as 'children's literature' assumes the way that children will react to the given text

and narrows the field of children's literature by desiring a strict definition of a subject that is as complex and nuanced as children themselves. Nodelman writes that "children and adults are not inherently different by virtue of their age" and that they have in common "being individually different from all other human beings" (274-5). Children's literature as a category ignores this individuality that children inherently possess; while adults have their literature divided by subject, bookstores will typically section off children's literature in one place, lumping together books for all different ages and interests.

A more accurate definition of children's literature does not come from the content of the literature itself, but from the intent of the literature. Children's literature, like all types of literature, is an industry, and the industry exists to serve itself—publishing and selling books in order to turn a profit. Children's literature exists as a marketing category, one that uses its status as separate and purposeful in order to spread ideology. Sectioning off literature for children encourages parents to buy those specific books, making it easier for authors and publishers to push specific messages and ideologies onto children, who have little to no say in the literature they consume. Of course, there are ideologies purposefully present in children's literature that are not inherently harmful; many children's texts contain messages that promote kindness, sharing, and other values of caring for one another as human beings. Where the promotion of values becomes harmful is when children's texts encourage the child reader, purposefully or not, to tacitly accept the oppressive systems around them. In his article 'The Impossibility of Innocence: Ideology, Politics, and Children's Literature,' Charles Sarland notes that "all writing is ideological since all writing either assumes values even when not overtly espousing them, or is produced and read within a social and cultural framework which is itself inevitably suffused with

values” (41). This idea of all literature being ideological and existing in a society and culture that has ideologies and values is what allows ideology (harmful or not, intentional or not) to be spread so easily. No children’s author is asking a child reader to think critically about economics, but by including structures in their novels that promote complacency under capitalism, these ideologies are being propagated. Nodelman writes that children’s literature is “inherently didactic” (272), and the existence of this literature as a marketing category that pushes ideology certainly agrees with this.

Children’s literature builds on the adult conception of children as not only a succinct category, but as innocent, and denies them the complexity of being human and equal to adults. Sarland writes that “Children’s books construct children, both as characters and readers, as without sexuality, innocent, and denied politics” (48). The image of the child as ‘innocent’ is false, and assumes that children cannot approach topics that adults know they are not immune to, such as racism, classism, or even sexual assault. This directly ignores the fact that children can be and too often are victims of racism, poverty, and sexual assault, and thus makes it more difficult to address and resolve these issues as they pertain to children. Additionally, this concept is true for the category of children’s books, but isn’t as true for the category of books marketed towards young adults. Young adult literature, such as *The Hunger Games*, portrays young adults as having more agency, individuality, and politics than characters in books marketed towards younger children. While these novels still infantilize young adults to a degree, they depict these characters as having more control over their fates than the passive characters of children’s novels who are often at the whim of the adult characters. Because their characters have more agency, the novels include political themes that children’s texts largely ignore.

Discussions and criticisms of children's literature center around the ways in which demographic groups and ideas are represented specifically for consumption by children. Because adults are creating these works—writing, illustrating, publishing, and purchasing books for children—adults ultimately make the decision about what children read and how they view ideas. This paves the way for racial prejudice, classism, and other forms of bigotry to invade children's literature and the consciousnesses of the children who read the propaganda set for them by adults looking to spread their values. Of course, this idea goes both ways: while bad ideas can be disseminated through children's literature, so too can good ideas; teaching children about love and compassion for others are prevalent ideas in children's literature. However, far too often, conscious and unconscious negative biases find their way into children's novels, setting children up for a lifetime of either unlearning these biases or further propagating them.

These negative biases are heavily discussed in children's literature, and specifically in the main text I am analyzing, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Although the bigotry is obvious in this novel to a critical reader, it is presented in a magical or whimsical way to appeal to children, using fantastical imagery surrounding candy and chocolate that easily disguises some of the main biases present within the text. While I am interested in discussing some of the more obvious bigotry, namely the racism that is often examined, I am more interested in delving into the effects this has on the child reader, as well as discussing some of the lesser talked about ideas surrounding classism and consumerism that are just as prevalent in the text. I argue that these implicit biases in a work of canonical children's fiction are influential to readers of all ages, but specifically target children in the interest of circulating ideology.

Similarly, I will be discussing *The Hunger Games*, and applying discussions of bias in children's literature to a young adult novel. I argue that in *The Hunger Games*, a novel that is antifascist and anticapitalist on its surface reinforces capitalist ideologies in a roundabout way. By examining how the novel promotes Katniss as an individual hero figure, I show that individualism promotes capitalism and thus ultimately the text undermines the overall message of the novel.

Although these two works are of different genres and written for different audiences, and although the messages that the authors attempt to convey to the reader are also opposites, the underlying themes of capitalism and individualism shine through in both novels. For this reason, I am interested in the ways in which both novels explore the idea of capitalism, consumerism, and racism, and will be arguing that these works directly address issues of inequality as well as sweep them aside, therefore perpetuating biases by pretending those biases aren't there.

Class Division in Children's and Young Adult Literature

Class divisions and representations of current class divisions exist in all literature, including children's literature. The way these class divisions are portrayed by the authors influences the reader, and especially a child reader. An author's use of realistic class divisions, exaggerated class divisions, or seemingly a lack of class divisions affects the way the fiction is read. In her article "Grass Houses: Representations and Reinventions of Social Class through Children's Literature," Stephanie Jones writes about the unequal representation of poverty in children's literature, reflecting on her personal experience while using multiple other articles and studies. Of the lack of representation for poor and marginalized groups, she writes that "we must ask ourselves how children will look at and relate to a world that has deemed them so unimportant that they do not fill the pages of books written for children, families, and schools" (43). Children who do not see themselves in literature, or worse, are seeing themselves represented in ways that other than white, middle class families, will internalize the messages of lower self-worth that the texts convey. Jones also writes that it is more common to see characters of color represented as poor or working-class in children's literature than it is to see white characters in the same situation, and that "We may be raising our young children to connect light skin with class privilege and dark skin with class marginalization, a dichotomous notion that promotes a very narrow and dangerous understanding about social class in the United States" (43). In this way, children's fiction perpetuates the racist and classist notion that people of color only exist in situations of poverty. In my analysis of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in particular, I will be examining the ways in which poverty is portrayed in children's literature and what effect that representation has on a child reader. I argue that *Charlie and the Chocolate*

Factory depicts class and class struggles in idealistic ways that minimize the struggles of those in poverty, while *The Hunger Games* exposes the corrupt nature of capitalist systems by depicting the suffering of impoverished people at the hands of the ruling class.

The capitalist ideology surrounding culture not only in the time in which *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was written, but also in the twenty-first century, as it continues to be read, influences the text and the way it is received by a reader. Pierre Bourdieu, in ‘The Forms of Capital,’ describes the ideal world of capitalism as a game of roulette when he writes, “roulette... gives a fairly accurate image of this imaginary universe of perfect competition or perfect equality of opportunity, ... in which every moment is perfectly independent of the previous one, ... and every prize can be attained, instantaneously, by everyone, so that at each moment anyone can become anything” (83). In other words, Bourdieu highlights the impossibility of equality under capitalism—envisioning a world in which people are not held back by the cycle of poverty, racial discrimination, corporate greed, and other forms of inequality that pervade modern capitalist societies. This is precisely what happens to Charlie; he has fulfilled the ideal dream of capitalist society by randomly becoming rich and elevating himself and his family from poverty. Yet, on the surface, the text appears to praise lower class people, like Charlie’s family, while looking down on the bourgeois families and actively punishing them. The text describes Charlie’s family as being “far too poor” and “never able to make enough to buy one-half of the things that so large a family needed” (5). Continuing by saying that “Charlie felt it worst of all,” (5) the text emphasizes the effects that poverty has on Charlie.

Additionally, the text teaches definitive values regarding self-control and complacency. Specifically, the text shows that poverty *creates* the valued traits of self-control and complacency, and that these traits are rewarded by the system. Charlie is shown to have a love for chocolate, and Wonka's chocolate specifically:

Only once a year, on his birthday, did Charlie Bucket ever get to taste a bit of chocolate. The whole family saved up their money for that special occasion, and when the great day arrived, Charlie was always presented with one small chocolate bar to eat all by himself. And each time he received it, on those marvelous birthday mornings, he would place it carefully in a small wooden box that he owned, and treasure it as though it were a bar of solid gold; and for the next few days, he would allow himself only to look at it, but never to touch it. Then at last, when he could stand it no longer, he would peel back a tiny bit of the paper wrapping at one corner to expose a *tiny* bit of chocolate, and then he would take a *tiny* nibble — just enough to allow the lovely sweet taste to spread out slowly over his tongue. The next day, he would take another tiny nibble, and so on, and so on. And in this way, Charlie would make his ten-cent bar of birthday chocolate last him for more than a month. (6)

This passage shows Charlie showing self-control; since we never see his school life, and he is too young to have a job, the discipline around his once a year birthday chocolate is the way the text shows that Charlie is deserving of what he will get by the end of the novel. This is in contrast to the other children who do *not* show discipline. Augustus, who “eats *so many* candy bars a day that it was almost *impossible* for him *not* to find one” (22); Veruca, whose father

“started buying up all the Wonka candy bars [he] could lay [his] hands on” (24); Violet, who switched to candy instead of gum and “can’t do without it” (31); and Mike, who was “extremely annoyed” (32) by reporters asking him about the golden ticket and had “no less than eighteen toy pistols... hanging from belts around his body” (33). Because of the way the text shows Charlie’s desperation and patience, and the other children’s selfishness, the fact that Charlie is the one who gets rewarded with riches pushes the capitalist idea that the system will reward those who do not question the system and endure poverty.

This idea of complacency perpetuates the cycle of poverty. By promising the working class eventual success, a revolt is suppressed and the poor are kept poor and made poorer by means of institutions such as wage theft, stagnating wages, and the exponentially rising prices of basic needs like food, rent, and healthcare. This happens to Charlie and his family at the start of the novel; they have less and less to eat every time food is mentioned. Charlie’s father gets laid off from a job that wasn’t paying him much to begin with, and “slowly but surely, everybody in the house began to starve” (38). Impoverished as they were, Charlie’s parents could not have been able to set him up for a prosperous life by sending him to college or even feeding him properly, and it is likely that Charlie would have died of starvation if he had not inherited the factory, with the text saying that “it seemed doubtful whether he could go on much longer like this” and that “everything he did now, he did slowly and carefully, to prevent exhaustion” (40). The imagery of starvation clearly showcases just how deadly class warfare is. Charlie does not have access to generational wealth; the cycle of poverty his grandparents and parents have been in could not have sustained Charlie past his childhood. Taking ownership of the factory was what ended this cycle for the Bucket family, though the reader never learns what happens after the rest

of the family is told that they will be living at the factory. However, this does not end the cycles of poverty that drive the capitalist system to which they belong. In the final scene, the Bucket family's house is destroyed by Wonka, symbolically ending their suffering and signaling their freedom from the cycle of poverty (153). The destruction of the house as a symbol is important because it represents only their family's release from poverty, but those who are impoverished outside of the Bucket household are still stuck in that cycle.

Dahl utilizes the trope of enduring and then spontaneously rising out of poverty and makes this idea seem possible to the child reader. He installs the 'rags to riches' idea into the novel, i.e. the idea that one can become successful simply by working hard (in Charlie's case, persevering). Sarland writes that some popular literature

offers the hope of autonomy and self-determination, in admittedly utopian forms, while at the same time affirming dominant capitalist ideology... while the closure of popular texts almost always reinforces dominant ideology, in the unfolding narratives there are always countering moves in which it is challenged. (50)

This juxtaposition is what is at play in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, as capitalist ideals end up being reinforced, though bourgeois parents and children are seemingly punished for benefiting from the system. The bourgeois characters, who exhibit traits primarily of greed and entitlement, are penalized by Wonka; in the end, they return home, seemingly humbled and with their bad traits squeezed out (quite literally for Augustus and Violet). The text emphasizes that in three of four cases, the punishment fits the child and the child only, but that Veruca's parents are equally to blame for her bad traits. Thus, when the children walk away from the factory, Veruca's parents are with her, equally covered in garbage from the chute. The punishment of the

bourgeois children and parents seems to challenge dominant capitalist ideology, showing that those who benefit from capitalism do not deserve to reap further benefits from it, like the chocolate factory. In the end, though, this is proven to be merely a distraction from the reinforcement of the dominant ideology, where Charlie keeps the unchecked global chocolate industry and its associated slave empire (discussed below) running. The text is only 'revolutionary' insofar as it pretends to be, while affirming and upholding class distinctions and capitalist values. As I will discuss more in-depth later, Charlie wins the prize of the factory by default, rather than for any moral superiority over the other children. In the 1971 movie adaptation of the novel, *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, the other children are cleared out in the same way, and Charlie almost wins by default. He does not, because it is revealed that Wonka knows about his and Grandpa Joe's theft of the fizzy lifting drinks, breaking Wonka's rules of not touching anything in the factory. In the film, Charlie passes Wonka's morality test by not betraying a factory secret to a fake rival company that Wonka invented to trick the children. Only then does Wonka give Charlie the factory; in this adaptation, it is moral values that make one successful. The novel, however, does not portray Charlie as someone who is morally superior to the other children. When Charlie wins by default, this is suggestive of the bourgeois notion that capitalism allows anyone to be successful, regardless of class status, moral values, or other factors.

Wonka and his chocolate factory present an ideal capitalist economic scenario, with none of the characters, adult or child, challenging this idea, even despite the revelation that the factory is dependent on slave labor to function. They all marvel and wonder at these injustices, and the capitalist nature of Wonka's factory ends up 'correcting' the evil of four of the five children,

reinforcing the idea that classism, and the system of capitalism that holds it up, is a just system that treats people the way they deserve to be treated based on their actions.

The four other children are characterized using typically negative, one-dimensional traits that aim to describe the children entirely without really describing them at all. Because of these simple and negative descriptions, the reader automatically assumes that these characters are also simple and negative. By contrast, Charlie is defined by the word 'hero,' a word which can carry bold and noble connotations; however, Sarland argues that in the work of authors like Roald Dahl "their protagonists are heroines and heroes primarily because that is their plot role, not because there is anything in their psychological make up that makes them inherently 'heroic'" (45). While, for example, Charlie's failure to condemn Wonka for enslaving the Oompa-Loompas shows that he is not the kind of hero the text sets him up to be, the text portrays Charlie as a hero not because he saves the day, but because he exemplifies traits that the text wants to encourage, traits that make one a good capitalist. Charlie, as the hero, displays self-control and an unwillingness to challenge the system. Sarland writes that "The assumption is that the reader 'identifies with' the protagonists, and thus take on their particular value positions" (49). If we do assume that the child identifies with the protagonist, specifically Charlie as a sympathetic protagonist, these are traits that a child would look to emulate, and continue to perpetuate the capitalist system around them.

As the protagonist, a lot of information is revealed about Charlie in order for the reader to sympathize with him. The first chapter, titled "Here Comes Charlie," personally introduces the reader to the Bucket family and says that Charlie "is pleased to meet you" (3). The rest of the chapter and many of the following chapters describe the extreme poverty the Bucket family lives

in and the ways it affects Charlie as a child, specifically noting that as the winter went on, Charlie “became ravenously and desperately hungry” (38) and that he was ““beginning to look like a skeleton”” (40). Thus, it is very easy for any reader, not just a child reader, to see him as a hero, or deserving of what he gets in the end. Conversely, it is also easy for the reader to see why the other children deserve the misery they get in turn, because their dialogue, while infrequent, is saturated with greed, to reinforce the idea that this is all they are. Dahl’s refusal to imagine children as complexly as they are sets up a good child/bad child dichotomy, reinforced by capitalist and class values. Charlie’s inherited fortune of the chocolate factory represents success in a capitalist society being given not by luck, but by connections. Bourdieu describes one of three fundamental guises of capital as “*social capital*, made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital” (84). In other words, the connections one has to successful people can and likely will bring some degree of economic success, if utilized in the right way. Charlie’s social capital develops over the course of the novel, as he transitions from having no social capital to being the successor to one of the world’s largest candy enterprises. Through this, Dahl shows the reader that social capital doesn’t matter, because Charlie became successful without having any. Disguised as an ‘anyone can be successful’ story, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* upholds classist and capitalist values by giving a false, hopeful success story. Bourdieu goes on to say that “the existence of a network of connections is not a natural given, or even a social given” (89). Bourdieu points out that it is not guaranteed that one will have or acquire social capital over the course of their life, which is seen in modern society as the cycle of poverty. In Dahl’s book, the four bad children are connected to their rich parents, but are shown to be unsuccessful at getting the success they want out of the

factory. They are assumed to resume living their middle and upper class lives once they leave the factory, showing that the temporary misfortune they faced in the factory had no effect on their material world. The final scene in which these four children and their families are present is one where they are defeated by Wonka hides the fact of their return to comfort after the novel's end. Through this, the novel denies the importance of social capital, choosing to show the loss of capital instead of the reality that none of these families will lose their status and place among the bourgeois class. Additionally, Charlie has no money and no connections until, by a random stroke of luck, he finds a golden ticket, and ends up inheriting the factory. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* presents children with a story that is opposite to the way the world works, and thus helps to maintain the status quo by offering a false hope to children, that classic rags to riches trope. The text presents the idea of cultural hegemony, or the domination of the working class by the bourgeoisie by ideological means. As Karl Marx wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class." The values presented in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* are those that actively benefit the ruling class, while making an appeal to the working class. The text suggests that wealth does not necessarily come from being born into wealth, and that even Charlie, poor and starving as his whole family is, can become a multi-billionaire over the course of one afternoon.

Representations of class and class struggles in children's fiction like *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* can similarly be found in young adult literature. *The Hunger Games*, set in an indeterminate future year, transparently showcases an extreme, tyrannical government and a society fueled by class inequality. The morning leading up to the reaping, or drawing of names

for the yearly fight to the death, Katniss describes how the Capitol exercises control over the people of Panem through the tesserae:

Say you are poor and starving as we are. You can opt to add your name more times in exchange for tesserae. Each tessera is worth a meager year's supply of grain and oil for one person. You may do this for each of your family members as well. So, at the age of twelve, I had my name entered four times. Once, because I had to, and three times for tesserae for grain and oil for myself, Prim, and my mother. In fact, every year I have needed to do this. And the entries are cumulative. So now, at the age of sixteen, my name will be in the reaping twenty times. Gale, who is eighteen and has been either helping or single-handedly feeling a family of five for seven years, will have his name in forty-two times.

(13)

This passage highlights the mechanism by which the Capitol systematically kills off the poor citizens of Panem. Citizens are able to get more food, barely, for their family, but in return, they submit to a higher chance of being killed off in a state-sanctioned deathmatch. The Capitol actively tries to keep the citizens in the outer districts in poverty; this is shown to be so they do not rebel against the terrible conditions they are doomed to live in. During the Games, Katniss teams up with Rue, a fellow competitor who is one of the Tributes from District 11. District 11's job is to provide food for the citizens of the Capitol, and Rue says that "they feed us a bit extra during harvest, so that people can keep going longer" (283). The Capitol only hands out food when it deems it appropriate, either to produce more food/other goods, or to kill impoverished citizens. In their article "Consumed: Food in *The Hunger Games*", Lori Parks and Jennifer

Yamashiro write that “[the citizens of Panem] are enslaved by the physical ramifications of their near starvation and left dependent almost entirely on the Capitol for food and other needs” (142). This dependency greatly controls the outcome of the Games. Katniss says that when a tribute wins the Games, “their district will be showered with prizes, largely consisting of food. All year, the Capitol will show the winning district gifts of grain and oil and even delicacies like sugar while the rest of us battle starvation” (19). This partly explains why districts 1, 2 and 4, the wealthier districts, have ‘career’ tributes - because their districts are always winning, this continues the cycle. The careers are well fed and prepared to win the Games, while children in poorer districts, like Katniss and Rue, go into the arena with no hope that they will leave it alive. While the poorer districts are concerned with survival, the middle class districts have what they need, and are concerned with emulating the lifestyle of the Capitol. The concept of cultural hegemony is exemplified in these districts; They have been taught to see the culture of the Capitol as something to strive for. Participating in and winning the Games is the way for these districts to increase their wealth and become marginally closer to living the way those in the Capitol do.

Early on, Katniss makes it clear that the reality of living in Panem, starving and under the oppressive regime of the Capitol, has jaded her. When she says “starvation’s not an uncommon fate in District 12. *Who hasn’t* seen the victims?” (28, emphasis added), the reader realizes that Katniss could have died at any moment, killed by the Capitol because there is a refusal of the government to provide for its citizens. She follows up this thought by saying that “starvation is never the cause of death officially. It’s always the flu, or exposure, or pneumonia. But that fools no one” (28). The citizens of Panem, weighed down by the burden of starvation, are very much

aware that this is happening to them, while the Capitol privately perpetrates but refuses to publicly acknowledge the injustice. The reader learns early on that the Capitol keeps their citizens weak and starving on purpose, in order to suppress a revolt. Katniss tells the reader about “the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol”, and informs us that the Games are the Capitol’s way of instilling fear and ensuring control over the districts (18). Effectively, *The Hunger Games* teaches the child reader the horrors of living under a fascist regime that uses an economic system of productive capitalism. This is demonstrated most obviously when Katniss talks about the “real message” the Capitol sends to the districts by holding the Games: “Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you” (19). The words that Katniss uses, particularly *sacrifice* and *destroy*, highlight the barbarism of fascism under the Capitol. As discussed earlier in regards to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, this is an example of the novel challenging the dominant ideology; the cruelty of capitalism and fascism is pointed out and exposed through Katniss’s thoughts and fears.

Despite the representation of Katniss’s suffering at the hands of the Capitol giving *The Hunger Games* an antifascist and anticapitalist front, the novel, ironically, ends up supporting the ideals it claims to be against by its very representation of Katniss as a hero figure. Because the reader is meant to identify with Katniss, one can assume that the reader will also idealize or internalize the ways in which she defies the Capitol. Through the first and certainly the final two novels in the trilogy, Katniss is shown to be a figurehead to the revolutionary movement against the Capitol. Her life is protected above all others, and her battles are simulated and filmed for propaganda advertisements. While her role as the rebel figurehead, or Mockingjay, is necessary

to inspire the people of Panem to join the rebellion, it does not represent a realistic avenue to counter fascism in the real world. A reader who identifies with Katniss may only go so far as she does in the novel in terms of rebellion; while Katniss does *believe* in the rebellion, she does not do much to aid it. Her biggest contributions are photo-ops and morale boosting, and while this can make the rebellion bigger it does not make it any stronger or more destructive. Thus, the child reader is taught that this kind of passivity can achieve change, fueling the systems that rely on working-class complacency and passivity in order to function.

The Hunger Games exemplifies and intensifies the current state of capitalism in the twenty-first century. Not unlike the United States and other capitalist countries, the poor are kept poor, and the rich are kept rich and continue to get richer. There is a small middle class, made up of districts 1, 2, and 4, but even they are not exempt from the horrors perpetuated by the super-rich. The Games themselves, a fight to the death in a man-made arena, cater to the super-rich Capitol residents—a sport for which they only ever have to spectate. The poorer districts see the Games for the horror they are, while the middle-class districts willingly participate and perpetuate the system. When she volunteers as one of the tributes from District 12—one of the poorer districts—Katniss writes that instead of applauding when asked, the crowd of impoverished people of her district “t[ook] part in the boldest form of dissent they c[ould] manage. Silence. Which says we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong” (24). This silence is in direct opposition to the violence and the charade of the Games.

The people of District 12 have clear-cut convictions against the Games, which do nothing but kill the children of the district and keep it in poverty. From Katniss we learn that not only do the middle class districts not oppose the Games in the manner of the poor districts, the middle

class districts train “Careers,” or children whose lives are devoted to competing in the Games (94). These kids train for the games in their home districts, and consider it a privilege to die in the Games, being active participants in the deathmatch. For the Capitol residents, those of the upper and ruling classes, the Games present a different kind of participation; Capitol residents interact with the players by way of sponsoring them, spending enormous amounts of money to deliver life-saving gifts to the competitors in the arena. The classes in the novel thus reflect the socio-economic classes of modern capitalist society; the Capitol residents represent the ultra-rich, millionaire and billionaire class; districts 1, 2, and 4 represent the middle class — for the most part, economically sound, and complacent in the oppressive system set up by the Capitol; and the poorer districts, representing those living below the poverty line. The class system in *The Hunger Games* is clearly defined, and it is shown that Katniss is acutely aware of class differences. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, however, we see a poorly defined class system; Charlie is shown as being in poverty, and the majority of other characters are wealthy. In *The Hunger Games*, the poorer districts all experience oppression and poverty in different ways that are representative of American oppression and poverty. For example, the one predominantly black district experiences police brutality, while predominantly white districts are able to get away with breaking the rules of poverty under fascism, and are able in certain circumstances to avoid being complacent and starving to death. After meeting Rue, who comes from District 11, a predominantly black district, Katniss wrongly assumes that Rue would have more to eat than children in other districts because the main export of her district is food. Rue corrects Katniss by telling her that if the people of District 11 eat the food they grow, the Peacekeepers will ““whip you and make everyone else watch”” (282). Not only is this an obvious allusion to slavery and

indicative of a plantation economy present in District 11, it is in direct contrast to the Peacekeepers in District 12, who take bribes from the citizens of the district and let the citizens do illegal activities because it actively benefits them. Katniss writes that the Peacekeepers in District 12 “turn a blind eye to the few of us who hunt because they’re as hungry for fresh meat as anybody is” and that they are “among our best customers” (6). The Peacekeepers do not see the people of District 12 as being a threat, so they allow hunting and other rule breaking as long as it is in their favor. Additionally, the Peacekeepers of District 12 being equally as hungry as civilians shows that they are only pawns of the ruling class, as well as that they have their own agency to break the rules set by their oppressors.

During the Games, Katniss frequently remarks that her years of growing up so close to starvation have prepared her for the brutality of the arena. She says the fact that the Career tributes have always had enough to eat “is actually to their disadvantage, because they don’t know how to be hungry. Not the way Rue and I do” (208). Katniss’s experiences with self-denial and hunger so that she could keep her family alive prove useful in the Games, showing that the Games reward these experiences, even though they also reward the brute strength of the Career tributes. This is similar to Charlie’s familiarity with self-denial, the same trait that is rewarded by those in power. Both instances of this reward by the elite are facetious; Charlie’s is an example of the false promises of capitalism, while Katniss’s demonstrates the ways in which fascist governments retain control of their citizens. In this way, Katniss is a puppet of the Capitol, being trained by way of starvation in order to be a player in the Games.

The Games, including interviews and other media events surrounding them, are a very recognizable phenomenon to the twenty-first century reader—a reality TV show. By developing

the Games in the image of a reality show, the text suggests that poverty is a game to the ruling class, as well as a tool by which to control working class people and those in extreme poverty. Allison Layfield writes that a key part of the appeal of reality television is that the contestants “are selected from among the viewing audience” and “are not actors” (“Identity Construction”). This is what happens every year in the fictional world of Panem. Two children are taken from each district, given flashy costumes, interviewed, and sent to kill or be killed in a gladiatorial contest. The winner is given interviews and a Victory Tour, a propagandist promotion of the Games that Katniss describes as “the Capitol’s way of reminding people that the Hunger Games never really go away” (370). Likewise, the media environment that surrounds the Games is reflected in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, with extensive newspaper and television reporting on the craze around finding the tickets and interviews with the children before they enter the factory. A key difference is that the media is banned from entering the factory and it is not shown that there is a post-factory media presence surrounding any of the children. In *The Hunger Games*, the Capitol is exercising tyrannical rule over the citizens of Panem with an extravagant show, preventing the upper class from seeing the true nature of the Games or moving to stop it. Because the Capitol residents see the Games as catering to them, and the horror does not affect their lives in any meaningful way, they dispose of the lives of District children the same way the Capitol government does. In the same way that the Capitol exploits and subjugates the districts for their wealth, they similarly exploit the children for entertainment.

If a child survives the Games, they are given a fancy house separate from the rest of the District in a place called the Victor’s Village. They are also given money, and are promised to be spared from future horrors involving the Games, though the children of Victors are not extended

the same protection. Since the Games are an extension of the oppressive system, a way for the Capitol to keep control over the districts, winning and being rewarded with wealth only serve to promote the capitalist value of perseverance through poverty, including the false promise that perseverance will lead to prosperity in the future. Similarly, this is reflected in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, with Charlie's lack of an active personality representative of the way capitalists need working class people to remain complacent in their poverty, with the hope that one day, wealth will come to them. This is not drastically different between the novels, with Victors of the Games winning a comfortable life that every person should have, and Charlie winning billions of dollars worth of property and profits from the chocolate operation.

Racism in Children's and Young Adult Literature

Children's literature has always featured racism and racist ideology, seeking to influence a child reader by overtly or subtly implanting these ideologies in texts. While it is more common to see subtle racist stereotypes today, many older children's novels contained outright, easily-identifiable prejudices against people of color. Tzvetan Todorov, writing about the theory of race, writes that racialist doctrines exist on a set of five propositions. The first is the existence of different races within the human species, a proposition that racialists believe is biologically true, as well as believing that the divide should be maintained. The second proposition is that there is a "continuity between physical type and character" (214), which includes physical differences and cultural differences. The third and fourth are based on the actions of the group on the individual, a unique hierarchy of values, and the fifth shows how racialism, the theory of race, joins racism: through what Todorov refers to as "knowledge-based politics" (215). This refers to political ideology that is formed based on the real world observations in the first four racialist doctrines. Children's fiction employs this racialist doctrine by establishing races, categorizing behaviors, and using them to make a judgement, subtle or not, about race that is passed down to the child reader. The most apparent example of racism utilized in children's fiction that I will be analyzing is in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, where Roald Dahl invents a group of people with distinct characteristics that are purposefully separate from the main characters. On the other hand, *The Hunger Games* has realistic depictions of modern ideas about race, while encoding racist messages between the lines. Both of these novels reinforce ideas about race that will not be lost on the child reader, whether they disagree with what is being presented to them or not.

While none of the characters say it directly, the themes of capitalism are put into place in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* not only through Charlie's inheritance and the lessons taught to the other children, but through Wonka's Oompa-Loompa slave empire. Sarland describes a passive level of ideology present in children's books, where "views of the world are put into characters' mouths or otherwise incorporated into the narrative with no overt ironic distancing" (47). The beliefs of the adult capitalists in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* are indeed presented as unironic, rational beliefs. Of the Oompa-Loompas' enslavement, Wonka says "so I shipped them over here, every man, woman, and child in the Oompa-Loompa tribe. It was easy. I smuggled them over in large packing cases with holes in them, and they all got here safely. They are wonderful workers. They all speak English now" (71). This description of the Oompa-Loompas' capture evokes not only the Middle Passage, but also cattle cars used to transport Jewish people to concentration camps during the Holocaust. The story Wonka tells of the Oompa-Loompas' transport to the factory in Britain makes him the hero, rescuing the Oompa-Loompa tribe from "a terrible country... [filled with] nothing but thick jungles infested by the most dangerous beasts in the entire world" where all the people are "practically starving to death" (69). The description of the Oompa-Loompas' home country is a clear reflection of the types of language used in colonial discourses to negate the existence of native cultures, civilizations, and language. The children who have won the right to tour the factory are fascinated at Wonka's imperialist slave-capturing story. Veruca even demands that her father get her an Oompa-Loompa for herself (71). In her article 'Candy Boys and Chocolate Factories: Roald Dahl, Racialization, and Global Industry', Catherine Keyser notes that in an earlier draft of the novel, entitled "Charlie's Chocolate Boy" (404), the Oompa-Loompas were "discovered",

an interesting word choice that inherently others them. In this earlier version, Oompa Loompas are said to have come from Africa, instead of Loompaland (405). Earlier in the novel, Grandpa Joe tells Charlie that “the place is full of workers” (17) but that “the main gates [are] fastened... with a chain” (16) and “nobody’s gone in! ... nobody ever comes out, either” (17). Thus, Charlie enters the factory with the knowledge that the Oompa-Loompas are trapped, working for Wonka until they die. Factories in Britain during the 1960’s did not operate on slaves, but exploited workers instead. While these are very different in their operations, they both serve to accumulate capital, and the capital that enables the factories to run comes from empire and slavery. Further, the Oompa-Loompas were black in the original “Charlie’s Chocolate Boy”, but in the final version, the Oompa-Loompas have “rosy-white” skin, “golden-brown” hair, and “beautiful white teeth” (76). Philip Nel, in a blog post entitled “Can Censoring a Children’s Book Remove Its Prejudices?” writes that the cherubic nature of the Oompa-Loompas in the final version only serves to “more subtly encode the same racial and colonial messages of the original versions.” Still in the final version, the text notes that the Oompa-Loompa men “wear only deer-skins” and that the women “wear leaves” and the children wearing “nothing at all” (71). The text uses this to solidify in the reader’s mind that the Oompa-Loompas are not as ‘civilized’ as the British people who have enslaved them; even though they have learned English, they refuse to comply with British dress standards. The Oompa-Loompas are racialized by Wonka, being referred to as a “tribe” (70). The dangerous beasts in the jungles where the Oompa-Loompas live, their dress, and what they eat serve to other them to a British or American reader.

When Charlie inherits the factory, he also inherits and agrees to keep the Oompa-Loompas enslaved in the factory. When Charlie is told that the factory will belong to him someday, Wonka says:

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. I don't want a grown-up person at all. A grown-up won't listen to me; he won't learn. He will try to do things his own way and not mine. So I have to have a child. (151)

Implied in this passage is the fact that Charlie will have to consent to keep factory operations the way Wonka has set them, and a key part of the factory operations is the labor the Oompa-Loompas provide. By keeping the Oompa-Loompas enslaved, he is not only committing major human rights abuses, but he is denying the impoverished people of his city, which once included his family, a place to work. Additionally, this passage highlights the inequality inherent in the adult/child relationship; as Wonka wants a child whose opinions are malleable and will not try to change the factory's operations, even if that would be the moral action to take. On multiple levels, the child reader is capable of understanding what this means for their *personal* relationships to adults and adulthood, as well as for children more generally. The text is teaching that children play a subjugated role in the lives of adults, that a child *should* bend to the will of and copy adult behaviors.

Whether or not the lesson of complacency and obedience is intentionally taught, it is present in the text. While a common roadblock in criticizing literature is authorial intent, Nodelman challenges this, saying that while "we can never be absolutely sure about these

intentions... that does not mean we cannot attempt to identify and understand them” (271).

Roald Dahl is not able to directly say what his intentions were when he wrote *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, but embedded in the texts are hints of directions aimed at a child reader. Of this, Nodelman writes:

texts... do often communicate what their authors wanted to communicate. Street signs that invite us to stop usually encourage most drivers to stop. Texts for children that encourage them to emulate characters who realize they have erred and vow to obey their parents to encourage at least some children to obey their parents - or, at the least, to understand that obedience is what the text is encouraging. (271)

When applied to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Nodelman’s argument brings out the passivity of the characters, e.g. the children’s refusal to condemn Wonka’s enslavement of the Oompa Loompas and Veruca’s outright support of the slavery present in the novel normalize the concept for a child reader. The text encourages the reader to identify with Charlie, and his indifference on the issues of slavery, racial oppression, and colonization will either lead children to be indifferent about the issues, or to realize that many *adults* are indifferent about the issue.

The passive acceptance of racism is also a prevalent theme in *The Hunger Games*. In her article “Black and Brown Boys in Young Adult Dystopias: Racialized Docility in *The Hunger Games* Trilogy and *The Lunar Chronicles*”, Miranda A. Green-Barteet writes about the racialization of characters, particularly young male characters, in dystopian novels like *The Hunger Games*. Racialization, as it pertains to this discussion, involves ascribing ethnic or racial identities to people who do not identify with those ethnic or racial identities, or practices that do

not conform to a specific ethnic or racial identity. Often, racialization is used to open the door for discrimination, with an oppressive majority group assigning racial identities to an oppressed minority group. Green-Barteet writes that series such as *The Hunger Games* “purport to be racially progressive” but include characters who are racialized, and notes that “the texts do not directly address race, racism, or racialized difference” (2). The novels juxtapose a racially diverse character list with the idea that race no longer matters in the futuristic dystopia.

Throughout *The Hunger Games*, the race and ethnicity of characters are indicated to the reader without being explicitly stated. At the beginning of the novel, Katniss writes that she and Gale both have “straight black hair, olive skin, we even have the same gray eyes” (8) and that these traits are common for people living in the Seam, the section of District 12 facing the most poverty. She also mentions that members of the merchant class of District 12 have “light hair and blue eyes” (8), implying that there is an ethnic divide between the merchant class and the working class. Katniss’ ethnicity goes unmentioned for the rest of the novel, and the fact that Katniss’ skin tone is alluded to only once while Rue and Thresh have theirs repeatedly brought up “tacitly suggests that Katniss is meant to be read as white” (Green-Barteet 7). Because she is meant to be read as white, the actions that Katniss takes during the Games, such as becoming protective over Rue, “invokes a racial hierarchy among the characters”, which ultimately leads Katniss to become the trilogy’s “white savior” (Green-Barteet 7). A white savior can be defined as a white person who acts to help non-white people, often in self-serving contexts. Katniss takes the revolution in her hands and repeatedly defies the Capitol in ways that characters of color are not able to. Specifically, Thresh has his own way of defying the Capitol and the Games, but it is not dwelled upon by Katniss or acknowledged as defiance. During his interview, she writes that

he “ignores [the interviewer’s] attempts at banter and answers with a yes or no or just remains silent” (126). In this way, Thresh “refuses to be docile” and challenges the theatrics of the Capitol’s Games (Green-Bartlett 9). Thresh is killed for his noncompliance, leaving Katniss as the representative for political opposition to the Capitol in the novel. Through this, the reader understands a real-world parallel of government silencing of political opponents, particularly those of color. Since Katniss is threatened by the government repeatedly at the end of the novel as well as in the next two novels in the series, it would not be accurate to say that they leave her alone for her political dissent simply because she is white. Rather, she is able to escape the worst of the punishment, something that Thresh did not have the opportunity to do during the Games.

While the fact that Thresh dies while Katniss is rewarded for noncompliance could be read as a criticism of real-world, different responses to protests based on the race of those protesting, to view it this way would imply that the novel directly addresses racial biases, which it does not. Race issues take a backseat to the main plot; neither Katniss nor the other characters ever comment meaningfully about racial bias. Besides her quick mention of her own skin tone at the start of the novel, Katniss fails to describe the race of anyone else in the novel, except for Thresh and Rue. This juxtaposes every other character with the District 11 tributes and their “dark brown skin” (45), effectively making everyone else white. The absence of racial identifiers for anyone but those specifically described as black doesn’t translate to an absence of race, but rather reinforces the idea that white is a default. For a child reader, this instills the idea that people of color are ‘other’ to white people, needing a specific description and being reduced to race on first glance. Additionally, the fact that both tributes from District 11 are black implies

that District 11 is a predominately black district, as no other tribute has their skin color mentioned and is assumed to be white by default.

The implication that District 11 is a predominantly black district has several other implications in the novel. Because, presumably, every other district is majority white, this suggests that during the war in which the district/Capitol dynamic was formed, that the oppressive Capitol enacted some form of segregation to make this possible. Otherwise, there would be more diversity in every district, rather than a concentration of people of color in one district. The segregation of the districts is further enforced by lack of information passed between them. During her first interactions with Rue, Katniss notes that the people of District 12 have “so little communication with anyone outside our district,” and even speculates that their conversation is not being shown on TV because the Gamemakers “don’t want people in different districts to know about each other” (203). Because communication between districts is almost nonexistent, potential revolution is suppressed and violations that happen within a district are kept in that district. For example, District 11 is more heavily policed than other districts; Rue describes the horrific things, like whipping and murder, that the Peacekeepers do to the people of District 11 for minor or unintentional rule breaking, while Katniss mentions she gets away with actions that are more illegal in District 12, and that hearing about the ruthlessness of the District 11 Peacekeepers “makes [her] feel like District 12 is some sort of safe haven” (204). The treatment of disabled children in both districts is a highlighted point of comparison between Districts 11 and 12. Rue tells Katniss that a boy who “wasn’t right in the head” was killed by the Peacekeepers for wanting to play with a pair of glasses (204). On hearing this, Katniss remembers a child in her district who is “not quite right”, but instead of being killed, “she’s

treated as some sort of pet” (205). While District 12 is by no means the “safe haven” Katniss hyperbolizes it to be, the reader can assume that the police brutality experienced by District 11 overshadows most of the gross human rights abuses that happen in District 12. The resigned way in which Rue talks about the Peacekeepers’ brutality shows the reader that the fictional world of *The Hunger Games* treats characters of color the same way that people of color are treated in the real world.

Katniss writes that part of her motivation for teaming up with Rue during the Games, besides her usefulness, is her resemblance to her sister, Prim. Of Rue, Katniss says that “she’s a survivor, and I trust her, and why not admit it? She reminds me of Prim” (201). Katniss’s will to protect Rue, founded in her likeness to a white child, shows that she needs to find *reasons* to protect Rue, rather than just protecting her because she is a child, a person who is a victim of an unjust system and is powerless to rebel against it. This shows that Katniss’s movement towards justice is dependent on empathy for Rue insofar as Rue resembles part of her own life.

The way Rue and Thresh are described in relation to Katniss, and the way that they make her effectively white, characterizes her as a white savior. It also places Rue and Thresh in a circumstance where they, as the only characters of color, have to die so that the white heroine can achieve her goals. Rue, as a companion to Katniss during the Games, helps her until she is no longer essentially needed, teaching Katniss about some of the wild plants and animals that can help her survive, as well as assisting Katniss in destroying the Career tribute’s food stash. Once she is no longer useful to Katniss, she is killed, and Thresh becomes the character of color who assists Katniss in her journey to winning the Games. In an encounter with Thresh, he kills the tribute who tries to kill Katniss, and then tells her that he will spare her “for the little girl” so that

there is “no more owed” between them (288). While this moment shows Thresh challenging the Capitol and showing compassion to another tribute, he dies shortly after; effectively, the novel shows that he was punished for this compassion while Katniss is rewarded with victory (Green-Barteet 9). The message that these deaths carry to the child reader is that characters of color, and black characters specifically, only exist in novels to aid the white protagonist. Because characters are the author’s projection of real people, the reader internalizes the concept of people of color existing to serve the white population.

Additionally, the way Thresh is described heavily invokes racial stereotypes about black men; Katniss emphasizes his size and towering presence, as well as comparing him to an animal, not unlike Wonka’s dehumanization of the Oompa-Loompas in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. His speech patterns are markedly different from that of the rest of the tributes; he speaks in short, broken sentences that not even Rue, coming from the same district, speaks in. When compared to the other tributes who are equally physically imposing, like Cato, the reader notices that Cato speaks in standard English, and “he is intelligent enough to carry on a conversation” with Katniss (Green-Barteet 8). Before killing Clove, the female tribute from District 2, Thresh says, “You said her name. I heard you. You kill her?” Another thought brings a fresh wave of rage to his features. “You cut her up like you were going to cut up this girl here?” (287) This bit of speech is the most Thresh speaks at one time during the entirety of the novel, giving the reader the most insight into his character via direct access to his thoughts. During this bit of dialogue, the reader also has access to Katniss’ perception of Thresh, noting the emotion, the “fresh wave of rage” in his expression that is absent in his speech. The way Katniss perceives Thresh, as the caricature of an angry black man, is in direct contrast to the way

she perceives Cato. Thresh, about to kill Clove, is angry and violent, while Cato, about to kill Peeta, is described as laughing and with “his lips ... set in a triumphant smile” (336). Describing Cato, a strong white boy, as “triumphant” while Thresh is described as being enraged, shows the reader the white protagonist’s perceived difference between white and black anger. The text constructs the reader in such a way that it “enculturates them into the dominant discourses of capitalism— class division, paternalism, racism”—in this case, because the child reader is assumed by the text to heavily identify with Katniss at this late stage in the novel, the reader adopts or internalizes the racist way in which she understands emotions coming from different people (Sarland 52). Cato and Thresh are described as being equally strong and physically domineering in relation to other tributes. Thresh’s speech patterns other him from Cato and the rest of the Career tributes, and Green-Barteet points out that “Thresh’s speech renders him more savage as it implies he is all brute strength” (8). He is not developed as a character the way Cato is, characterized only by his physical appearance, strength, and refusal to be a “docile” character in the Games (9). The way Thresh is described is presumably meant to showcase his refusal to be docile, to show him as an opposition to the Capitol, someone who refuses to play along with the Games. He is shown to not agree with the flashy nature of the Games, the theater of death, and the spectacle of things like the interviews and costumes. His rejection of the Games is not as bold as Katniss’s, perhaps because she is cast as the white savior, but also because he is characterized as a solitary, intimidating, and brutally violent person. The child reader, seeing the only black tribute characterized in this way, while the white characters have complex characterizations and backstories, can see this translated to the racist way black men are represented in other media.

Consumerism in Children's and Young Adult Literature

Capitalism encourages the endless consumption of goods, while also promoting self-sacrifice in the way that individuals consume those goods. In her article, "The Micro-Ethics of Everyday Life: Ethics, Ideology and Anticonsumerism," Stacy Thompson writes about the relationship between capitalism and consumers as individuals. She discusses the ways in which the problems inherent in capitalism are pushed off onto the consumer, leaving the individual to bear the ethical responsibility of these problems rather than addressing them on a societal level. She uses shopping at Target as an example, because they state that they donate a certain percentage of their profits to charity to help local communities. Instead of asking why the company does not do more, the consumer is led to think "*I am already doing precisely what I need to do to address the problem: I should keep buying to keep saving my community*" (902). This highlights the problems of "ethical consumption", or the idea that individuals have a responsibility to use or not use certain goods in order to make a difference in global issues. The concept of ethical consumption "encourages [someone] to take action *but only as a consumer*" (901). The individual then fails to address the underlying issues of capitalism that rest within corporations and the elite, because they feel like by feeding the corporations more money, those corporations will in turn funnel the money and resources efficiently into the hands of those who need it, even though corporate greed is responsible for societal problems like poverty and climate change. As Thompson puts it, "we charitably 'donate' a little bit of our own wages... but our 'gifts' stand merely as an easily comprehensible and visible mode of responding to the individual but not the social ills of globalized capitalism" (913). In other words, an individual feels guilt about the inequalities of capitalism, and takes it upon themselves to make a difference in this

system by consuming “ethically”; thus, the “donation” of wages is not a donation at all, because the corporation through which the consumer makes their purchase decides where that money goes. Ethical consumption also extends to *not* consuming in a way that benefits someone other than the individual. Thompson gives the example of hotels that encourage guests to reuse towels in order to “save water” and “help the planet”. As she points out through statistics, an individual’s water consumption “is utterly inconsequential in terms of affecting the planet’s water supply” (907). The hotels promote the reuse of towels in order to save *money* on water, detergent, and labor. While they guilt the individual consumer into thinking they are making a difference, the only entity that benefits from the self-denial of a fresh towel are the corporate managers.

Similar to how corporations encourage individual sacrifice through consumption of specific products, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* presents conflicting values of both consumption and self-denial to the child reader. In the *dramatis personae*, Augustus Gloop is initially summarized as “A greedy boy” (n.p.). Given that this one word descriptor of greed is all we know about Augustus as the child’s first introduction to him, the reader is pressured into forming an unfavorable opinion of him. Thus, the child is prevented from imagining Augustus as a person, instead, seeing him as a one-dimensional character trait. In addition, his last name indicates that he is a symbol, i.e. it is not a real last name, so the reader knows not to see him as a representation of a real child. By extension, his first name, meaning “great” or “magnificent”, can be seen as mocking his weight even when other characters are not directly doing so. From the *dramatis personae*, the reader would assume that greedy is all Augustus will be throughout the book. This proves to be incorrect, as the adult characters call him greedy and other names

simply because of his weight, and not his actions. Charlie's Grandma Georgina describes him as "a repulsive boy" (23) after the narrator describes him as being "a nine-year-old boy who was so enormously fat he looked as though he had been blown up with a powerful pump... and his face was like a monstrous ball of dough with two small greedy curranty eyes peering out upon the world" (21). The *dramatis personae* describes Augustus the way the adult characters in the book will go on to describe Augustus, while the other children do not comment on Augustus or his personality at all.

Thus, the narrator is revealed to be in ideological agreement with the adults in the novel. As mentioned in the introduction, Charles Sarland writes that all literature is ideological because of values that societies and cultures possess. Using Sarland's idea of literature being ideological, the beliefs presented about Augustus and the other children in the *dramatis personae*, which are reflected throughout the novel, come from a societal rejection of certain traits, and in Augustus' case, fatphobia, specifically the association of fatness with negative traits like greed and overconsumption. The text states that Augustus eats "so many" (22) Wonka chocolate bars each day, yet he is ridiculed not only by Wonka but the other characters for buying into a consumerist culture that Wonka helps to perpetuate. Augustus and the other children represent greed in different ways, and their greed is fueled by their upper-class status and the structures that allowed their families to acquire so much wealth. They see Wonka, a bourgeois factory owner, as one of them, and expect their greedy behavior to go unpunished or to be spoiled by Wonka the way they have been spoiled by their equally bourgeois parents. However, Wonka demonizes the children for their greed despite the fact that his factory is one of the structures that creates greed. It is known that Wonka's factory is "the largest and most famous in the whole world" (7), and

Charlie's family praises Wonka as "the most *amazing*, the most *fantastic*, the most *extraordinary* chocolate maker the world has ever seen" (8). Knowing that Wonka's factory is a global chocolate empire, one can see that his influence bolsters consumerist culture and drives the greedy behaviors exhibited by the children. The novel shows that capitalism demands *both* consumption and self-denial – consumption because it is needed for the dissemination of goods and capital, and self-denial because capitalism is a system based on the exploitation of those without power. Charlie's consumption (the buying of Wonka's chocolate) and his self-denial (going without food, piecemealing his birthday chocolate each year) mirror the conflicting demands of capitalism. Because capitalism requires a permanent underclass, the self-denial that Charlie demonstrates is representative of the expectation that those in that underclass will keep themselves in their disadvantaged positions in the system.

The four 'bad' children all share one trait: greed, despite only Augustus being explicitly described this way. Violet aggressively chewing gum; Mike demanding to watch TV at all hours and getting his way; and Veruca Salt, who is shown to be far greedier and demanding than the others, for example:

"Daddy!" shouted Veruca Salt (the girl who got everything she wanted). "Daddy! I want an Oompa-Loompa! I want you to get me an Oompa-Loompa! I want an Oompa- Loompa right away! I want to take it home with me! Go on, Daddy! Get me an Oompa-Loompa!" (71)

In this scene, or the scene in which Veruca and her parents are brought to terms with her spoiled nature after the squirrels deem her a "bad nut" (112), the text shows that greed is Veruca and the other children's true bad trait, not just Augustus'. Nodelman, as a critic of children's literature,

says that his work is driven by looking at “how North American and British adults work to shape children in ways that make them happy consumers by means of the texts produced for them” (270). This concept is evident in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Charlie is given a fortune for not being greedy, and also for not doing anything else. The text pushes the capitalist concept that complacency with one’s place in the system brings wealth. In other words, the shift from poverty to wealth or relative wealth does not come from destroying the system, but by working tirelessly within that system. Charlie does not break Wonka’s rules the way the four other children do, and is rewarded just for that.

“You mean you’re the *only* one left?” Mr Wonka said, pretending to be surprised.

“Why, yes,” whispered Charlie. “Yes.”

Mr Wonka suddenly exploded with excitement. “But my *dear boy*,” he cried out, “*that means you’ve won!*” (142)

Here, Wonka demonstrates that because Charlie is simply the last one standing, he wins by default. He wins by not consuming the way the other children do, yet what he wins is a global chocolate empire that is built on exploiting the consumption of others. The text does not acknowledge the fact that Charlie *could have* broken the rules before the other children, and that one of them would have won in that instance. The children are all faced with their weaknesses, and while Charlie’s is never truly identified, the reader can infer that had he encountered it, he may have fallen onto the wrong side of the good child/bad child dichotomy set up by the text, and failed Wonka’s test. By doing this, the text suggests that Charlie *does not have* a weakness, because he is an antithesis to the greed shown in the other children. This then positions Charlie as more powerful than the other children, as well as setting him up for success, because he does

not fall victim to the greed that Wonka installed into the bourgeois children. Charlie does not possess greed in the same way the other children do because he grew up poor, and thus the text romanticizes poverty in the sense that it can make someone a better person. This diverts greed from the average person, leading them to not strive for better conditions for themselves and others, while the wealthiest people continue to hoard resources and money, leaving no room for social mobility in the traditional sense.

The Hunger Games, while showcasing themes of consumption of food and wealth similar to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, also presents the reader with the concept of the consumption of the self. When Katniss is selected, against her will, for the Games, she comes to learn through her training that she must construct a persona for the audience, the entirety of Panem—but especially the wealthy Capitol residents—to relate to and for the viewers to consume. This is a survival tactic; her mentor, Haymitch, insists that her outward persona is what will keep her alive in the arena, if she can be likeable enough for people in the Capitol to want to sponsor her. Katniss constructs her personality to be presented by the Gamemakers and producers, and consumed by the citizens of Panem. As the Games are required viewing for all citizens, every person not in the arena will be focusing on the tributes who live through each day, consuming their identity as they perceive it. Katniss gives up her right to an authentic personality and sense of self, as she must hide who she really is from the people of Panem but also the other tributes in the arena, to deceive and outlive them. Layfield writes that “Katniss imagines how Panem viewers watch her, and she behaves accordingly” (“Identity Construction”). Katniss actively tailors her behavior to the way she believes she is being perceived, and does so in order to win the sympathy of Capitol residents, who can send her gifts that aid her survival. Not only is

Katniss constructing a new persona for herself, she is creating a brand, the image of the “girl who was on fire” (57). By doing this, she is effectively monetizing her image, selling the idea of herself in order to get sponsors and captivate an audience. This emulates the modern trend of social media influencers, who trade their authentic personality for advertisement deals, money and internet fame, a similarity that is certainly not lost on the modern young adult reader. This economy revolving around the commodification of the self is in stark contrast to the industrial/factory-based economy presented to the reader in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, ultimately giving rise to vastly different messages about consumption and ways of interacting with others and one’s own identity. Additionally, Katniss’s constructed identity revolves around fire, a reaction that is known for its consumption and destruction of things in its path. This consumption imagery represents the way the Capitol residents crush Katniss’s real life and personality and take the idea of her for themselves. Notably, when Katniss and Peeta get angry with Haymitch their first meeting with him, Haymitch punches Peeta, and tells him to not cover up the bruise, saying “The audience will think you’ve mixed it up with another tribute before you’ve even made it into the arena” (57), and emphasizing that though this is against the rules, the fact that Peeta wasn’t caught will make him seem even stronger. Perception by others is the driving force behind all action in *The Hunger Games*, and especially during the activities that pertain to the Games themselves, like the pre and post-Games interviews, interactions with Capitol people and other tributes, and of course, every second spent in the arena. Haymitch directly addresses Katniss’s concerns about the way Peeta changed the audience’s concept of her when he says that “It’s all a big show. It’s all how you’re perceived” (135). This moment changes Katniss’s pattern of thinking, and she finally realizes that Haymitch is right, that the

Games can be manipulated, and that she is capable of that manipulation. It is also the beginning of a loss of her identity, as she starts to lose the concept of who she was in District 12, before the Games began and her every move was watched.

Katniss has very little agency over the course of the novel, and that agency is further limited by the constraints of the arena. As she is always thinking about the implications of her behavior, she acts in very particular ways that do not always reflect her authentic self. She is shown to be an impulsive person who is aware of her temper and is able to restrain it out of fear. Her few authentic moments in the arena center around her relationship with Peeta - when she realizes that her and Peeta have a chance to come out of the arena together, alive, she calls out his name “before [she] can stop [herself]” (244). Her desperation is genuine, but she quickly suppresses the urge to call out to him again out of fear—fear of being caught by another tribute, and fear of being vulnerable to the audience of Panem. She does find him, and when she comes to understand that what the Capitol residents want to see is her romance with Peeta, the two of them “perform their love story for the cameras as a direct communication with Panem viewers” (“Identity Construction”). The authenticity is gone, and what remains is the “star-crossed lovers” image, a narrative for the Capitol residents to latch onto. Ultimately, the Games and perception by viewers impacts Katniss’ sense of self, with Layfield writing that “the camera itself mediates her identity and her survival.” She no longer is able to distinguish between her real self and the self that she becomes during the Games, telling the reader after she and Peeta have won that she cannot “separate out [her] feelings about Peeta,” and that she cannot tell the difference between “what [she] did as part of the Games. As opposed to what [she] did out of anger at the Capitol. Or because of how it would be viewed back in District 12. Or simply because it was the only

decent thing to do. Or what [she] did because [she] cared about him” (358-9). Katniss’s primary motive during the novel is to win the Games, and in order to do so she must perform a version of herself that is digestible to the wealthy Capitol residents. As a result, she does not know the motives for her actions, because her authentic self has been compromised from the moment she volunteered as tribute. In fact, her authentic self has *always* been compromised, because she is always being watched under the fascist Capitol government. Additionally, the warped sense of identity Katniss has due to perception under the rule of the Games gives a warning to the reader that perception is a factor in identity, with Layfield writing that “*The Hunger Games* also asks its adolescent audience to think critically about the way television influences their own identity construction process.” The need to present oneself in a consumerist culture absolutely impacts one’s identity — this culture demands that a person be readily available for consumption, and thus a person’s identity must be tailored to that consumption. The influence on a person comes not only from television, like in *The Hunger Games*, but from social media and other media such as books and movies. A reader of *The Hunger Games* knows that Katniss’s identity construction as a teenager undergoing the kind of scrutiny the Games provide is not dissimilar to the identity construction in their own lives.

The reality TV aspect of the Games also serves to highlight the bigger exploitative nature of the Capitol on the districts of Panem. The consumption of the lives and narratives of the tributes parallels the way the Capitol impoverishes and exploits the districts for their personal benefit. The greed of the wealthy portrayed in the novel does not stop at capitalizing on the people of the districts in order to live lives with rich food and luxury items, but extends to consuming and exploiting the personas and inner lives of 24 district children every year. When

trying to figure out how to prepare Katniss to be subjected to the public eye and their judgement, Haymitch says ““Are you going to be charming? Aloof? Fierce? So far, you’re shining like a star. People are intrigued, but no one knows who you are. The impression you make tomorrow will decide exactly what I can get you in terms of sponsors”” (116). He asks Katniss to construct a new identity, asking her to be authentic, but in a distinct manner that will tell the Capitol audience what to expect from her. Because Katniss is impulsive, she rejects this narrow persona creation and refuses to package herself into a neat box labeled with a personality trait for consumption by the Capitol. Haymitch emphasizes the desire of the Capitol residents to know details about Katniss’ personality, home life, the thing she cares about. Katniss, who can’t even bring herself to be vulnerable with Haymitch at first, lashes out at him for the greed of the Capitol, saying ““They’re already taking my future! They can’t have the things that mattered to me in the past!”” (117). She refuses to give herself up to the consumers of the Capitol any more than is absolutely necessary for survival. The novel mocks the idea of reality television by dramatizing the image of the consumer and highlighting the effects of this kind of TV on the reality star.

Conclusions

Children's literature, while almost impossible to piece together as a cohesive category, undeniably exists as an entity that has an abundance of influence on the children who consume it. Domination of the industry by adults inevitably paves the way for ideological control over children via literature. This control is wholly exemplified in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, with a chocolate tycoon as a representative for adult ideology and influence. Because there is more than a passive influence on children's literature by adults, children are taught by these texts to value the ideals of the ruling class, who have access to the means of production in this industry. Realistic class systems are present in children's and young adult literature such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Hunger Games*, in order to spread ideology that can be easily interpreted, internalized, and adapted to the real world by the child reader. Even in texts that present the reader with whimsical phenomena, there are aspects that are undeniably tied to reality that are understood by the reader to be representative of that reality.

Since it is wholly unlikely that adults will ever relinquish control over the children's literature industry, allowing children to write and publish their own stories, it is important that children's literature intentionally conveys certain messages. A better children's literature admits the complexity of childhood (and personhood), subverts dehumanizing ideologies, and promotes communitarian values over individualism. As I mentioned in the introduction, children's texts often promote communitarian values like sharing, but to expand on this concept, I believe children's texts should go a step further, upholding values of mutual aid and solidarity with those who are in a more vulnerable position than oneself.

Of course, by talking about children's literature in a critical way, there is a tendency to generalize child readers while also criticizing the generalization of child readers performed by children's texts. As an adult discussing children's literature, it is important to highlight the intricacy of childhood, and I have made a conscious effort to keep this in mind and in my writing. It is critical to not describe children as not understanding what happens to and around them, or to say that they are voiceless, because by doing so, we inadvertently silence them. By giving my opinion on what children's literature should be, I am participating in this silencing; however, children's literature will *always* carry the values of those who write it, and I believe it is best that they carry values that encourage kindness and humanity.

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