



Children's Rights in Roald Dahl's Selected Young People's Fiction

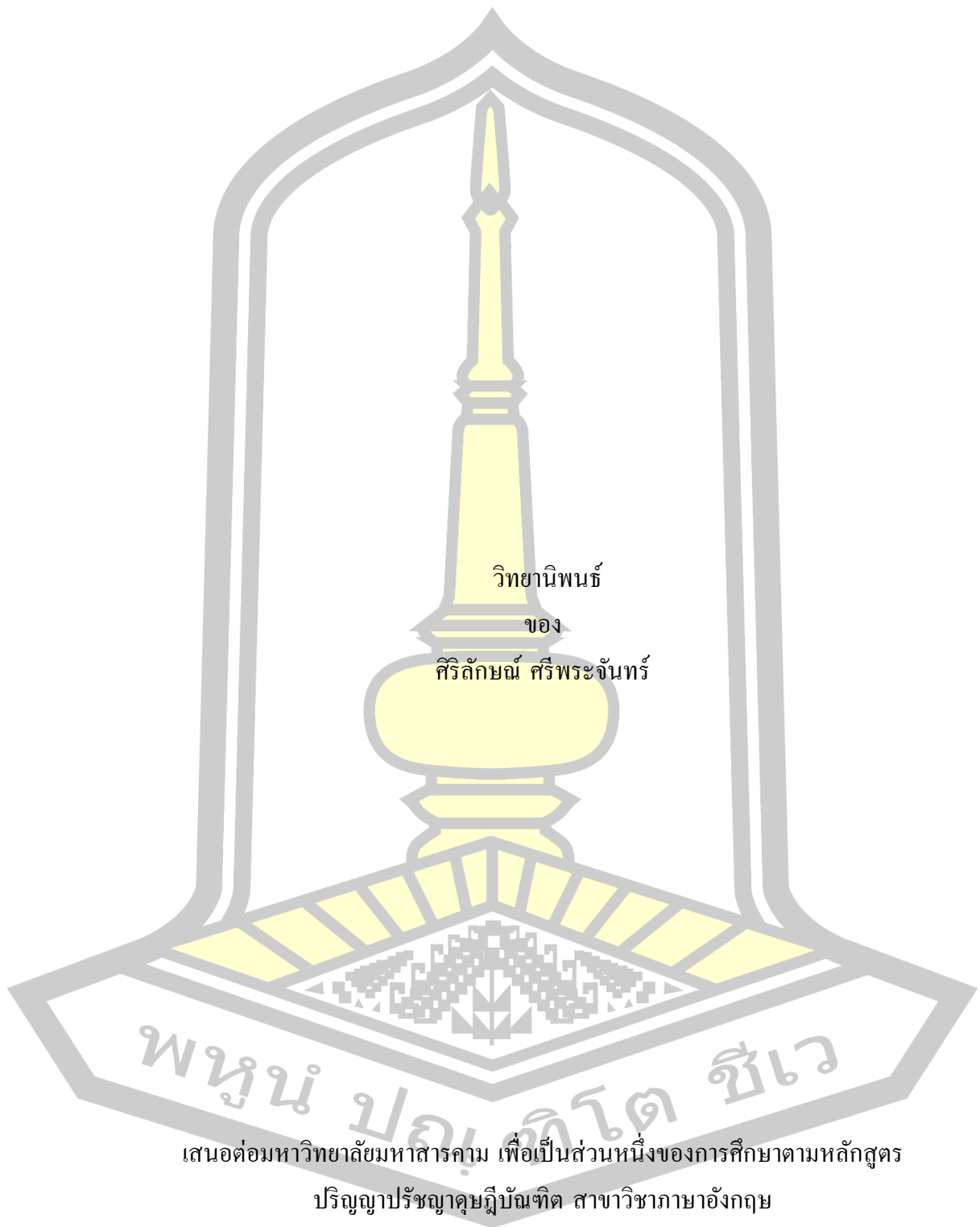
Sirilak Sriphachan

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Doctor of Philosophy Program in English

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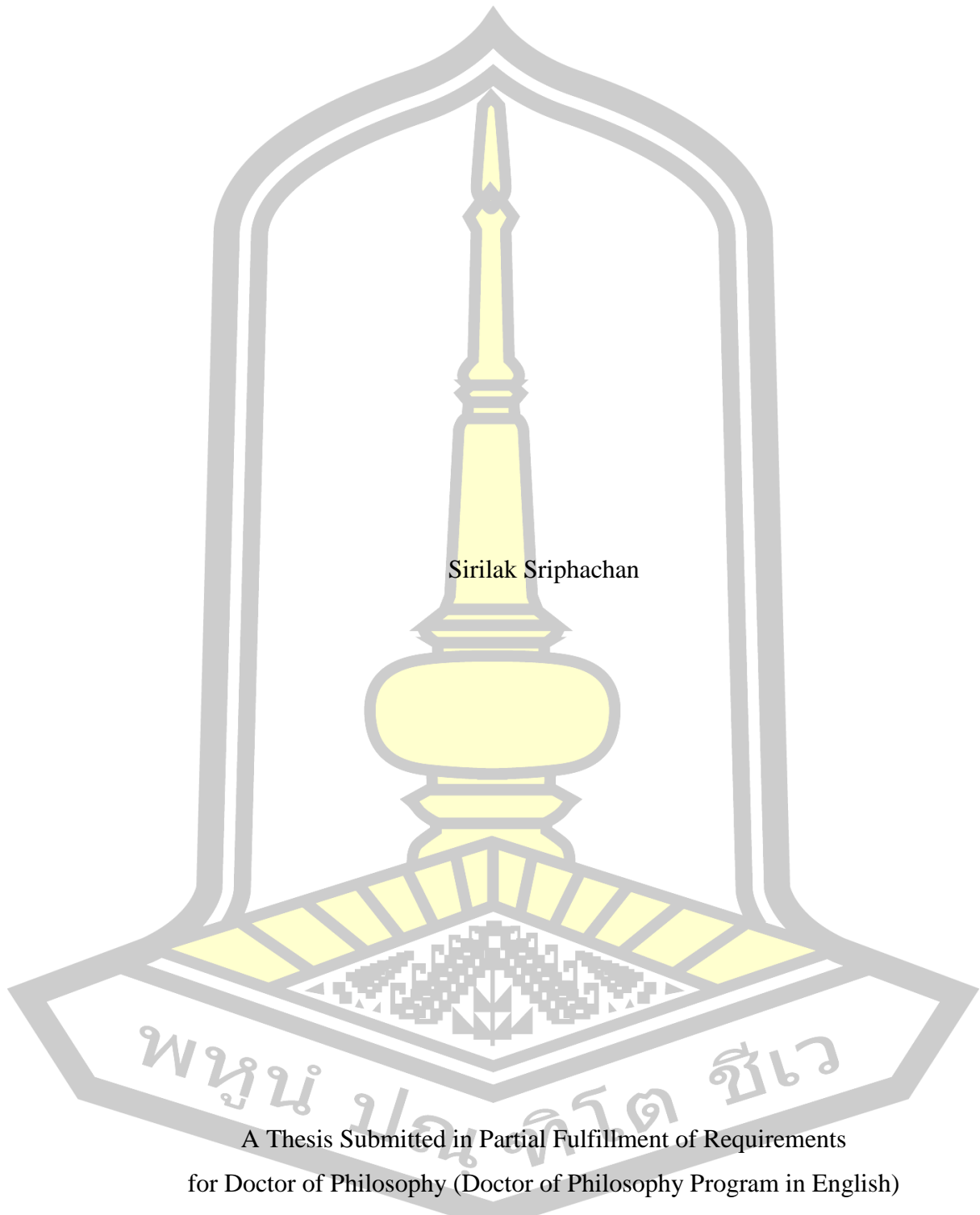
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The examining committee has unanimously approved this Thesis, submitted by Miss Sirilak Sriphachan , as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Doctor of Philosophy Program in English at Mahasarakham University

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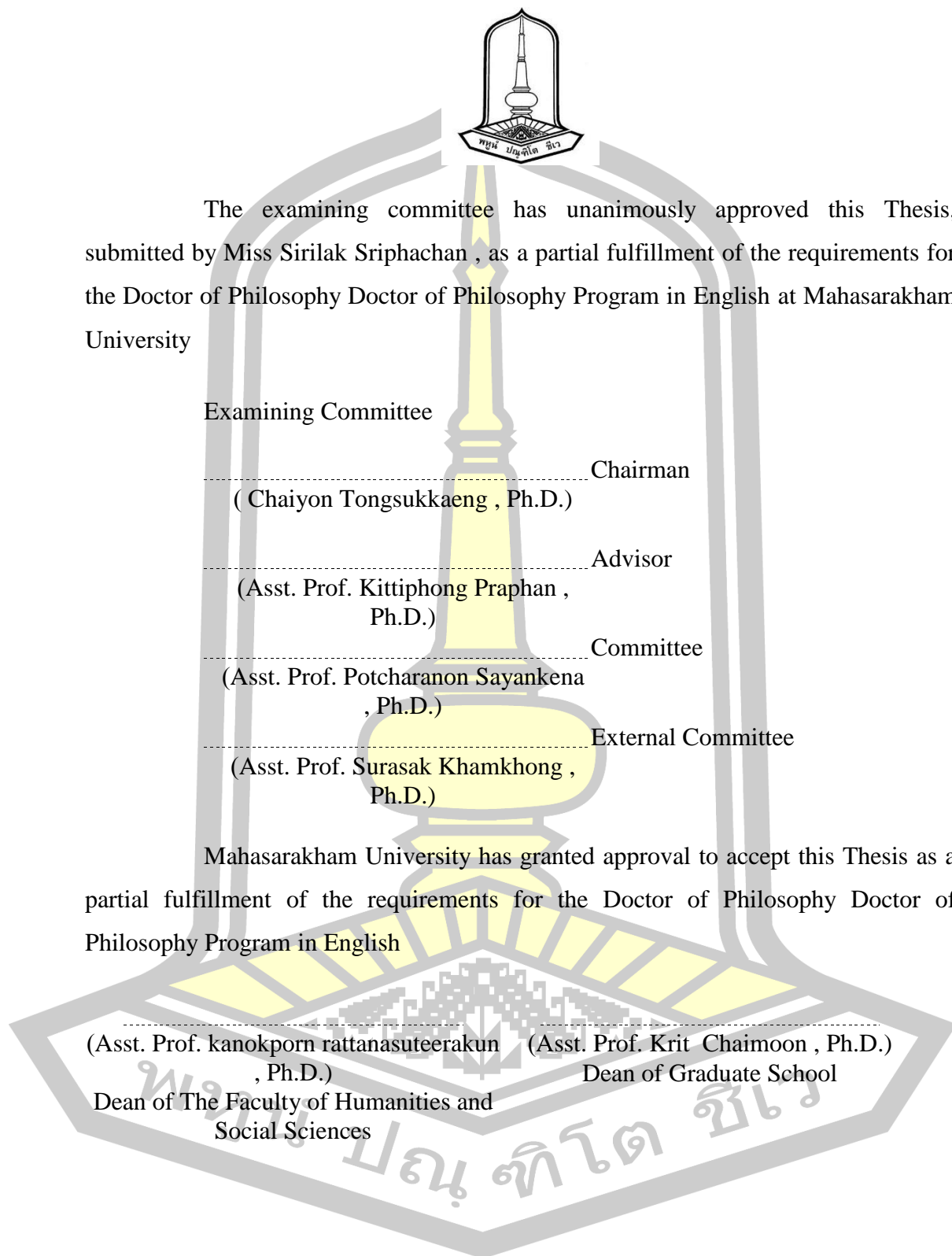
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Roald Dahl's ideas about the rights of the children which are assumed to be blended in ten selected Dahlian stories for the children: *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *The Magic Finger* (1966), *The Enormous Crocodile* (1978), *The Twits* (1980), *George's Marvelous Medicine* (1981), *The BFG* (1982), *The Witches* (1983), *Matilda* (1988), and *The Minpins* (1991). Tracing the author's personal life, it was found that Roald Dahl was mistreated by his school masters and older school boys when attending British boarding schools. In addition, the Dahlian children's books were written in the second half of the twentieth century. The campaigns for equality and liberty from the marginalized groups such as black people, gays and lesbians, women, and children were vigorously launched during this period. For these reasons, the research topic has been established on the ground that Dahl's writings for the young people were inspired by both the biographical legacy and sociopolitical events.

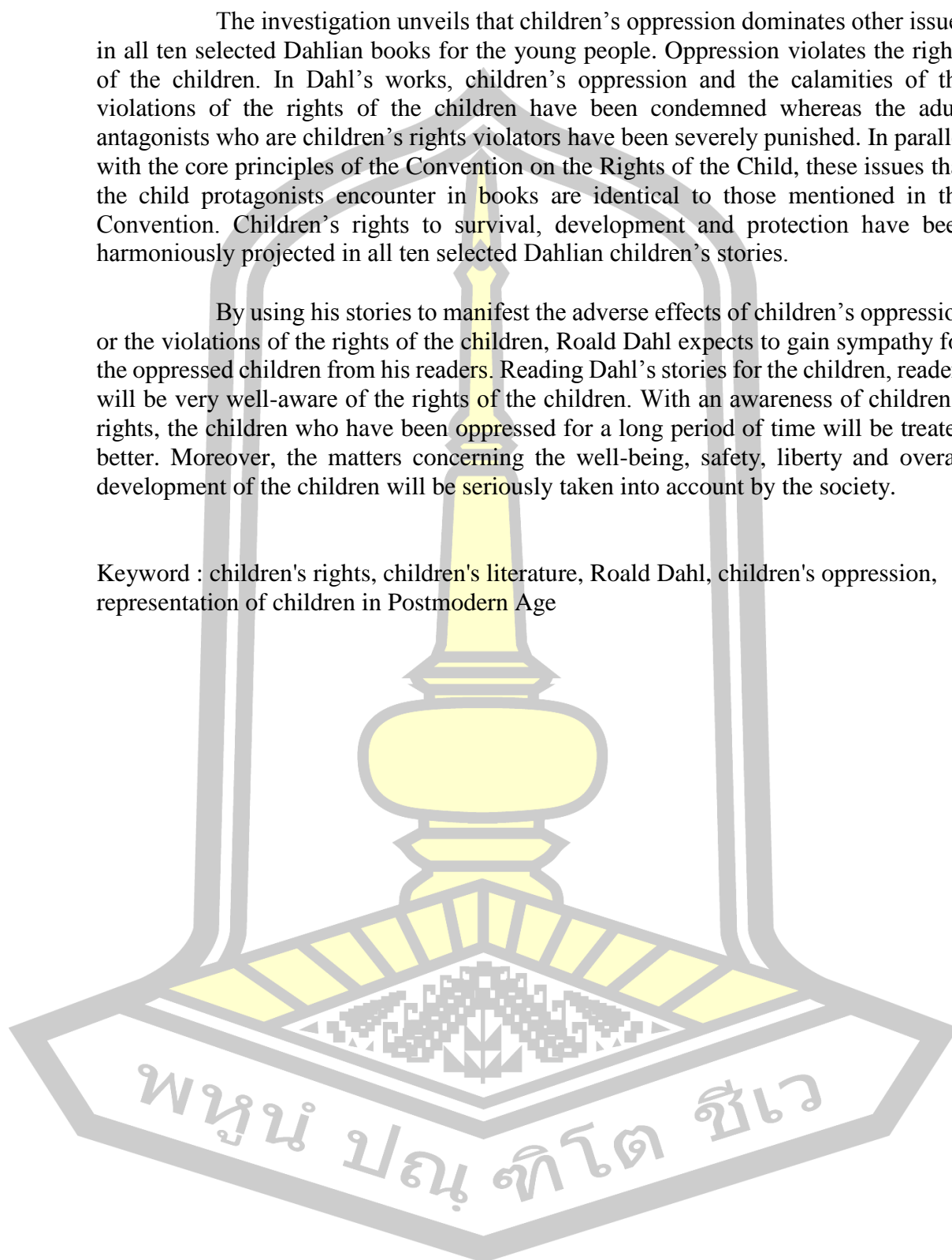
Psychologically, the oppressed children whose rights are violated must adjust and respond appropriately in order to survive and live on. Besides, they have to employ dreams or fantasy to help them to get away from miseries caused by oppression or the violations of their rights. That's why Roald Dahl whose rights used to be violated had to adjust himself by dreaming of the world which rights, equality, freedom and privileges are endowed to the children. In other words, we can say that the children are equal to or better than the adults in Roald Dahl's world. At the same time, the selected Dahlian children's stories can be deemed the writer's opposition against the violations of the rights of the children while functioning as a healing potion to cure the writer himself from his childhood pain. Thus, it is discernible that the selected Dahlian young people's books have been used by their writer to voice for the rights of the children.

The chosen Dahlian stories have been created in the second half of the twentieth century, from 1964 to 1991. The period is called postmodernism. Therefore, the philosophical ideas of Postmodernism impact on these Dahlian books. Postmodern concepts have been created as the reactions against pre-modernism and modernism. Based on these logics, many literary aspects in the Dahlian children's books have been created to be different from those found in the traditional children's stories, particularly, the child protagonists and the social institutions such as school and family.

The investigation unveils that children's oppression dominates other issues in all ten selected Dahlian books for the young people. Oppression violates the rights of the children. In Dahl's works, children's oppression and the calamities of the violations of the rights of the children have been condemned whereas the adult antagonists who are children's rights violators have been severely punished. In parallel with the core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, these issues that the child protagonists encounter in books are identical to those mentioned in the Convention. Children's rights to survival, development and protection have been harmoniously projected in all ten selected Dahlian children's stories.

By using his stories to manifest the adverse effects of children's oppression or the violations of the rights of the children, Roald Dahl expects to gain sympathy for the oppressed children from his readers. Reading Dahl's stories for the children, readers will be very well-aware of the rights of the children. With an awareness of children's rights, the children who have been oppressed for a long period of time will be treated better. Moreover, the matters concerning the well-being, safety, liberty and overall development of the children will be seriously taken into account by the society.

Keyword : children's rights, children's literature, Roald Dahl, children's oppression, representation of children in Postmodern Age



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Carrying out this research writing disrupted me from fully functioning my teaching and non-teaching duties at Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University from time to time. The generous, sympathetic and perceptive comprehension and attitude from the administrators, faculty and staff of Sakon Nakhon Rajbhat University, especially those who run or work for the Institute of Languages, Arts, and Cultures and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, allowed me to perform the investigation to the end of the task. I would also like to express my profound appreciation to all of them.

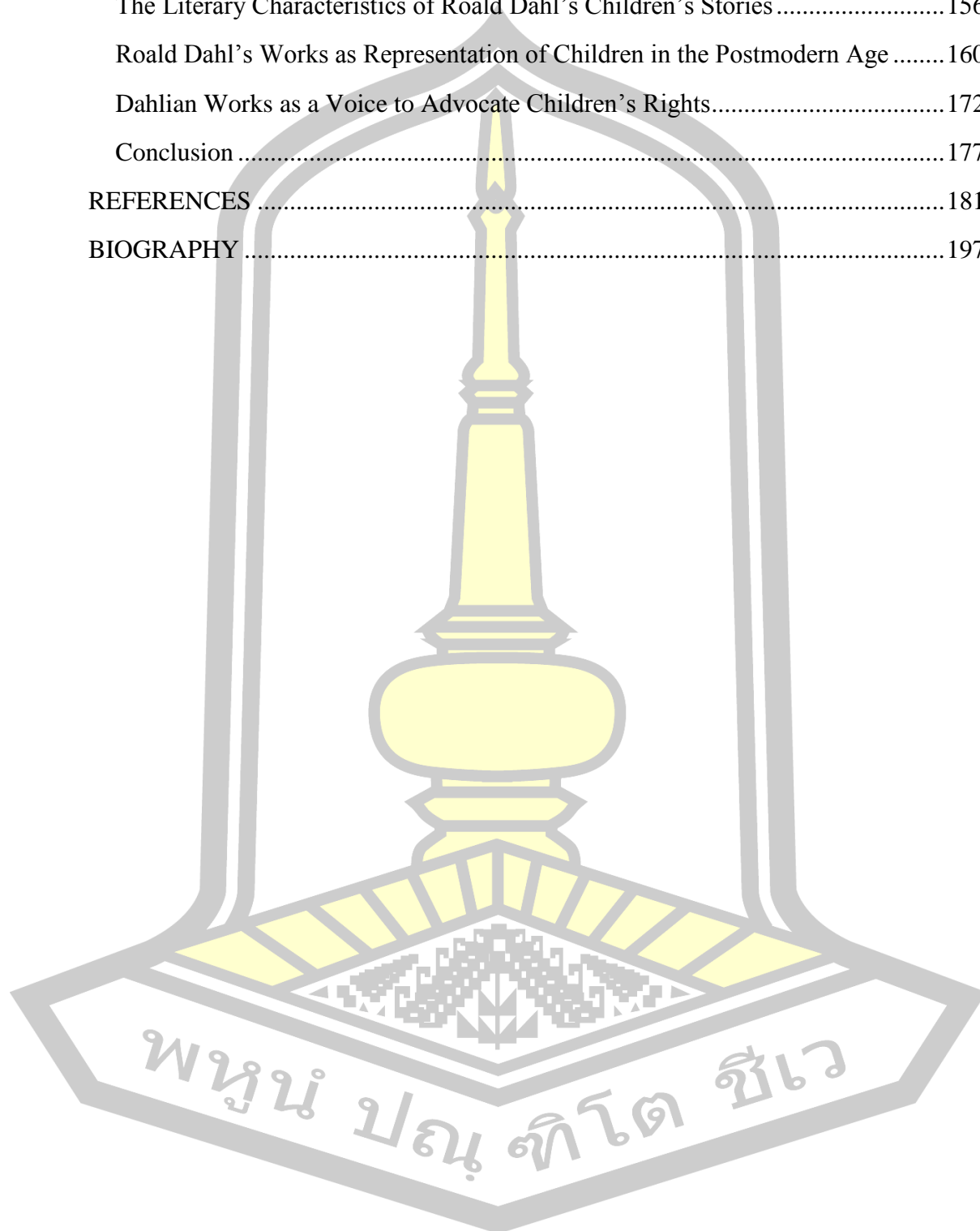
Last which does not mean the least, I would like to acknowledge with gratefulness, to the support and love from my father, late mother, sisters and brothers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is divided into five chapters aiming at exploring Roald Dahl's ideas about the rights of the children. Chapter one, "Introduction," deals with general information of the dissertation. The background of the dissertation mentions about the benefits and significance of literary writings for the children. The next section elaborates on the background information concerning children's literature history and development so as to lay some groundwork for the readers. Major schools of literary criticism are also provided under the topic of theory on children's literature. The theory of children's rights broadly supplies the readers with the notions regarding the rights of the children: background, definitions, categorizations of children's rights, as well as philosophical ideas underpinning children's rights theory. Since the author's life and his works are always interconnected, a biographical note and studies on Roald Dahl's children's stories have been reviewed and they are attached to the end of the unit.

Background of the Dissertation

In spite of sounding simple, the term children's literature cannot be viewed simply as the texts created just for someone small, young and immature. Collectively, the genre is broad and varied both in forms and styles. The use and meaning of the books written for these little audiences are heavily debated and exhaustively discussed, providing generic statements about how readership of the stories intriguingly and complicatedly works for their readers (Curthew 11). Bruno Bettelheim, for instance, believes that children's literature contains the messages which can strongly impact on the unconscious mind of the children, shape their perception and guide their development (6). Supported by many research studies, children can be affected emotionally and intellectually by interacting with the images in the picture books and the environment. These effects will leave very crucial and

lasting impression in a child. With the ideologies embodied in the books which are read to or read by them, children will learn to form their behaviors, develop individual character traits including adopting appropriate ethical and aesthetic appreciation and social values (Reynolds 4-5; McCorquodale 6). Even the unborn can be influenced by the children's stories. When listening to the books their parents read to them, they react to these voices. Regularly reading stories to one's offspring, the bond between the children and their parents is built and higher chance of school success is likely to happen to students whose parents consistently read stories to their children. All aspects of the child development can be enhanced by reading or using children's books. To mention just some, the benefits of reading children's stories range from stretching the child's attention span, widening reader's interests in the new subjects and hobbies, obtaining new vocabulary, syntax, language basics, providing examples to cope with feelings and problems in lives, to stimulating the child's imagination (Anderson 19-20).

Regarding the connection between literary writings and human rights, the importance of children's literature as the source and vehicle for conveying the knowledge and comprehension of children's rights has just been acknowledged in the literary sphere and educational institutions only recently by the interdisciplinary theory (Todres & Higinbotham 38). According to historians, human rights turned to become the society's major concerns when literary reading increased in the eighteenth century. Since then the public started to empathize other human beings through their vast and abundant reading of novels (L. Hunt 55). While the philosophy of human rights was officially endorsed and practically formed as laws to protect a person's dignity, freedom and privileges by the philosophers like Thomas Jefferson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, or other lawyers of that times, Lynn Hunt contends in "*Inventing Human Rights: A History*" that literature, rather than laws, can appeal directly to fellow human beings and contribute more in enhancing the people's rights (56). In the same way, and even with more powerful force, children's stories are encoded with ethics which can be absorbed more efficiently by their readers during their most formative years. Many research studies reveal that a child who reads will be less violent, become more empathetic, having greater ability to detect derision and able to think creatively. Called by Peter Hunt in *An Introduction to Children's Literature*

(1994) as “one of the roots of Western culture” (1), children’s literature does function as the genesis of “social rituals, ideological creeds, and legal principles about justice, legal autonomy, punishment, and, of course, rights (Dickinson 1,6; Stephens 229-231). Although the definitions and rules to respect and abide to children’s rights are not explicitly listed or academically described like what have been done in the legal texts, the meanings of children’s rights can be created and conveyed through the characters’ actions, dialogues or various fictional elements of children’s literature.

Roald Dahl is the most interesting and thought-provoking case in terms of the creator of stories for the children. After ending his military service as a RAF pilot during World War II, he began his writing career with propagating war articles, and stories for adults when working at the British embassy in Washington. Although his first children’s novel, *The Gremlins* was the first fiction coming out to the market in 1943, it was the publication of *James and the Giant Peach* in 1961 that truly made him become recognized as one of Britain’s most famous children’s writer. (Maynard & McKnight 2; Tumer 4; Minneboo 3) Dahl usually writes for children from seven to nine (West 16) and his stories bring in something new for the field of children’s literature (Minneboo 7). The popularity of Dahl’s works with the young audiences is unquestionable since many of his children’s stories still belong to the best-sellers (Klugova 48). Of course, with such a huge success, there must have been considerable approvals and compliments from literary scholars and critics. In her “*Fiction for Children and Young People: The State of the Art*” (2009) Catriona Nicholson states that an essence of Dahl’s success results from great fusion of humor, subversion and violence in his children’s stories (55). Adventure, magic, fantasy, morality and reality are mixed together in his writings. His style of storytelling and language use is very unique. “He makes use of every possible word in the English vocabulary and when there is not a suitable word for something he wants to express, he invents a word,” writes Minneboo (7). However, a number of children’s literature’s reviewers, teachers, and librarians have objected to Dahl’s books for the children. An evaluation from Peter Hunt, for example, suggests that his books are energetic, vulgar, violent, and often blackly farcical. (20) Class conscious themes are accused to appear in *Fantastic Mr Fox* and *Danny the Champion of the World* while many readers regard

poaching in the second book as unacceptably illegal stealing (Renen 1-7). Even his most popular one *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is also criticized for containing racism with the portrayal of the Oompa-Loompas as dark-skinned pygmies in its first version (Howard 1). Part of the resistances is also derived from his negative social views (Klugova 48). According to Klugova, the harshest disapproval would be from Michael Landsberg who blames Dahl's children's works for containing not only racial discrimination but also sexism, sadism and false attitude. Landsberg reasons that well-written children's literature should be full with humour of the genuine, humane, affirmative kind. The "reek of dog excrement or red-hot sizzling hatred" found in Dahl's fiction seem to be destructive and unacceptable to be included in any writings for the young readers (90).

Like most of Roald Dahl's fans, the researcher has explored children's novels extensively and found that Dahl's stories for children are intriguing, distinctive and untypical. No wonder they gain both admiring and disapproving appraisals from readers and critics. Typically, the lead characters in Dahl's children stories are the orphans who lose one or both parents: James in *James and the Giant Peach*, Sophie in *The BFG* and the unnamed boy in *The Witches*. They have to deal with the oppressions caused by their senior women relatives in the house or the adult villains in school. Then, one good adult appears to help and they can victoriously fight back their adult enemies. After they can free themselves from these oppressors, the child protagonists will be rewarded with fun and exciting adventures (Hansson 3; Klugova 16; Hammill 52). At the peripheral level, Dahl's works for children seem not to offer anything rather than pleasure and reading stimulation; the author's determination has been confirmed in his interviews as previously discussed. Yet, beyond the literal meanings of his works, the researcher believes that Dahl's stories for children inadvertently provide something very meaningful and important to the freedom, privileges and living conditions of the young people. After investigating Dahl's stories for children in depth, the researcher discovers that significant messages regarding Dahl's ideas about the status of the children in our society are hidden in the books. When delving into the larger number of documents which elaborate the author's childhood, school life, reading passion, World War II's participation, his charity works and the sociopolitical situations encompassing Dahl's life, it is

assumable that Roald Dahl's young people's fiction carries the writer's ideas about the rights of children.

Dana L. Fox and Kathy G. Short have pointed out the significant role of children's literature in the lives of the children. In *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature* (2003), Fox and Short assert that children's literature functions efficiently to empower the lives of the children. Social justice, social reform and (multicultural) education can be administrated and promoted using the books written for the children. According to these educators, they believe that children's literature is necessary and very important with its "power to change the world" (19-20). Although Roald Dahl's social views are attacked and his children's stories have often been banned by some critics, looking at these works from my perspective I contend that the fight for the rights of the children and an advocacy to defend for their well-beings can be traced from many elements of the fiction and from the socio-political background of the stories. Reading Dahl's stories for the children, the children's world can be transformed. The meanings of children's rights in this dissertation, therefore, are established to extensively cover all kinds of protection and support which Roald Dahl's works for the children can help construct the young audiences to find their place and identity in the world community which is usually overpowered by the adults. The examination of the author's ideas about the rights of the children will start off with the social contexts of child oppressions and the oppressions of children prevalently portrayed in the ten selected works: *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *The Magic Finger* (1966), *The Enormous Crocodile* (1978), *The Twits* (1980), *George's Marvelous Medicine* (1981), *The BFG* (1982), *The Witches* (1983), *Matilda* (1988), and *The Minpins* (1991). Demonstrating afterwards is how Roald Dahl's concepts of the rights of the children have been formed. Both the incidences in Dahl's life and the ongoing socio-political events influencing the author to speak for the children in his writings will be critiqued to explain and substantiate the assumptions of the study—Dahl's selected children's stories incorporate the ideas of children's rights and these works voice for and represent the children.

The demonstration of sympathy and understanding to the parentless, belittled and unfairly punished children can always be witnessed in Roald Dahl's stories for children. As Yardley had analyzed, Dahl's caring condolence and compassion for this group of children must stem from the tragic circumstances he received at the early time of his own life. At the age of four, he had to handle with miserable family demises when his sister and father died. The severe school regulations and bullying brought him another horrific mental scar. In his first autobiography *Boy: Tales of Childhood* (first published in 1984) Dahl stated how depressing and painful it was when he and his friends were beaten by the sadistic teachers and school headmasters. Furthermore, all the young school boys including Dahl himself were fagged by older school boys. In this account of his own life, Dahl describes, "By now I am sure you will be wondering why I lay so much emphasis upon school beatings in these pages. The answer is that I cannot help it. All through my school life I was appalled by the fact that masters and senior boys were allowed literally to wound other boys, and sometimes quite severely. I couldn't get over it," (Dahl 144-145). Reading this description, even the tough and mature adults like us can feel that letting someone bigger or more powerful bully and exploit the others who are smaller and weaker is so wrong, unfair, and immoral. Dahl must have been deeply traumatized by this school cruelty. With such bitter memories, the adult oppressors and the authorities in his children's books are always depicted as extremely brutal and nasty. No doubt, building the hideous antagonists from the people who hurt you in the past can be helpful for recuperating from the haunted childhood agony. The inclusion of weirdness, horror, macabre, outré and unexpectation in his works are also considered as the author's sensitive responses to deal with the grief and losses he encountered in his family and in schools. (YardleyC01). These fiendish incidences make Dahl feel closely related to the orphaned and the unfortunate children. Therefore, an argument in the succeeding part of the dissertation will elaborate how Dahl's has exposed himself as the children's advocate in his children's literature. In his fiction, Roald Dahl can vent out his empathetic feelings for the parentless, the ill-treated and the deprived. As Donald Sturrock writes, "In many instances his books are a kind of imaginative survival manual for children about how to deal with adult world around them" (42). By creating this kind of young people's fiction which allows the majors

to be completely defeated by the minors, Roald Dahl can regain what he had lost during childhood. His books can help both the child readers and the author to get back the happiness and security which had been taken away by the unkind adults since the time they were too small to fight for themselves. Figuratively speaking, his works permit the public to hear the voice of the oppressed children.

Apparently, different forms of children's oppression are usually found in Roald Dahl's selected texts. Because oppression violates the rights of the children, to provide better understanding and to make this interdisciplinary research valid, the notion concerning children's rights history is presented in the following section of the dissertation. Both philosophical and scientific principles or core concepts underlain in the establishment of children's rights organizations, mainly from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are discussed to subsidize the researcher's belief that Dahl's primary texts are mingled with the author's defense and support for the young readers. An attempt in this unit is to reason why jeopardy, violence, dark humor, macabre, weirdness, bizarre or all charges and negativities frequently emerge in Dahl's children's works. Similar to Barbara Basbanes Richter who considers the dark and violent imagery in Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* as "life's truths" providing the perception of social structure and human relationships to the children (325), I deem the adversely somber and strange aspects in these selected texts as the author's reminder or shrewd advice given to his young readers to prepare themselves so that they will not be careless and weak but get ready to face the difficulty in their real life bravely and confidently. Argumentation presented here is to reveal how Dahl has bargained with his small audiences using his children's stories to empower them to step across their old world to the new world with confidence and strength. Not only Dahl's personal life but also the fictional elements of the selected stories will be employed to back up the contention. The dissertation will further interpret Dahl's ideas of the rights of the children by analyzing the child protagonists and the metaphors for the children in the chosen works. The main points to be debated in the last part are what kinds of values and character traits of the children have been intertwined in Dahl's selected texts. The results gained from the discussion will lead to the conclusion that Dahl's children's literature speaks for the children and it can be regarded as the representation of the children based on its

power to invent the modernized and capable children.

The thought of giving rights to the children had occurred just about a few centuries ago. Based on human history, the being of the children or their existence had never been discussed by the adults (Rai 1). Likewise, books written for them were never seriously taken into consideration in the history of literary mainstream because the children and children's literature had always been marginalized (Adámková 11; Todres & Higinbotham 5; Paul 181). Moreover, an exploration of the international academic databases has shown that very few of similar studies have been performed. As Anthony D Fredericks states in his *Social Studies Through Children's Literature: An Integrated Approach* that children's learning opportunities will be extended far beyond the pages of the texts when good children's literature is integrated fully into other curriculums. By connecting one subject to children's literature, children's attitudes and aptitudes will be enhanced – not just narrowly within the scope of that one particular text, but widely across the curriculums (4). Therefore, the dissertation is expected to create new multidisciplinary knowledge and make contributions to both literary education and the society. The researcher believes that reading this literary analysis, the teachers who employ English literature to teach children and young adults in Thailand can certainly gain some benefits. Besides getting the new perspective to look at Roald Dahl's stories, the teachers may help point out to his/her students both good and bad actions and behaviors of stereotype and non-stereotype characters which they should and should not imitate. In addition, this research project, like children's literature which is a rich resource, seeks to expand its importance and advantage to cover as many facets of the child development as it can. The study examines not only the authors' views and attitudes towards children's rights but it also explores other related literary reviews, child development theories, reports on children's rights and other relevant research studies. Hence, the discovery will reveal many informative, enlightening and beneficial concepts of these matters to readers. The knowledge and insights gained from the study are believed to widen their thoughts and understanding of their fellow human conducts, social structure and human relationship. Most importantly, the ultimate hope of the analysis is to promote awareness of children's rights. Reading this study, with similar impacts gained from reading children's books, is supposed to “act as catalysts, precipitating changes in

how children understand themselves and the world” (May 114 – 137). The ethical, political and legal ideologies inserted in the study will be decoded from the selected texts and discussion concerning these contents will stimulate readers’ compassion for the young people. Children, hopefully, will be treated with understanding and kindness. The violation to their rights is expected to decrease after all.

Children’s Literature Development

When asking people if they know *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty* and Aesop Fables, almost none will reply that they have no ideas what these names are about. People around the world have grown up with these fairytales, albeit mostly in their mother-tongues. Even at the time we were unborn or could not read, these stories were told or read to us by our parents. Today, perhaps, some very young children may not know these stories in the printed version, but it can be certain that many must have known them under the names of Disney classic film production. So “no” is not speculated to be the answer. Then, if the next question is, “Do you know what children’s literature is?” I doubt how many people can give an affirmative reply to the second question despite the fact that all the earlier mentioned stories are classified as children’s literature. Children’s literature is not used for only entertaining the children; some of its values and significance have been aforementioned. The peripheral recognition of children’s literature from the public seems to necessitate the promotion of studying this genre. As this analysis is focused on Dahl’s works for the children, a brief history and development of children’s literature is discussed in this section so as to provide fundamental knowledge of the investigation.

Prior to an invention of the printing press, children, sitting with the adults, listened to and enjoyed stories told by their elders. These tales encompassed the adventures or heroic deeds of older people. Talking animals, imaginary characters, magic or supernatural power were often included. Originally, the tales were not created for the children. The stories were orally passed on from generation to generation before they were collected for printing. Irish folk tales can be traced back as early as 400BCE, while the earliest Indian written folktales the *Panchatantra* were created around 200 AD. Later in 400 AD the first version of Aesop’s Fables

appeared. In the following era when written language and simple writing utensils and materials were invented, monks and educated men wrote “lesson books” to instruct the Anglo-Saxon children. An abbot of Malmesbury and a bishop of Sherborne, Aldhelm (640-709) employed his *De Septenario, de Metris, Enigmatibus, ac Pedum Regulis* to inculcate the meaning and use of number seven in the bible. Children were asked to solve Latin riddles and puzzles in the books.

During the Medieval Period, books on morals and etiquettes began to be seen in England by 1430. The publication of William Caxton’s *Boke of Curtayse* took place in 1477. The *Babiies Boke* with its subtitle *Manners and Meals in the Olden Times* contained behavioral rules for boys who would become the knights during the Age of Chivalry. Then, in the next century, primers or ABC books emerged. As these books were intended to be the first school children’s books, they contained alphabet and Christian principles. At the end of the century, *Hornbooks* were made and designed with convenient handles for children. They could be hung around children’s necks. The purpose of this creation was also to teach children to read alphabet, combinations of letters and prayers.

Printing became less expensive in the sixteenth century. Ballads of *Robin Hood* were printed only on one side of the single sheets of paper called broadsides. Charles Perrault’s *Comtes de Ma Mere L’ Oye* or *Tales of My Mother Goose* were published in 1697. Their translated versions were separately published and sold as chapbooks by itinerant peddlers in England. Both in England and America, books for children were influenced by Puritan ideas. The books emphasized the fear of God, religious instruction and preparation for death which children did not like. Children enjoyed reading adult books that entertained them such as John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1714), Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), Mallory’s *Death of King Arthur*, *Reynard the Fox*, and *Aesop’s Fable* (Parayno 15).

From 1683 to 1691, the *New England Primer* was produced for children of American colonies. It was 3 by 4 ½ inches with about 100 pages containing the alphabet, words, syllables for spelling lesson, the Lord’s Prayers, catechism, hymns and verse, rhymes for each letter and the alphabet. In 1658, the first illustrated school book, *Orbis Sensualum* or *Orbis Pictus* (The World in Pictures) appeared. It was

written in Latin and German by Johann Amos Comenius, Bishop and educator who believed in teaching by allowing children to see things. Charles Hooke translated it into English in 1664. Books in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continued stressing religion and morals because of the rise of Protestantism. *Divine and Moral Songs for Children* by Dr. Isaac Watts came out in 1715. Watts was considered by some writers as the starting point of the history of children's literature while "The Cradle Hymn" as the children's poem. Similar to the hornbook, was the battledore (1746 -1770). It was a 4 by 6 ½ three-leaved cardboard folded like a pocketbook providing alphabet and easy reading matter that made it popular among child readers until 1840 (Parayno 14-16).

The popularity of children's literature soared in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Books with illustrations became prevalent. In 1744 John Newbery published *A Little Pretty Pocket – Book*, and it was called the true first book invented for children's pleasure reading. Since paper and printing were cheap, the children's industry flourished during the 1800s. Being conceived as the first person who came up with the idea of producing books to entertain children, John Newberry was heralded the "father of children's literature" (Huck and Kuhn 21). Newberry also published a collection of nursery rhymes called *Mother Goose Melody*. In 1922, an award for distinguished children's book – The Newberry Award was named after this renowned publisher. Meanwhile Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778), a French scholar, introduced a new philosophy to educate children. His book *Emile* embodied the ideas of giving children freedom to develop their natural interests and learn from actual experience. He advocated that children be taught about the real things and the world in which they live. Another writer of this period was Thomas Day (1748 – 1789). He published *History of Sanford and Merton*, a story about a good little boy and his teacher. They both tried to reform a bad boy. The *Peter Parley* was informational about countries of the world, wonders of science, and historical figures.

Didactic children's literature in the previous era could not prevent its little audience to love fairy tales. Grimm's *Fairytales* was republished to revive the interest for the imaginative stories. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected the old German stories not for the entertainment of children but for recording them scientifically for posterity. The stories were translated into English in 1823 and were called *Grimm's*

Popular Stories. Two decades later, Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales* appeared in 1846. Among them were "Thumbelina", "The Emperor's New Clothes", and "The Nightingales". Andersen was regarded as the great master of the literary fairy tale (Parayno 89). The trend for writing children's books changed afterwards when laughter was considered advantageous for a child's mental and emotional development. To serve children's sense of humor, Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* was produced. Based on similar reason, Lewis Carroll an Oxford University's mathematics professor made up *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) to delight Alice Lidell-- a little girl he adored. Its sequel *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) followed afterwards (Parayno16-17). There were more talented writers who wrote entertaining books for children. Modern fantasy and important modern picture books originated with L. Frank Baum's *The Wonder Wizard of Oz* (1900) and Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901). Realistic children's literature began to be seen in the Victorian period (1830 – 1900). Books for girls and boys were separated. Stories for girls were rather domestic and celebrated family life like Louisa M. Alcott's *Little Women* (1868) and Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903). In contrast, stories for boys such as Mark Twain's *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* (1867), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1881), and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1900) encompassed an encouragement for adventures, excitement or masculine instinct and they were mostly enjoyed by boys. Some animal tales such as Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877) and Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894) were liked by both boys and girls. They shared the children's books market of the nineteenth century. This popularity was extended to the twentieth century. Children continued reading anthropomorphism stories such as the one earlier mentioned Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) including *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) by Kenneth Grahame's and *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White.

Children's literature in the twentieth century is diverse in both characters and authors. Instead of the earlier dominant white world ideology, more multicultural approach has been seen, and child heroes come from all colors. Some series books are produced and have been well-received by their audience such as Laura Ingalle Wilder's *Little House* series (1932), C.S. Lewis's collection *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950 – 1956). Without a doubt, the popularity of literary series has been maintained

until the twenty-first century from a tremendous success of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (Fass 184 – 185; Daniels 78).

As the idea of giving the rights to the children has been developed from the concepts of childhood, it is necessary that the information background and development of children's literature should also be viewed from the same perspective. In similar fashion, scholars in arts and humanities often base their way of seeing major changes in our world by dissecting human societies into three main stages: Premodern/Preindustrial Age, Modern/Industrial Age, and Postmodern/Anti-modern Age. The researcher, consequently, employs the same system to look at important movements in children's literature. To provide quick comprehension of this part of the dissertation, a brief explanation of the terms is given as follows.

Premodernism began from the beginning of the history to around 1650s or the Enlightenment Age (1687 – 1789). The epistemology of this age was very open to supernatural and religious beliefs such as human's knowing is a subset of God's knowing. Then people moved away from God and superstitions to science and technology and sought for intellectual potential and individual enjoyment in the Age of Modernity (Mid 1700s – the first half of the twentieth century). Major movements in the era included democracy, capitalism, industrialization, colonization (imperialism) and urbanization. Freedom and individualism were widely propagated. Postmodern Age began from the second half of the twentieth century to the present marking by the riots in Paris in 1968 when students called for radical changes in a strict, closed, elitist European university system. It was also dubbed as anti-modernity as postmodernists rejected and blamed modernity or industrialization for its societal injustice, environmental problems and moral decay. Undoubtedly, postmodernism does not believe in an absolute truth but pluralism. Rallying by the group of postmodernists are protecting the environment, liberal ethics, self-conceptualization, inclusiveness, freedom of religious faiths, globalization, for instance (Carson 11-17; Barrett 17-18).

The origination of the books for the children or children's literature and the ideas of giving them their rights are derived from how the adults in the society define the word children, how the children are perceived and what position the children have been placed in the adult- dominating society. Based on such grounds, literature for the

children can be deemed, according to Monika Vosková, “a mirror of contemporary society” (90). Certainly, the perception of the children by the adults, or in other words, the concept of childhood transforms with times. In the past, children were thought of as “the small adults” and the idea and definition of “childhood” never really existed (Ariès 125; Bubíková 14-22.) Before the concept of childhood was initiated, children of the earlier times had to wear the adults’ clothes, read the adults’ books, and share things produced for the adults. Owing to an absence of the concept of childhood, children’s literature was historically considered only as a second branch of the “big” literature. When the concept of childhood took place in the eighteenth century, children’s literature could emerge as a separate genre. In the Pre-industrial era, the children were believed to be born sinful and they were raised to be submissive and obedient. They grew up along with fear and corporal punishments imposed on them by the adults around. There were no pure children’s books in the past eras. Literature created for the adults was just adjusted and given to the young people to learn religious instruction and social manners. Reading was restricted to alphabet or etiquette books and Bible. Children who preferred to read for pleasure had to turn to adult literature such as Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) or Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) (Bobulová 9).

Children were seen differently in the age of industrialization or modernism. Influenced by John Locke’s theory of *tabula rasa*, the concept of childhood was changed dramatically and children were viewed as heavenly creatures who were pure and intuitive (Bobulová, 17). As these small people were believed to be born with special needs which differed from the adults, they were allowed to play and enjoy certain degree of freedom. Childish behaviours were admired and acceptable. Specific books intended to entertain the children were created. The transformation of this concept of childhood brought about huge production of children’s books causing the nineteenth century to be called the Golden Age of Children’s Literature. Folk and fairy- tales came back and prevailed as the reminders of Romantic interest in oral literature. Before the Industrialization Age ended, scientific advice on parenting appeared in the early twentieth century. Consequently, the new idea of upbringing the children was depicted in children’s literature of that time. Children of the first half of the twentieth century were portrayed “as white and middle-class” boys who resided in

either rural or suburban environments. They engaged themselves in plenty of exercise and fresh air . . . and two loving parents (Reynolds 37). This kind of portrayal provoked the call for multicultural representations and diversity in children's books among literary reviewers. The logic behind this push was that the prevalence of white – middle class boys could discourage non-depicted children from reading and writing books. They thought cultural pluralism to represent various genders, classes and ethnic or minority groups should be reflected more in children's literature so as to promote social justice and educational equality (Hunt 33).

Postmodernism started in the second half of the twentieth century. The period spanned approximately from 1960 to 1990s (Lewis 121). The idea originated as a reaction to modernism, a concept dominated from the late nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century. Once again, the concept of childhood shifted from the previous era. Children in this period had been raised democratically and affectionately but they were no longer regarded as the innocent creatures. They were not protected from the notion of reality. On the contrary, they were encouraged to face it, taking the burden which the adult world put on their shoulders. At the same time, parent-child relationship became less significant. Tighter bond was given to peers and school. Most of postmodern children were often left to spend their leisure time alone in front of television and computer. These children were isolated and they felt lonely (Thacker, 140; Bubíková 67). Like the other kinds of arts, children's literature was affected by the philosophies of postmodernism and it was radically changed. Books written for children became nonlinear, nonhierarchical embodying with the texts which decenterized the authors but privileged the readers. Stories with multicultural narratives and multiple perspectives appeared. To deconstruct grand narrative or metanarrative of traditional literature, the authors used a means of subversion. Fragmentation was employed with space, titles, illustrations, fonts, typography, numbers, or symbols. Some postmodern stories also explored into the social elements of marginalized and ethnic minorities. Besides, fulfilling the reviewers' call for diverse representations in children's literature in the previous era, such stories have added variety and prosperity into postmodern literature (Lewis, 127; Porter, 57; Adámková, 10-15).

Theory on Children's Literature

The background information regarding children's literature development presented in the previous section has demonstrated that children's literature, as well as its readers – the children, has crossed over from the absence of their existence to the status that could be called privileged entitlements. Like the books written for them, the children under the circumstances of childhood concepts have to encounter with several predicaments. They are neglected and suppressed. Luckily, more attempts have been made to upgrade their living conditions and to develop their potential in the succeeding eras. As the power of the books in empowering different aspects of the child development has been widely recognized, parents and teachers try to encourage their children to read and make use of children's literature. With today's technological advancement, a large number of children's literary texts can be produced, and accessibility to them is just a click of mouse. Currently, people prefer to spend their time reading and watching stories through televisions, computers or smart phones. Reading and print-based stories have been affected tremendously. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, cyber abuse, internet crimes, and new forms of violence and dangers have been increasingly committed to and by the children creating several social issues. Therefore, children's literature and the children still have to struggle and adjust themselves to survive under the light of this hypertext oriented world.

The creation of Roald Dahl's selected stories for the children happened in the period of postmodernity: *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *The Magic Finger* (1966), *The Enormous Crocodile* (1978), *The Twits* (1980), *George's Marvelous Medicine* (1981), *The BFG* (1982), *The Witches* (1983), *Matilda* (1988), and *The Minpins* (1991). In these works the qualities of the postmodern fiction including the child characters which are opposite to those of traditional ones can be noticeable. Argumentations made in the dissertation are to claim that the stories have been written to articulate for the rights of the children; they voice, negotiate for and represent the modern children. To set the groundwork and vigorously critique these works, major thoughts concerning children's literature criticism are discussed as follows.

Any school of theoretical thoughts applicable to literature for the adults can be deployed to examine and interpret literature for the children. Based on an introduction of *Teaching Children's Literature* published by the Modern Language Association in 1992, an outstanding Professor of English at Princeton University, U. C. Knoepfelmacher asserts that perhaps the studies of the children's literary texts would be conducted by more multiple perspectives that might actually be wider in range than the approaches adopted with the firmly established literary texts for the adults. In this single publication, several children's stories had been reviewed and critiqued through the lenses of new historicist, structuralist, feminist, psychological, mythic, and reader response criticism. According to the remarks given by Jill P May in *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association's* "Theory and Textual Interpretation: Children's Literature and Criticism", the field of children's literature is gaining more attention from scholars and critics. Due to an amplitude of scholarships in the field, these literary academics' attitudes towards children's literature are transformed and the boundaries of literary criticism have been destroyed (May 81). Since many disciplines are involved and studies of children's literature can take advantage of all available disciplines, children's literature tends to be studied and interpreted under the mode of interdisciplinary lenses (Hunt 1- 8; Wojcik-Andrews 238). Contemporarily, the courses about children's literature are included in various educational programs like English, foreign languages, library science, American Studies, education, philosophy, social sciences, and Women's Studies.

To whichever direction children's literature criticism was or is heading, the primary goal of the critiquing theory is to choose the appropriate or good books for the children. Besides assisting the selection of the right books to the audience, literary theory and the practice of interpreting literature is very crucial to promote high standards in literature and to enhance readers' aesthetic appreciation of any literary texts (Russell 48). Many critics consequently concur that we cannot detach literary theory or the practice of interpreting literature from any literary works. Hans Bertens, for example, has described in his *Literary Theory: the Basics* that knowing about literary theory will make it a lot easier to understand literature. With the principles employed from the chosen literary theory, the interpreted meanings found in the poetic and fictional contents will become sensible and authentic (3). Indeed, theory is

assumed to help and explain the hidden problems concerning reading books for children. As referred by Hunt in *Criticism, Theory, & Children's Literature* (1991), Alan Garner and Anita Moss's similar ideas regarding literary criticism have been alluded as an endorsement for Hunt's view in regards to the relationship between criticism theory and stories for the children, "... good work with children's literature depends, ultimately, on coherent and thoughtful criticism, and good criticism depends on coherent and thoughtful theory. ... if we believe that children's literature occupies a place in the traditions of all literature, we owe it to ourselves to explore what is going on in the field of literary criticism." Although Hunt sees that criticism is sometimes threatening, confusing and changing, he believes it will help us to work with both the people and the texts of children's literature (1-2).

Completely neglecting the audience, some scholars approach children's literature by focusing on only its text or fictional content. The emphasis of these textual focused studies is placed on analyzing the features of the fictional structure, literary components and linguistic elements. Close reading is usually adopted by these critics to find out the motifs, devices and techniques used by the authors; how and why the chosen stories have been written. Since a multitude of children's literature is available today, these textual approaches are basically recommended by some critics as an easy way to assess the literary merit of children's stories. If the teachers and parents want to quickly select good and suitable books for the young readers, they can take a look and judge the quality of the books from these attributes: the fictional characters – who the story is about?; point of view – who is telling the story?; setting – where and when the story takes place?; plot – how are the events organized and what happens?; theme – what messages or key ideas underlying in the story?; style – how the writer expresses himself/herself?; and tone – what kind of the author's attitudes towards the contents or the subjects included in the stories? (Anderson 46). After previewing, the adult critics can decide whether these books will be of the interest or suitable for their children or not. Formalism, Practical, New Criticism, Structuralism, Stylistics, Post –Structuralism, Deconstruction are categorized as these text or language oriented approaches.

Textual analysis of children's literature is considered rather restricted. This trend of literary interpretation was traditionally deployed by the reviewers of children's literature in the past. Based on the theoretical concepts of the approaches, the ongoing social context or other external literary indicators are excluded from examining and evaluating the literary works. Neither the author's life nor the psychological, political or cultural background is relevant to studying children's literature. An interaction between the audience and the text is ignored as well. The same text will be read time and time again by the experts or ideal readers to interpret the true meaning of the work. Story told would mean and remain the same for all readers. Applying these textual approaches, the adults (parents, teachers, librarians and literary scholars) usually act on behalf of the children to determine the inherent features of the stories. So these textually - focused concepts were constructed to serve the social demands controlled by the dominating adult power. Books were written to help children learn to read and to behave. Stories, particularly in the old days, considered to be good under these lenses often carry moral didacticism and they always contain implied messages that suggest the children the right ways to act. Children are taught to trust the text while reading. Reading is acceptable only when the approvable code of ethics is obeyed. The literary texts in these books will appear oppressive if teaching the children to read according to these theoretical textual-base perceptions is deployed. Such stories and reviews will make the children become passive audiences. Their critical thoughts cannot be developed. These approaches were practiced by the early critics and they were increasingly performed during the 1930s – 1950. Although their popularity declines, these textual and language focused approaches are still employed by some literary scholars to explain stories for the children at present (Rogers 143; May 18 - 19). In this study, some fictional elements of the chosen works are analyzed in order to evince the inquiries of the dissertation through the basic literary dimension of the chosen stories.

Another set of theoretical concepts occasionally chosen by the critics to illuminate our understanding of the texts are the author/character - oriented approaches. The central thought of this criticism is derived from the belief that fiction is created by actual people. Literature can be understood faster and better if readers know about the writer's background, education, or psychological conditions. Critics

who employ this historical/ biographical criticism will try to find the connection between the author's works and his personal life. If these approaches are employed to scrutinize the chosen children's stories, the writer's childhood can be expected to be mirrored and resonated in some of the stories' literary aspects. This conventional literary assessment originated very early at the beginning of the nineteenth century. When Roland Barthes "death of the author" was publicized in 1968, the approaches have rarely been used as a tool for interpreting literature ever since. Although Roald Dahl's young people's fiction is not intentionally written to advocate for the rights of their child audience in the first place for Dahl himself insists in a couple of interviews that his stories are created to provide fun, entertainment and to encourage the fond of reading to his young readers (West 65-66), the reflection of the author's ideas of children's rights can be sensed in his children's works as previously mentioned. Employing the author/character - focused approaches as the tools to delineate the chosen children's stories will unveil certain living incidences in Dahl's life which help form the ideology of children's rights engendering his empathy and desire to protecting the oppressed children.

Because the authors inhabit in human society, they are impacted by some significant political, economic and social movements happening during their living and writing time. Viewing the artworks from this standpoint, the author's stories can be regarded as a product of the society and vice versa. Adopting the contextual perspectives to examine the stories, critics will react and response to the literature using different kinds of social notions. All dimensional contexts of the society will be examined. The meanings of the stories can be interpreted in terms of philosophy, religion, socio-economy, culture, technology, human development, and scientific progress. In the eyes of these critics, context defines and is always related to arts. Therefore, social functions, beliefs, major changes of the society can always be found to be integrated in and decoded from any pieces of literature. Included in this group of context – oriented approaches are Marxist criticism, Feminist/ Gay/Lesbian criticism, Post-colonial /neo-colonial criticism, New historical criticism, Cultural criticism, and Myth /Dialogism criticism. In the case of exploring Roald Dahl's ideas about the rights of the children, historians had witnessed many major social changes such as civil rights campaigns, Black movements, student protests, minority group

rallies, and the struggling for autonomy of the women taking place during the period that Dahl lived (1916 – 1990) and wrote the chosen stories (1960s – 1990s) (Hunt 147; Minneboo 35 - 36). Without a doubt, the activities demanding for the rights of the children had also been zealously launched by the children advocates particularly in Europe and America through these years of social reforms. Traces of the public calls for legal equality and social justice for the children in Dahl's literary creation are visible. One of such noticeable clues is the untypical characterization of his female characters. As earlier discussed, some feminist critics accuse Dahl as a misogynist from his ugly portrayal of the witches in *The Witches* besides hinting that men are not eligible for being the witches. Based on this belief, in the next chapter an oppression of the children as portrayed in the Dahlian selected works will be delineated and interpreted from these context – oriented approaches. Meanwhile, Roald Dahl's female characters who are stereotypically or non-stereotypically constructed will be analyzed through the Feminist lens in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Many critics of the late twentieth century (1970s) have regarded textual, author, historical and biographical focused approaches as archaic and less productive for literary studies. In contrast to the traditional literary analysis, the recurrent debates of criticism and theory in the last fifteen years have been shifted to be concerned with the relationship between the text and its readers (Hunt 8). Literary interpretation is no longer confined by the perfectly single meaning, language, structure and writing techniques residing inside the text. On the contrary, what appear to be more important to the critics are how readers react to the texts; what in literature engages the readers' imaginations, how the characters speak to the child audiences, how these child audiences see themselves in the world in the book, how the communities of readers experience the texts; what kind of engagement, discussion and activities will help enhance the readers' cognitive and emotional interaction (Rogers 138). For these revolutionized critics, texts will mean nothing without readers. When readers participate in and activate the literary text the meanings occur through the reader's pre-understandings and liberal beliefs. Thus, meaning is an interactive creation between the text and the reader's mind. In addition, one text may mean differently for different readers. Even for the same old reader, the meanings of the same text can be changed when it is reread. All in all, every meaning of one particular

work is valid and correct (Anderson 42). Owing to their challenging and constructive effects on the child readers, the reader – oriented approaches have been widely practiced for the past thirty years in the field of children’s literature criticism.

Therefore, reader – oriented approaches allow the powerful role of the reader in constructing meaning from texts. Deploying the strategies from these reader based perspectives to teach literature, texts can be owned by the child audiences. They will feel that they are included; they are enabled to negotiate their interpretations of the stories, thus, are empowered to have their own voice. In other words, applying these approaches, children are liberated and they will no longer be colonized by the adult power. This school of criticism turned to be phenomenon impacting on “a pedagogical shift toward child-centered classroom” among children’s literature scholars during 1980’s and 1990’s. Teachers have employed the approaches to teach their students in their literary classes and discovered and rediscovered, as described by Theresa Rogers, “rich interactions between the readers and literary texts --- transactions that create connections and dialogues between a reader’s whole ‘world’ (affective, experiential, cognitive) and the ‘secondary worlds’ of literature (139 - 140).

The subjects of social context, particularly in terms of culture do always matter whatever the genre of children’s literature is studied and whatever school of criticism is used to evaluate the text, its readers and reading process. Especially more recently, some works in drama and responses to literature are expanded to include the rooms for learning multiple social, cultural and expressive knowledge. This significance of cultural topics has been evinced by Rogers in her “Literary Theory and Children’s Literature: Interpreting Ourselves and Our Worlds” that wherever the social and cultural practices and literacy and literary practices are performed, they cannot be separated from cultural and social issues (141). The practices of cultural studies had taken place at the early stage of literary criticism (Miller 1), and even today the tradition has never seemed to disappear from the mainstream literary studies. Moreover, critiquing literature and arts from these lenses consistently resurfaces in the media; whenever it happens, it usually brings out vehement reactions and tenacious engagements from the related communities (Fox & Short 3). The focuses of cultural criticism are on the issues of power and social justice. Classes,

genders and races are the major concerns of these approaches. Nonetheless, it looks rather unusual that the issues of age, the power of the children and their rights which significantly showcase different facets of the social justice have hardly been seriously discussed by the critics and scholars of children's literature. Such negligence of these children's issues from the literary sphere illuminates the importance of the dissertation's topical discussions concentrating on the social power and justice for the children.

In terms of an analysis of children's stories, it has been found that critics tend to combine several approaches to practice their children's literature criticism these days. As asserted by McCarthy, multiple lenses are required to explain the readers' interpretations of children's literature since a single perspective seems insufficient to make sense of the responses from these child readers (126-127). The logic underpinning this practice is that each theory can add one more layer to the literary analysis. Besides some theories of children's literature intertwine with each other. As we can see in many recent works, the issues of social and cultural representation of the children's race, class and gender were examined by using cultural lens or others in combination with their readers' responses in several studies (Rogers 142). The outcomes gained from these studies indicated that readers, through language and discourse, preferred to construct multiple subjectivities and identities than depending on specific, marked or completed individuality or personality. This tendency of mixing different approaches with the reader - responses to conduct studies of children's literature makes the child readers' interpretation of themselves and their second world in the books become unpredictable. Due to this latest trend in studying children's literature, critics have proposed for, as theorized by Rogers, children's stories which contain "a space in which identities and positions can be negotiated—spaces in which a new "playing field" is created for deciding what is good, just, fair, and possible, and, for older students, spaces in which literacy practices themselves can be interrogated and critiqued" (Rogers 142). Reading and exploring Roald Dahl's children's stories, the researcher finds that Dahl's selected children's stories are embodied with spaces which their child readers can play, bargain, blame or question. The Dahlian child protagonists and antagonists are also varied allowing an "array of possibilities" for all small audiences to identify themselves with. Because these

theoretical concepts of the discussed theories of children's literature comply very well with the basic principles of the rights of the children which I will make detailed argumentations in Chapters 4 -5, the combination of reader – oriented approaches and Theresa Rogers' theory of children's literature will be adopted to demonstrate that Dahl's chosen works negotiate and advocate for the rights of the children. In the last part of this dissertation, I will subsequently discuss and conclude these selected Dahl's children's stories as representation of their implied readers, the children.

Theory on Children's Rights

Why do humans need rights? This question is responded to by humanists that because the traits of rights help explain what makes us human. The replies to this question are based on not only logics but also human basic needs. Initially, rights theory was developed by educated white men; nevertheless, the conception of who has rights tends to be expanded to enhance the rights of those groups of the underprivileged: women, people of races and cultures, adults of restricted intelligence, and eventually the children. Lately, according to Nigel Thomas's *Children's Rights: Policy into Practice*, even certain non-human living things such as some animals have been fought for by philosophers and social activists to also be entitled to their rights (1).

In fact, the ideas that humans had their rights were initiated in the era of European enlightenment around the end of the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. At this time, all traditional institutions and beliefs had been gradually subverted. As stated further in the same paper, confidence in the divine decreased, papal and royal power were "being challenged" (2). With the gradual changes of their understanding of the nature and the world, people began to question the monarch, religious and governmental institutions. In parallel to the notion of human rights, children had been viewed more kindly. Soon afterwards, some social activists started to call for the rights of children. It can be said that an oppression of children declined in the eighteenth century. Pediatrics originated. Childcare was launched even though the practice was focused on disciplinary reasons. Still, harsh punishment was widely acceptable while infanticide would be blamed (Cahan 9; Kellett 3).

Capitalism originated in Western Europe among Protestant traders of England and Holland and this economic system indirectly brought in the new materialistic ideology of upbringing the children. Likewise, Puritans which was another group of religious dissidents emphasized on the importance of individual salvation and concern for the welfare of the children (Fox 286-306). Science and technologies of communication and transportation progressed. Many free thinkers were born in different countries and they spread their philosophical and ethical ideas of humanism. In 1762 Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile or On Education* was published. His work proposes some idealistic notions concerning the innate goodness of a person; man is naturally good or every child was born pure and innocent before being impacted on by external forces. The project for child development and education is presented to foster the individual's autonomy in a series of these philosophical books. On account of these aforementioned factors, a new way of thinking about childhood and the ideas about the rights of the children have been dramatically transformed ever since.

Before the twentieth century, children were rarely taken into any discussions on the topic of rights. As it was mentioned earlier, "rights were generally assumed to be an attribute of rational adults" (Thomas 4). However, many significant historical events took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These social happenings brought about the international calls for the public's attention to the well-being of the children which led to the social campaigns for protecting the rights of the children. The Industrial Revolution (1800s) occurred in the Victorian Era. Owing to this industrialization, child labor was needed. Then, the world underwent the following major events: Colonialism, World War I (1914 – 1918), the Great Depression (1929 – 1939), and World War II (1939 -1945). In an attempt to avoid the third world war, the United Nations has been established while Cold War loomed. Living in the British society and other European communities in the post war period was grim and appalling. Commodity shortages caused people to depend on rationing. Decolonization increased. Everybody faced his hard time. The tragic conditions were worse for poor and orphaned children. They were forced to work as cheap laborers in factories and the fields. Millions suffered from famine, homelessness, epidemic and

ethnic holocaust. The governments were urged to save the lives of the unfortunate minors. Humanitarians and the children's rights activists, Eglantyne Jebb (1876 – 1928), Janusz Korczak, Ellen Key (1849 -1926), and Lady Sara and Louisa Blomfield (1859 – 1939), launched the campaigns to urge the public to give their hands to find solutions for several social problems concerning the matters of the children (Hägglund & Thelander 365-372; Ennew 1).

Thereafter, people started more discussion about the rights of the children. At its beginning process of an establishment of the children's rights, children's developmental needs were concentrated rather than their autonomy. While the Swedish social reformer, Ellen Key named the twentieth century as "The Century of the Child", Save the Children Fund was founded by Eglantyne Jebb in Geneva in 1920 to give help to European children who suffered from starvation, sickness, orphanhood or homelessness caused by the First World War. With these social activists' constant attempt and encouragement, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the League of the Nations in 1924. Based on Nigel Thomas's *Children's Rights: Policy into Practice*, most activities of children's rights' policy and programming launched at this initial stage were focused on the attempt to help the deprived children to meet their "basic needs" (4). The main purpose of these social organizations set up during this period was to empower the child to develop fully so that he or she will become a valuable member of the society.

In contrast to the early development of children's rights, the campaigns of children's rights activities at the end of the 1960's were operated with the aim to liberate the children from the adults' control. As asserted in Richard Farson's *Birthrights* (1974), children should not be hindered to manage their own lives because "the acceptance of the child's right to self-determination is fundamental to all rights (27). Abiding by Farson's stance, John Holt posits in his *Escape from Childhood* (1975) that all rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities of the adult citizens "should be made available to any young person of whatever age who wants to make use of them (15). In order to release the children from the adults' authorities, a number of legitimate power and living liberties have been proposed to endow to the children by these rights advocates: the rights to vote, to legally take care of their own lives, to work for money, to manage their own education, or to choose their own

guardians. Since both Farson and Holt's extreme ideas appeared to be rather risky and unsafe, their proposition was objected to by other supporters and activists for children's rights. Luckily for the children, new compromising approaches have been initiated in the following decades. For instance, Michael Freeman has suggested in his *Children and Society* (1987) that the combination of both protection and empowerment must be taken seriously into the adults' consideration if they want to entitle the children to their rights. Adults could pretend to be children then ask themselves what kind of action or behavior they would need to be "shielded against on the assumption that [they] would want to mature to a rationally autonomous adulthood and be capable of deciding on [their] own system of ends as free and rational beings" (310). According to Freeman, thus, rights can be bestowed to the children while protection is established when it is required. At the same time, restrictions on the child's freedom or autonomy can possibly be imposed as long as they are considered necessary and beneficial for the children's future. To put it another way, children's rights are installed to maximize the overall capacities of the children. Being entitled to their rights, the children will be enabled to become the self-determined, rational, decent, and efficient adults.

For more than a period of ten years, discussions, negotiations, and collaborations had been performed among all parties whose works and lives were involved with the children. Governments, non-governmental organizations, human rights advocates, lawyers, health specialists, social workers, educators, child development experts, and religious leaders from all over the world agreed to formally endorse special Charter for the children in the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989. In 1990 the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified as an international law. In this Convention on the Rights of the Child, all principles and standards have been carefully written to cover every aspect of a life of anyone under eighteen years old. Basically, the child's rights in the Convention are the human rights. These rights are inherent to all children. They are equally important, indivisible, non-discriminatory and inalienable. They can be interrelated and interdependent. Every ratified nation must make sure that all children will benefit from special protection measures and help; have access to services such as education and health care; can develop their personalities, abilities and talents to the fullest

potential; grow up in a happy environment full of love and understanding; and are informed about and take part in, and accomplish their rights in an accessible and active manner. The Convention is the most ratified international treaty.

Roald Dahl's Biography

Many critics and readers have found that Roald Dahl integrates his life experiences into his writings. To profoundly understand and correctly interpret his works for the children which are assumed to contain the messages concerning the rights of the children, a brief biographical note on this writer is presented hereafter.

Roald Dahl was born on September 13th, in 1916 in Llandaff, England to the Norwegian parents, Harald Dahl and his second wife, Sofie Magdalene Hesselberg. Roald was their only son and the second child of their marriage. When Mr. Harald Dahl died only a few weeks after the family had lost Roald's eldest sister, Astri in 1920, Roald's mother decided not to go back to Norway, but to continue raising her own four children and two stepchildren as a single mother in England. In 1923, Roald attended the preparatory school for boys at Llandaff Cathedral School. He moved to study at St. Peter's from 1925 – 1929 before entering Repton in Derbyshire from 1929 – 1934. His school life at both British boarding schools was tragic. The horrific caning at St. Peter's and agonizing fagging system at Repton have been prevalently depicted in *Boy Tales of Childhood*, his first autobiography. These school horrors, as described by Roald Dahl, "leave the lasting impression' on the young school students who are beaten. [. . .] Even today, whenever I have to sit for any length of time on a hard bench or chair, I begin to feel my heart beating along the old lines that the cane made on my bottom some fifty-five years ago," (Dahl 145).

However, there were some pleasant things for Roald Dahl to enjoy at Repton. He got along well with Mr. Arthur Norris, the art master. An exhibition of his photo shooting was supported and organized by this teacher. They hanged out together on Sunday afternoons having cakes and tea to talk about paintings and other great artists' works. His fond memory at this school also included the blind tastings for confectionery giant Cadbury's; the experience became Dahl's inspiration for writing his masterpiece—*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Besides, he recalled how good

he was at playing games there. He was the Captain of Fives and Captain of squash-racquets. In spite of a few joys for him at Repton, the oppressions and suffocation from fagging, nasty teachers, snobbish schoolmates, beatings and various forms of enslavement made Roald Dahl desire to end his schooldays as soon as he could. So after four years at this British public school, Dahl states in *Boy*, “Without the slightest regret I said goodbye to Repton for ever,” (Dahl 167).

At the age of eighteen, Roald Dahl decided to take part in the Exploring Society’s expedition to Newfoundland before working as a salesman for Shell, the oil company, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Five years later, he signed up with the Royal Air Force in Nairobi and was trained to be the pilot officer for the Gladiator fighters in Iraq in 1939 when World War II broke out. Afterwards, he was transferred to Washington, USA, as a military attaché in 1941 when he was badly injured by the plane accident in Libya (Lacová 7-8).

Roald Dahl met his first wife Patricia Neal who had been in Broadway plays and many Hollywood movies at a dinner party held by Hellman in New York. Dahl married Patricia in July 1953 and the two had a small wedding in New York when Roald was thirty-seven and Patricia was twenty-seven. They moved in an apartment near Central Park and also bought a house in England near Roald’s mother’s. The couple lived part-time in America and part-time in England (Kelly 66). Their first child Olivia was born in New York on April 20th, in 1955. The couple had five children who became very influential on Dahl’s future career as children’s writer.

Dahl’s new career as a writer also started in the United States with an encouragement from a noted British writer, C.S. Forester, who urged Dahl to write about his war experiences. With a stimulation from Forester, Dahl’s first story, *A Piece of Cake*, was sent for publication in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1942 (Sturrock 168). Although only one year later, his first children’s story, *The Gremlins*, appeared in the book market, Dahl’s deadly short stories with twisted ending for the adults had been continuously written and they were found in many magazines through the 1940’s – 1950’s.

After the birth of his own children, Roald Dahl was turned to be a “very maternal daddy” (Treglown 115). In spite of the publication of his first collection short stories *Someone Like You* in 1953 in the US, Dahl’s literary career seemed to

be unsuccessful for several years. It was hard for him earning his living and he was forced to write filmscripts in the late sixties. While his wife worked very hard and succeeded professionally winning an Oscar, Roald Dahl himself had to face the barren writing period (Henfridsson 3-4). Far worse, Patricia underwent three successive strokes, became lame, unable to speak, read or write in 1965. Dahl and some friends helped Patricia to recover. At the same time, he took part in making a James Bond film, and had some of his short stories for the adults adapted for making television dramas.

Being a father, Roald Dahl began making up bedtime stories for his own children as soon as they were grown enough. In addition, he had difficult times attaining new ideas for adult fiction. These two difficulties together with his American literary agent and his publisher's suggestions, Dahl was turned to become interested in writing children's stories in the latter part of his writing career (Minneboo 35). Hence, *James and the Giant Peach* was seen in the book stores in 1961 whereas *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was released in 1964. Soon afterwards, many books for the children were produced and their popularity among the child audience led Dahl's life into fortune and fame as a great British storyteller. In his last interview, Roald Dahl had disclosed the secrets of how to write these successful and popular children's stories:

I have a great affinity with children. I see their problems. If you want to remember what it's like to live in a child's world, you've got to get down on your hands and knees and live like that for week. You find you have to look up at all these bloody giants around you who are always telling you what to do and what not to do [...] So subconsciously in the child's mind these giants become the enemy [...] When I wrote *Matilda* I based it on this theory [...] Children absolutely warm to this. They think, "Well, Christ! He's one of us." I don't think you find many chaps [...] in their mid-seventies who think like I do and joke and fart around (Sykes 82).

Dahl's stories resemble their author. They hide the substances of righteousness and humanism under their frightening and eccentric covers. Although his works for small readers are criticized for the dark humor and violence, the call

from their author for protecting all the children has been intriguingly underlain the texts of his fiction. As asserted by Sturrock, Dahl's authorized biographer, some reflections of Dahl's support for and protection of the children in his writings for the children have been noticeable, "It gave him the confidence to claim, at the end of his life, that he spoke for young people, that he was their advocate in a world that largely ignored them" (Sturrock 42).

Roald Dahl consistently sides with the children in his whole life. His support for them has been mirrored in both his life and works. While living, his time and money were always given to the underprivileged. Some of the proceeds from the film production of his first children's book, *The Gremlins* were donated to the RAF Benevolent Fund. He set up the Public Welfare Foundation with Charles E. Marsh—Dahl's American wealthy friend and patron. The charity work helped many needy families in Limehouse, London to be able to acquire education and medical care. In 1948, 28 sewing machines were sent for the Jamaican women's organization so that the island's poor children could have clothes to wear to school. According to Sturrock, his biographer, Dahl's generous deeds had always been acknowledged by those around (544 – 546). Scholarships, occupational training, medical equipment, clinics and micro-loans for fishermen have been granted to numerous recipients.

Dahl and Patricia had been through some family tragedies during their thirty years of marriage. Apart from Patricia's strokes in 1965, Theo, their only son got brain injury from the taxi accident in New York in 1960. In November 1962, Olivia, their first daughter, died from measles encephalitis, at aged seven. Dahl and Patricia were divorced finally in 1983. In that same year, shortly after his divorce, Dahl remarried to the set designer, Felicity Crossland. They stayed happily together for seven years. Unfortunately, on November 23rd, 1990, the death from a rare blood disorder brought Dahl's second marriage to an end. Luckily, the fame of this great writer of stories for the children is still alive under the name of Roald Dahl Foundation. The charity organization has been run by his second wife, Felicity Dahl. Grants from the foundation aim to help the areas of literacy, neurology, and haematology (Lacová 8).

Studies on Roald Dahl's Children's Literature

Roald Dahl was a prolific writer. With the exception of his very first children's fiction *The Gremlins* (1943), he spent the first half of his writing career (from 1940's to 1960's) with war propaganda articles, adult short stories, play scripts and film screenplays before committing himself to writing young people's fiction (from 1960's to 1990's). Thus, even though this dissertation aims to analyze and discuss his stories for the young people, occasional allusions of other types of Roald Dahl's works could possibly be encountered along the course of this presentation. From the researcher's discovery, for example, a couple of research studies were conducted to examine and compare the similarities and differences between the literary aspects and writing techniques of Dahl's adult short stories and children's fiction. Nevertheless, in the later part of his life Dahl had become even more famous and better known worldwide as the writer for children's literature. So a number of the research works have been conducted to interpret his young people's literary production portraying invaluable knowledge assets for those who are interested in examining the Dahlian fiction and anyone who wants to study children's literature in general.

Deploying deconstructive theory to examine the binary relationship between the adults and children illustrated in *Matilda*, Jenny Hansson asserts that a theme of children against adults is a familiar motif commonly found in many of Roald Dahl's children's stories. In *Matilda's* text, this particular Dahlian characteristic can easily be indicated and the dichotomy rests in the portrayal of both types of characters (4). The grownups are depicted as either big, powerful, bad, ignorant or inactive while the children as tiny, innocent and defenseless. The headmistress oppresses her students while Matilda's parents, Mr and Mrs Wormwoods neglect and belittle their own daughter. Their relationships are "warlike" and almost every literary aspect manifests the division and opposition between the people of these two age groups. According to Hansson, this kind of adult – child's dichotomy can be regarded as "the root" of Roald Dahl's popularity. It will not be difficult for the children to fall in love with Dahl's books because in his works "the adults and children are always having war, and the children always win in the end" (Nicholson, "Fantasy" 324). Owing to such plot, the

author has successfully created the close connection with his implied readers who naturally see the adults as their “enemies” (West 116). Despite the hideous depiction of the adult characters and the children’s victory in the end of the stories, Hansson thinks that the binary relationship between the adults and the children in *Matilda* has not been resolved yet because of the “inner maturity” of the lead child hero, Matilda. Matilda is too competent socially, cognitively, and emotionally to be a child. To correctly and firmly adhere to the common Dahlian adult-child paradox imagery, Hansson prefers Dahl to characterize Matilda more realistically like the other children who are rather incapable. Although Dahl bestows the adult’s traits to allow Matilda who represents the children to win the fight against the adults, Hansson posits that the adult-like characterization of Matilda “discredits” the entire adult – child division, a common theme frequently found in Roald Dahl’s young people’s fiction. (21)

The battle between the children and the adults in Roald Dahl’s children’s stories is pointed out by many critics. The theme is obvious and even the inexperienced target readers of the books can notice this recurrent imagery of children and adults competition in Dahl’s fiction. The structure, dialogues, characterization, and the tone of the stories convey which side the author is with. Roald Dahl dislikes and disapproves the adults. On the contrary, he is so fond of the children and he approves almost all their nature and habits. Similar to Hansson’s analysis of *Matilda*, the argument in this dissertation will further interpret how these two generations compete against each other in Dahl’s stories. More stories of similar theme are added into the investigation and the discussion will be extended to claim the author’s unexplored views regarding the support for the well-being and the construction of his child readers.

The influence of the writer’s traumatic childhood experiences upon his writing has been investigated in the best-known Roald Dahl’s children’s story, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Despite of its tremendous success, most parents have expressed their concerns for the presence of cruelty and violent scenes appearing in this book. Augustus Gloop falls over the chocolate river just to be sucked up along a factory pipe and into the fudge room. Screened by the wise squirrels as the bad nut, Veruca Salt is pushed into the garbage chute leading to the unkindled incinerator. Excluding Charlie, other Golden Ticket winners have punitively undergone dangers,

and they are almost killed in the Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. In her thesis *Chocolate Hell – How Trauma and Religion Permeate Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2012), Marian Elyce Maloney contends that the presence of cruelty and grotesque in this masterpiece mirrors how the author tries to cope with the pain and unhappiness he received while studying in the religious schools (4). Thus, the caning episodes in Roald Dahl's autobiography *Boy: Tales of Childhood* have been cited regularly by literary scholars to interpret and understand the meanings of Dahl's works. As described by Maloney, "The cane became a figure of complete terror, an icon that succinctly represented the most memorable parts of Dahl's education." To Maloney, the excruciating school events have perpetually impacted on Dahl's attitude towards religion (14). Dahl seems to become an atheist when he grows up. But instead of his religious renunciation, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is prevalent with several theological allegories from Dante Alighieri's *Everyman* and *Inferno* (4). The seven deadly sins of lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride are deployed to characterize the other Golden Ticket holders who are the child antagonists: Augustus Gloop, Veruca Salt, Violet Beauregarde, and Mike Teavee. The chocolate factory is comparable to hell or the fire of the *Inferno*. Maloney claims that Charlie Bucket's pilgrimage into the factory symbolizes Roald Dahl's journey to overcome the agony inflicted on him at his early life (34).

Another thesis *A Modern Fairy Tale: Gender and Power in Roald Dahl English Language and Culture* conducted by Nienke Minneboo uncovers the fairy tale elements in Roald Dahl's widely known children's books: *James and the Giant Peach*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The BFG*, *The Witches*, and *Matilda*. These books contain magic, gross violence, retribution and good triumphs over evil similar to what we can see in fairy tales. In both Dahl's books and fairy tales, the issues of gender and power are depicted, and they share many commonalities. The forms of oppression and resistance are ubiquitous either in the traditional tales and the modern Dahlian children's stories. As exemplified by Minneboo, "Matilda is oppressed by her parents and Miss Trunchbull, Miss Honey by Miss Trunchbull, James by his aunts, Sophie by the orphanage and Sophie and the BFG by the other giants. Matilda stands up to Miss Trunchbull, James to his aunts, Sophie and the BFG to the giants and Mr. Wonka to the spoiled golden ticket winners" (32). The human

qualities and their secret power are embodied in the poor, the lowly, the old, the ugly and the animals. These attributes can be seen in both the fairy tales and Dahl's works for children. Due to these qualities, the protagonists in this conventional and Dahlian fiction are capable to win over the villains (37). However, most heroines in fairytales such as Snow White, Cinderella and Rapunzel are passive, kind, and beautiful, and the female antagonists are active, powerful, unattractive and evil (12-13). Although the female antagonists in Dahl's stories resemble those in the fairy tales, Dahl's female child protagonists do not look like the lead female children in the classic stories at all. Instead, their fairy tale qualities are re-characterized by the author to suit the identity of the contemporary women whose roles and identities are formed by the woman's rights movement in the sixties. Based on this ground, Dahl's heroines are turned to be, according to Minneboo's description, "strong young women who have a mind of their own and can achieve anything they want" (37).

Many topics discussed in Nienke Minneboo's *A Modern Fairy Tale: Gender and Power in Roald Dahl English Language and Culture* will be referred to in this analysis as they concur with the researcher's viewpoints. Yet, in my dissertation, the discussion will emphasize on how Dahl's stories can help empower his child readers; the subject which Nienke Minneboo's research paper does not cover. More of Dahl's books are also included in the researcher's investigation in order to validate the research assumptions of the empowerment qualities of Roald Dahl's young people's fiction.

Several literary aspects of Roald Dahl's literature, both for the adults and children, are analyzed from various angles by Jitka Klugová's *Roald Dahl: the Author for Two Audiences. A Comparison of His Writings for Children and Adults*.

Regarding Dahl's works for the children, she meticulously scrutinizes the characters, themes, first chapter, illustrations, visual signs, moral concepts, the language and criticism on his children's stories and poetry. As for the adult short stories and films, the issues of characters, themes, children and childhood memories, spouses' relationships, sex, business matters, social criticism, language and visual signs are discussed. The impact of the sociopolitical events of the English and American in the twentieth century on Dahl's children's works is pointed out: the symbol of an American dream, an Empire State Building in *James and the Giant Peach*, Queen

Elizabeth II in *The BFG*, the huge sales of television in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and the space program in *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* (12).

The notes of the author's personal life influencing his literary features and writing styles have been examined, too. Nonetheless, no children's rights campaigns and the effects and contribution of Dahl's works on the development of the child readers which are the major conceptual analysis points of this dissertation have been raised to discuss in Jitka Klugová's research because the focus of her research is on comparing the differences between Dahl's writings for the small and mature readers.

In light of Dahl's works for the children, Klugová states that Dahl's children's books are imbedded with many controversies besides possessing the richly imaginative components. They can instigate several responses and feelings from the readers: laughter, tears, love, hate, fear, dreams, and imagination (41-42). The stories are, as quoted from Jeremy Treglown's *Roald Dahl A Biography*, "subversive and hedonistic [...] and yet conservative, nostalgic, and authoritarian" (8-9).

Interconnections among Roald Dahl's own writings can be observed in some books. A character's father in *Danny the Champion of the World* talks about *The BFG* at the bedtime, for example. Illustration, puns and neologisms are used more than in the adult short stories. In addition to the fictional qualities, Klugová assumes that the popularity of Dahl's children's stories are also derived from three key factors: the culturally increasing independence of the children of his time allowing his readers to easily relate to his individualistic child protagonists, the booming business of children's literature in the twentieth century, and the editors' power (43-44). Although one prominent trait in Dahl's adult short stories is their imaginative characteristic like his children's books, their endings differ. Children's stories obey "the rule" by ending happily. In the short stories, Dahl always twists the readers' expectation. Vivid depiction is also praised. The characters in these adult short stories may be normal people living normal lives but they are projected from "unusual angles" to expose their secrets and socially disapproved actions. Displeasing dark sides of the adult's nature like sex or cruelty are often exaggerated. Despite accentuating the adults' negativities, Klugová still observes that Dahl must believe in the rule of "fair play". All the bad adults in his short stories always have to pay back for all their bad deeds. Uncle Oswald the seducer in *My Uncle Oswald* gets seduced; Mr Boggis of *Parson's*

Pleasure swallows his own medicine (63).

Although most critics are likely to study Dahl's works separately as if he was a two-headed author creating different literary themes and styles for different audiences: the adults and the children, Laura Viñas Valle contends that the bridges linking two groups of Dahl's works have reflected the continuity of author's narrative voice affirming that Dahl does not write indistinctly for his audiences. In the children's stories, with an attempt to build a bonding with and install certain attitudes on his child readers, the children are addressed to directly with the first point of view demanding for their attention and participation. This narrator's voice in these children's stories usually sounds more authoritative, omniscient, discernible and intruding than in the adult short stories. The intrusion of the first – person narrative voice in Dahl's adult stories is not maintained and constant, though. The third – person narrator is used more and this narrator does not demand cooperation from the readers but seek for their sympathy and comprehension while detaching itself from the scenes and actions in the adult short stories (307). In spite of these dissimilarities, Valle confirms that the consistency of Dahl's children and adult stories' narrative voice can be retained because the author conforms to his understanding of what the children's literature and adult books are and he chooses to emphasize on different aspects of these books (293).

The elements of social criticism in Roald Dahl's children's works are explored by Irem Tumer (2009). The irony and satire style Dahl employs conveys his disapproval of the contemporary capitalism, consumerism and materialism of the twentieth century. Messages of the social destruction sent through Roald Dahl's stories for the children are interpreted from the character stereotypes and the adult authority figures such as the headmasters, the wealthy, and the adults who manipulate their power to oppress the children or who do not take suitable actions and these adults are punished to confront a "bad ending." Violence, corporal punishment, over-consumption of food and technology are all attacked in these young people's fiction (18). Once again Roald Dahl's painful childhood memories from the religious schools and his seclusion from the British society resulting from his ancestors' Norwegian originality are speculated as the sources of these negative social views (17).

Interpretations of the savage scenes and hideous portrayal of the adult characters in Roald Dahl's children's books are discordant. While these features in Dahl's stories are viewed as the author's social criticism and painful childhood side-effect, we find different defense for Roald Dahl from Barbara Basbanes Richter. Referring to the scary events happening to the children who win the Golden Tickets in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* previously mentioned, Richter argues that such a rampantly perilous dark motif is not something new in children's literature since some more gruesome and grisly actions have been traditionally present in the children's fairy tales. Richter exemplifies the instance of a biological mother stabbing into her own son's heart to death in *How Some Children Played at Slaughtering* including some frightening episodes of the children's classics like *Snow White*, *Rapunzel* and *Hansel and Gretel*. She sees the exposé literary dangers as realistic human behaviors. To Richter, the cultural norms and classes in our society are elucidated through these disturbing imagery in children's literature (325-326). In contrast, another critic, David Rees dislikes the unpleasant character depiction and violence in Dahl's children's stories. Rees thinks Dahl's world is too extreme. Things in Dahl's books are black and white, or two-dimensional and thus, surrealistic (144). What Rees perceives in the real world is that there are many types of adults who treat the children differently. Unlike those portrayed in Dahl's children's stories, many of them are very kind, and they do not abuse the children.

Like most of Dahl's children's books, in *The Twits* and *George's Marvelous Medicine*, two aspects of family life (husband and wife; grandma and grandson) which are the social conventions including other taboos are ridiculed to create humour. Samantha Louise Rothbart; thus, inspected for translation problems and strategies used to retain humour of parody across cultures in these books together with their French translated version, *Les Deux Gredins* (2007) and *La Potion Magique de Georges Bouillon* (2007). The verbal and visual frames, and frame semantics in the books both the English and French were compared and analyzed based on context, contextualization and relevance theory. It was found that the humor in Dahl's parody from the English books, as a whole, was retained in the French version even though there were certain problems. From all selected extracts, four of them showed the retention of Dahl's parody while three of them failed to maintain the humour from the

original English version. In one instance, the language used might be effective but the cultural consistency was not. Rothbart concluded that some strategies were used unsuitably to translate these books (92). Although this study seems not to involve directly with the topic of this dissertation, the benefits of humour in children's books for the child audience as discussed in the early part of Rothbart's research coincide with one of my research assumption about the construction of the readers. Many notions can be attainable as the useful ground for interpreting the selected Dahlian fiction.

In *An Analysis of the Children's Characters in Roald Dahl's Novel: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Wan Syakira Meor Hissan investigated the moral qualities of three child characters in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*: Augustus Gloop, Veruca Salt and Charlie Bucket. Based on the *Assessment in Moral Education at The Secondary School Level*, 16 moral values taught to school children in Malaysia namely compassion, freedom, moderation, self-reliance, courage, gratitude, humility, rationality, cooperation, respect, honesty, public spiritedness, love, diligence, justice, and physical and mental cleanliness had been traced through the characterization of the literary children. Hissan thinks that children's literature was and is frequently used as a tool to teach and enhance its child readers' moral values. By portraying the good child characters, the implied readers who are the children can relate to, identify themselves with and imitate the behaviors of the child characters in the fiction. To judge the child either he/she is good or bad, the child's mature and immature morality is measured via the characters' deeds and actions. The study finds that the immature morality is depicted by the egocentric and non-emphatic manners of Veruca and Augustus. Because both of them are bad children who are irresponsible, disobedient, aggressive, bossy and greedy, they are punished. In contrast, Charlie obeys all the factory's rules. Besides his obedience, his mature moral values of honesty, responsibility, love, courage and respect are demonstrated through the interactions with his family elders creating positive relationship with them. Therefore, Charlie is deemed a good boy who deserves to be rewarded with the chocolate factory. According to Hissan, the universal moral values in the Western fiction of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* would also be advantageous to Malaysian school children. When young children learn the consequences of bad habits in the story, they

can relate these consequences to their real world and refrain from these habits. Therefore, children's literature should be incorporated in the school policy (90). *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is the early Roald Dahl's children's book. In the later Roald Dahl's stories for the children, his child protagonists have been characterized differently from Charlie Bucket. In this dissertation, how and why Roald Dahl's child protagonists evolve and transform from the timid, obedient children will be elaborated in its last chapter.

The next two research studies on Dahl's fiction are Hans Henfridsson's *A Thematic Analysis of Roald Dahl's Adult Fiction* (2008) and Zuzana Lacová's *The Theme of Morbidity in Children's Writings of Roald Dahl* (2010). Henfridsson praises Dahl for his contribution of genuine art in combining humor to the plots without eliminating the macabre element in his adult short stories. Although Dahl uses both implicit and explicit techniques to present the macabre mood in his fiction, the explicit method tends to be adopted more, and it is usually integrated with ironic literary device. Many times the lead character is ridiculously portrayed betting his own body for money in these adult stories. Then he will find himself ending up in merciless destiny. Revenge between two genders, man and woman, also floods these adult stories. Under the spell of an animalistic sexual drive, the male character is repellently thrown into an absurd mortality. As for the child protagonists, the involvement with loneliness, death and insanity is imposed on the young characters. Sometimes the child can cause many people to die. In short, Dahl's fiction for the adults is full of perverse death, unpredictability and black humour (39-40).

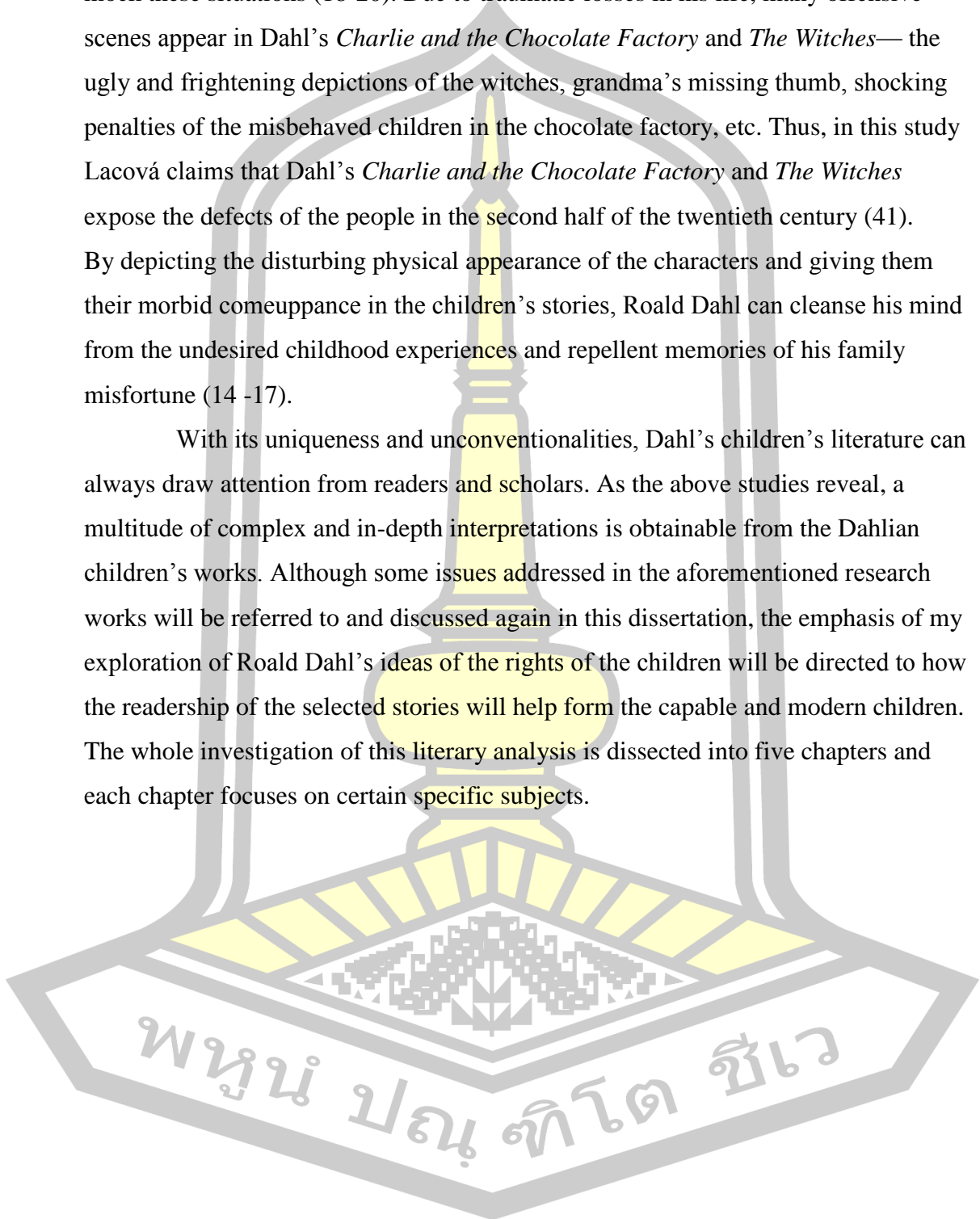
Regarding Zuzana Lacová's *The Theme of Morbidity in Children's Writings of Roald Dahl*, the study engages the writer's personal life to interpret Dahl's two stories for the children: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Witches*.

According to this investigation, Lacová describes that the person who has the sick state of mind is likely to see the world from the morbid point of view.

Psychologically, the gloomy aspects of the writer's life are influenced by the loss of family members, bullying and corporal punishment at schools including some external situations like wrong behaviors of the members in the society. Frequently consuming these abhorrent occurrences, the morbid thoughts are stocked in the writer's mind and these thoughts can develop to annoy his life from time to time.

To decrease the unpleasant features of morbidity, the only thing he can do is just to mock these situations (18-20). Due to traumatic losses in his life, many offensive scenes appear in Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Witches*— the ugly and frightening depictions of the witches, grandma's missing thumb, shocking penalties of the misbehaved children in the chocolate factory, etc. Thus, in this study Lacová claims that Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Witches* expose the defects of the people in the second half of the twentieth century (41). By depicting the disturbing physical appearance of the characters and giving them their morbid comeuppance in the children's stories, Roald Dahl can cleanse his mind from the undesired childhood experiences and repellent memories of his family misfortune (14 -17).

With its uniqueness and unconventionalities, Dahl's children's literature can always draw attention from readers and scholars. As the above studies reveal, a multitude of complex and in-depth interpretations is obtainable from the Dahlian children's works. Although some issues addressed in the aforementioned research works will be referred to and discussed again in this dissertation, the emphasis of my exploration of Roald Dahl's ideas of the rights of the children will be directed to how the readership of the selected stories will help form the capable and modern children. The whole investigation of this literary analysis is dissected into five chapters and each chapter focuses on certain specific subjects.



CHAPTER TWO

DAHL'S PORTRAYAL OF CHILDREN'S OPPRESSION

Oppression offends the children's rights and it permeates Roald Dahl's children's books. In chapter two, "Portrayal of Children's Oppression in Roald Dahl's Children's Literature," these subjects will be discussed: historical background and social contexts of children's oppression, theory on children's oppression, and the portrayal of children's oppression. To let the readers perceive and comprehend the consequences of children's oppression clearer, the final section of this chapter is dissected into physical and mental oppression.

Children's literature and the society are always related to each other. As discussed earlier in chapter one, stories can be a mirror of the society. Believing in the impact of the society on literature, critics usually discuss how and what important social events have been included in literary works. Viewing children's stories from this lens, their criticism may provide the answers and explanation for these questions: how are these events presented in the stories?; are the actions and situations presented in the stories purely fictionalized or based on historical truth?; or what kind of writer's social reactions can be decoded from the fictional components of the stories? As a matter of fact, the influences of the society on Roald Dahl's children's stories have been examined and pointed out already by some researchers. Dahl's harsh criticism of the post-industrial society is reflected through an ugly depiction of the adult antagonists and their unpleasant experiences at the end of his children's stories (Tumer 5). Also, many social emblems and major social changes in the twentieth century have usually been employed as a backdrop of his stories including the Empire State Building in *James and the Giant Peach*, Queen Elizabeth II in *The BFG*, the booming television business in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and the space exploration in *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* (Klugová 12).

In terms of the characterization of the female characters, particularly the heroines, Nienke Minneboo claims in her thesis *A Modern Fairy Tale: Gender and Power in Roald Dahl* (2012) that women's rights campaigns and the search for their social equality and liberation in the 1960's cause the meanings of fairy tales' gender

and power to be redefined in Roald Dahl's children's stories. Owing to these social activities, most of Dahl's children's stories are dominated by female characters. Moreover, the Dahlian lead girls and some female adult antagonists such as Sophie, Matilda, Miss Trunchbull and Miss Honey are not portrayed as passive, desperate, dependent and docile like those in *Cinderella* and *Snow White*. In other words, they are characterized to be different from the female characters in those classic stories (35 - 36). However, like what exists in the fairy tales, Dahl's works for the children as well as his first autobiography *Boy: Tales of Childhood* usually project the child protagonists who are oppressed by their parents, teachers, senior relatives and other bad adults. Even though Dahl's works and the fairy tales' similarities are indicated and the writer's childhood pains have been frequently employed to analyze and discuss Roald Dahl's children's works as briefly presented in chapter one, the researcher contends that the oppression of children displayed in Dahl's stories is not inspired only from the author's personal experiences and the writer's notions of the fictional elements in the fairy tales. Instead, the researcher believes and will make the argument in this chapter that the maltreatment of the children depicted in Roald Dahl's children's stories can be regarded as the effects of the ongoing socio-political events which the author views as serious social issues. Since the oppression of the children has been deep-rooted in our society, some people, especially the adults, seem to accept it as the normal human behavior (Crosson-Tower 20). Roald Dahl does not agree with most people. He continuously presents different forms of children's oppression in his children's stories to urge for attention and resolution from the public. In this chapter, the researcher investigates how children's oppression is portrayed in Dahl's works. To provide better understanding and make the argument of this investigation stronger, the historical background and social contexts of children's oppression are explored. Then, theory of children's oppression, physical and mental oppressions of the children as depicted in Dahl's chosen stories, and the effects of children's oppression are discussed.

Historical Background and Social Contexts of Children's Oppression

Children's oppression took place as early as the beginning of the history of humans. Based on *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1962) by Phillippe Ariès, the being of the children had never been discovered until the seventeenth century because before this era the idea or the concept of childhood had not originated yet (25). Prior to the Middle Age, the 'child' would immediately belong to the adult society as soon as it was delivered. Without the idea of childhood, nothing was created specifically for the children. They had to use the items initially produced for the adults: garments, household tools, and even books. Lacking the childhood concept, the adults in the ancient society generally thought that children were not different from them, except from their small size. So children were taken for granted and were treated badly. In addition, as Lloyd De Mause states in *The History of Childhood* (1974) that children were "killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized and sexually abused" (2).

Besides, mortality rate of the newly born babies was high. Therefore, the Medieval parents try not to show affection for their children. Some other reasons that brought about the oppression and grave treatment to the children were derived from the child's dependency on the adults and theological belief. Religiously, children were considered as the sinful belongings owned by their parents and the adults around. According to the psycho-historical records, the offerings of children were practiced in Mesoamerica, the Incas, Assyrian and other ancient societies in the first four centuries. The infants were sacrificed to gods. Unwanted children would be left in the wild to be killed by animals. Girls or those who were born with some disabilities had often been discarded and exposed to natural dangers to die. The tradition was continued in Rome until Christianity became the State religion (Rai 1). As for the pre-industrial families, children were needed to help the adults with hunting and farming as well. Sometimes parents would send their own children off to help relatives who needed labour for a short period of time (King 373). The living conditions of the children seemed to be better in the 1600s when John Locke (1632 – 1704) the English philosopher proposed his *Tabula Rasa* theorizing that children are born as "blank slates" ready to absorb whatever is taught or offered to them. People

started to think of children as separate human beings. Unfortunately, an industrialization in the 1800's caused the plight of most British children to go down to the opposite direction of John Locke's Romantic idea of an innocent childhood whose lives should be fully indulged in fun and enjoyment. When economy was transformed and mass production was manufactured in factories, most of poor Victorian children were put to work at an early age in textile mills, coal mines and business plants. Girls as young as five had become the maids or nurses of wealthy families. While industrialization was going on, a number of ragged children crowded city streets. The lives of the majority poor children were totally different from those of the minority rich (Gubar 2). The enslavement of the children which accompanied the periods of "Imperialism" or "Colonialism" and "Industrialization" led the lives of the poor children, particularly the orphans, to be hellish. They had to work in textile mills, coal mines and business plants at an early age with low pay. In order to fix these social problems, children's protection laws were passed and the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) was founded in 1889. Other child protection associations were set up, too, with the primary aim to solve these social issues of children's abuse, exploitation and oppression.

Then, two major wars broke out in the first half of the twentieth century, World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939 -1945). After both wars the world had encountered with global economic recessions. Children, particularly in Europe, were horrifically and massively affected both during the battling times and after the wars. The most shocking oppression of children took place when the German army occupied many European countries in the second war. The Nazis and their collaborators advocated the murder of non-Aryan children who were considered unwanted or dangerous both as part of the racial struggle and as a measure for security prevention. As reported in *The Holocaust: A Historical Summary*, more than a million children, mostly Jewish, were killed during the Second World War (United States Memorial Museum 17). Those who survived were forced to be subjects of medical experiments or used as child laborers. In the ghettos, Jewish children were left to die from hunger, insufficient clothes and shelterlessness. Considered too young, unproductive, ill, or disabled, these useless children were deported first to the killing centers. There, the unfortunate children were incarcerated, shot or gassed to death.

It can be said that being a child in those days was rather unpleasant and tragic in so many ways.

If we turn to look at another side of the world, we will find that in the United States the situations of children's oppression around the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century were not different from what happened in Europe and England. Although the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was established in 1875, prior to the British child protection organizations (Myer 449), children's oppression in America went on in drastic and dreadful conditions before the establishment of this organization. It came with the institutionalization of slavery during the colonial era in the seventeenth century. It increased during the American Revolution. Based on the American history, exploitation and child abuse could happen easily especially with the native American, African American, and ethnic minority American children. Often the enslaved black children were taken away from family without consent or were sold separately to buyers or traders with no biological parents or siblings. Owned by their masters, these black children had to work in the southern plantations or almshouses in the north during the civil war. As stated in *The Maltreatment of the Children from Historical Perspective*, sometimes, those stronger and more powerful adults even used these children to gratify their sexual need (2-3). The newborns were cruelly killed. Bigger ones were assaulted and raped. At the same time, the adult oppressors were rarely blamed or legally prosecuted by the society. Nonetheless, some social practice and legal actions had attempted to alleviate the problem of children's oppression taking place in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. As enumerated in *A Short History of Child Protection in America* that the news of the NYSPCC (New York Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the first child protection organization), spread and by 1922, "some 300 nongovernmental child protection societies were scattered across America" (Myers 452). When the laws to penalize the children's oppressors were enacted and more juvenile courts and non-governmental associations were inaugurated, the lives of these marginalized and deprived children seemed henceforth to get better.

In light of the historical contexts, the sixties to the eighties in both America and England were so eventful and dynamic, incorporating the sociopolitical reforms; cultural and philosophical transformations; and advancement in several disciplines: science, technology, medicine, psychology, etc. These decades followed World War II; the world was in the period of decolonization, great depressions, Cold War, and consumerism. The global societies were dissected into two political sides led by the American and Russian superpowers. While Russia's communism propagated collectivism and classless social structure, the United States' capitalism has theorized the ideologies of private ownership, freedom, democracy, and humanism. Through these years of the second half of the twentieth century, there were so many changes and the world was apparently chaotic. Amidst these tumults, the formerly marginalized groups like women, gays, Blacks, Hispanics, workers and students stood up to demand for social justice, freedom, individuality, autonomy, and suffrage (Anderson 21; A Hunt 147). They deviated from social norms and called for different kinds of rights. Protests representing different suppressed and voiceless groups successively and rampantly took place around the world, particularly in Europe and America. Governments and authorities were questioned and no longer trusted by the peoples. The baby boom from the previous decades in combination with the rapid economic growth, scientific and technological successes catalyzed antiwar movements, sexual and cultural revolts from the young generation (Marwick 39). Students' uprisings erupted to resist severity of learning, living and evaluative system in schools and universities across England, France, Japan and America. The most famous demonstrations by mass students happened in Paris in May 1968 (Maurin & McNelly 4).

Almost all Roald Dahl's children's stories were written from the 1960s to 1980s. He turned to start writing children's fiction in the sixties, during the second half of his writing career. This change was acted in compliance with his American literary agent and his publisher's suggestions. In addition, Dahl was also inspired by his fatherhood's obligation. When having the children of his own, he had to devise bedtime stories for them. At this stage of his life, he and his family alternated living and working in both England and the United States (Minneboo 35). While big students who were radical and strong could fight for themselves, small children could

not do anything under different forms of oppression inflicted upon them by the adults. Thus, children's oppression remained during the time the Dahlian children's stories were created. Extreme corporal punishment had been identified in institutions; brutal mistreatment of the children occurred in their child-care centers and residential schools. Child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and oppression had become serious social issues gaining attention from the general public (Shaw 17 -19). Based on John E. B. Myers' article "A Short History of Child Protection in America" published in the *Family Law Quarterly* (2008), child abuse became the "national issue" of the United States in the 1960s (454 – 455). Officials and social workers from non-government organizations cooperated to find the solutions to these matters and physicians played an important role to awake the nation to be aware of the calamities of children's oppression.

Children's oppression has been a long-lasting social problem. It imposes sufferings and difficulties on the oppressed. Besides destroying the lives of these innocent children, oppression instigates social injustice. Roald Dahl underwent different forms of oppression when he was a child. The narrative in his first autobiography *Boy: Tales of Childhood* is filled with countless episodes of exploitation, abuse, and mistreatment which the school masters, bigger students and matrons commit to the children, the boy Dahl and his friends. As the grownup and a father, Dahl had to witness these unethical deeds consistently taking place again in the British and American societies from the 1960s to 1980s, the period he wrote children's fiction. As Roald Dahl clearly remembered the pain and bitterness he received from being oppressed when attending schools, he did not want oppression to occur to other children. In opposition to children's oppression, he employed his children's stories to be a tool to expose the cruelty of children's oppression to his implied readers and the community at large. In the ensuing section, the concepts and studies concerning children's oppression are reviewed and discussed to provide valid groundwork for the comprehension of recurrent theme of children's oppression centering on the chosen Dahlian children's works.

Theory on Children's Oppression

The definitions of children's oppression remain unstable. Some scholars in the field may base the meaning of the term on the results which will befall the subjects of an ill-treatment. For example, in her article "Five Faces of Oppression" Iris Marion Young implies that any practice of dictatorship or tyranny by the ruling adults can create oppression and injustice for the children (1). Therefore, it can be assumed that all impositions which generate any unfair, cruel and wrong doing acted upon the small children and young adolescents aged under eighteenth can be deemed oppression of the children. The concept of child abuse alone, according to Gwyneth R. Boswell, can be "complex and does not lend itself easily to its definition" (87). Indeed, the scope of children's oppression can be extended to all kinds of abuse, neglect, exploitation, maltreatment, and harm that happen when the adults unethically and inefficiently administer their power to treat, raise and take care of the children. Even the denial of their language, education and opportunities that may make children grow fully as capable mature human both in mind and in body can also be considered as an act of oppression. Whenever the children are oppressed, their freedom and potential are limited and they will become less human.

The unsettled meanings of children's oppression engage obstacles and uneasy conditions for all parties involved. When social workers, lawyers and scholars conduct their research studies concerning the ill-treatments of the children, they primarily encounter discordant interpretations of the expressions interchangeably used for giving the overall concepts concerning children's oppression.

By and large, the terms used for children's oppression such as abuse, neglect, exploitation, ill-treatment, maltreatment and so on can be viewed from either the legal or cultural standpoints and they are widely recognized for their indefinite meanings. Based on an article "Child Abuse" which was published in Jonathan Bradshaw's *Poverty: The Outcomes for Children*, Deborah Quilgars asserts that "cultural understandings and standards" make the definitions of children's oppression and child abuse to become varied (65). The complication of an adoption of the terms is attributable to various reasons. In the first instance, approvable treatment of children differs across cultures. For example, while traditional families in some Asian nations

may allow using an open hand to spank or slap the children for their misbehavior, many European countries may ban any forms of corporal punishment. Sometimes it is also very difficult to indicate the precise boundary between parenting and oppressing one's children. Personal values, religious beliefs, education and even economic or social factors like poverty, filial duties, adultism or hierarchicalism can result in what the person considers as harmful or beneficial treatment to the children, too. With different understandings and perceptions of children's oppression, the studies to prevent these adults' misdeeds inflicted on the small persons can sometimes be obscure and difficult to deal with particularly in terms of identifying and reporting the abusive and oppressive events to the relevant agencies.

In spite of obscurity and cultural difficulty for defining terms used in the theory of children's oppression, some legal institutions and social organizations which work for children's safety and well-being have continued to broadly define all the terms necessary for facilitating and enabling successful operation of the jobs done by their officers and agents. *A Literature Review into Children Abused and/or Neglected Prior to Custody*, the research supported by England's Youth Justice Board, cites the meanings of children's oppression terms guided by Welsh Assembly Government and Working Together to Safeguard Children. These definitions are widely applied by related organizations in the United Kingdom. As the services of these foundations to safeguard and promote the children's welfare will cover protecting the children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health and development; ensuring that children will grow safely and successfully from their childhood to adulthood with their fullest potential, identifying forms of abuse and neglect accurately is crucial to the accomplishment of their duties. Even though the meanings of many forms of abuse and neglect overlap making it hard to differentiate one form from another, their definitions are briefly given as follows:

Harm refers to ill treatment or impairment of health or development or witnessing the ill treatment of another; development means physical, social, intellectual, emotional or behavioral development. Abuse and neglect include physical, emotional or sexual maltreatment of the children. Hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating can be categorized as physical abuses. Emotional abuse refers to any inappropriate interactions with the

children that may lead to negative consequences of their emotional development. Causing children to feel frightened or in danger, exploitation, corruption are also considered as emotionally abusing the children. Sexual abuse engages compelling the children to participate in any sexual activities such as prostitution, physical or non - physical contacts or even looking at any pornographic materials, or urging the children to sexually or improperly behave. Neglect is the consistent failure to fulfill the children's basic physical and/or psychological needs. Ostracizing the children from family and inadequately supervising a child's growing are regarded as neglecting as well (Day, Hibbert and Cadman 58 – 59).

The extent of the meanings of children's oppression seems to collectively integrate all definitions of every form of misdeeds that the adults may inflict on the children. As it has been stated in the study conducted by Beverly Kingston, Bob Regoli and John D. Hewitt, *The Theory of Differential Oppression: A Developmental-Ecological Explanation of Adolescent Problem Behavior*, "the term oppression is a summation of the abusive, neglectful, and disrespectful relations many children confront. . . . it occurs whenever adults act in ways that belittle or trivialize children as being something less than authentic and feeling human beings" (241). Based on such definition of "oppression", it appears that a child can be oppressed easily and frequently.

Theoretically, children can easily be the victims of the adult's oppression owing to various reasons. Because the biological nature, social status, and legal power of the children are inferior to those of the adults, oppressive adults can exercise their power to control the children completely whenever and wherever they want. The children's state of inferiority certainly predisposes the status of their dependency. In almost all circumstances, children have to socially, economically, and legally rely on their related adults – parents, senior relatives, teachers or guardians. Most of children, especially the very small ones, cannot provide for themselves in terms of basic needs and finance. On certain matters like marriage or setting up business, children cannot make their own decision or run the business without parental or legal permission if they are underage. When they want to do anything, they have to ask for permission from adults close to them, causing them to feel lacking independence. Facing with many restrictions in their daily life, all children will regularly be

oppressed by the adults' controlling supremacy. As notified by Friere, the more the adults try to control the children, the more oppressed the children will become. . . . [Subsequently] the children will be transformed to be like "inanimate things or objects" (51). The lives of these oppressed children will be subordinated, and this deprives them of earning living human beings' essential qualifications such as sentience, mobility, awareness, autonomy and will. In their "Differential Oppression Theory" published in an *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Deviant Behavior* (2001) Robert M. Regoli and John D. Hewitt posit concordant remarks that although the degree of an oppression that each particular child bears may vary according to the consistency and severity of the oppressive events he/she undergoes, all children are oppressed (131 – 133).

Based on the oppression patterns classified by Iris Marion Young's "Five Faces of Oppression", children who reside in the society which oppression exists will inevitably confront with these social situations ensuing oppression: violence, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism (1). Among these oppressed situations, violence is regarded by Young as the most "obvious and visible" form (4). As for the children, the threat from violence can harm them very easily and even their lives will be lost since children are fragile and unable to protect themselves. Oppressed children have to stand different kinds of attack and damages perpetrated by the adults. They can be hurt verbally, physically and mentally from the adults' rage or beating. Dangerous tools may be used as weapons to injure the children. In the worst case scenario, children can be killed if such violence inflicted on the vulnerable children gets out of the adult's hand. Under the social situation of exploitation, children may be tricked to work for the adults' benefits with unjust compensation. They can be forced to work in the sweat shops, factories or farms with low pay. These workplaces are usually in poor conditions constituting both unhealthy and unsafe environment for the child workers. Some unfortunate children may even be lured to get involved with immoral and illegal jobs like begging, narcotic business, armed force, and prostitution. Children will be socially rejected and removed from basic resources if they undergo marginalization. Nevertheless, when comparing between exploitation and marginalization, as stated by Young, the latter is worse than the former because the children's social status will be downgraded until they will

finally be dissociated from the society (2). Being marginalized, even the child's labor will be deemed useless for the oppressors. In the past, marginalization was usually caused by racial and capitalist reasons. Black children or small native citizens in some countries were confined to the edge of the society or banished from their original home to live in the reservations by the more powerful and victorious Whites. If the most brutal marginalization happened, all children of one certain race could be eliminated from the society for good like what happened to the Jewish children in Europe during World War 2.

Oppression divides the society into two opposite sides: the powerful and the powerless. Ruled by the dominating adults, children whose rights and privileges are taken away will be definitely categorized as the powerless. Lacking their power, children will be unable to decide, participate in, and voice their opinions on any minor or major changes in their own lives. They will be treated with disgrace on regular basis. According to Paulo Freire, "powerlessness is the strongest form of oppression" since oppressed children who do not have power will be prohibited to speak about oppression or injustice they suffer (qtd. in Young 2). In the more calamitous situation, oppressed children do not even realize that their lives are enslaved and degraded by all adversities of an oppression. Opting to be reticent instead, they accept the ill-treatment as something they deserve. Finally, they will become totally silenced earning "no voice and no will" (Young 2).

The last social occurrence which succeeds oppression is Cultural Imperialism. As described in Young's "Five Faces of Oppression", this kind of oppression takes place when the governing group of people decide a set of communication, manners, behaviors and beliefs and "establish it as a norm" for the rest of the society to obey and practice. This kind of oppression can be exemplified from the case of India. Being colonized by Britain, the Indian people had been deeply ingrained by the British culture during the period of colonization. However, even after they had been given their independence, modern Indians still speak English, walk, talk, eat by imitating the British way of life. In terms of sexuality, people like the transgenders or homosexuals will be seen as inferior or abnormal only because the majority of people are heterosexual (Young 3-4). Without a doubt, in categorizing the children and the adults into two parties of cultural imperialism, it is obvious that the

adults will belong to the ruling class whereas the children will become the class which is ruled. Having the power in their hands to control the children, the superior and influential adults can instruct and disseminate what they think appropriate to the children regardless of opposition or dislike from the children. Children will have to receive the adult's beliefs, values, goals, custom, language, and way of living given to them. They cannot create nor have their own identity. Even though they do have their own identity before the oppression takes place, they will lose their own identity soon. With the concept of Cultural Imperialism that comes along with children's oppression, the child will be labeled by a lot of stereotypes leading them to become "the Others" and "invisible" at last in the society.

Many factors cause the adults to oppress, maltreat, abuse, exploit or neglect the children. Individually, the adults' age, gender, abuse history, personal character, relationship pattern and so on can push them to consciously and unconsciously oppress the children residing in their vicinity. The study conducted by Vincent J Fontana, a pediatrician renowned for maltreatment syndrome in the children, unveiled that a case of child abuse is usually complicated deriving from several motives and multiple stimulators (736 – 744). Parents who are underage, uneducated, immature, financially unstable and those whose marriage is arranged by families or relationship happens accidentally and temporarily without love, goal and intention will be likely to possess the inabilities to meet the demands or take responsibilities accompanying parenthood. If problems from work occur at the same time with other marriage and living crisis, these parents will be unable to cope with difficulties in their lives wisely. They may gain anxiety, stress, and temper imposing the indifference, victimization and violence upon their own children. Some adults may use or be addicted to drugs, alcohol or substances. Substance addiction will alter the users' perception and reality leading them to gain physical and mental damages. They will be behaviorally and emotionally erratic. When getting intoxicated or high, these parents cannot control themselves. They always ignore, harass, frighten, and abuse their children. Statistically, two – thirds of cases of child ill-treatment belong to children whose parents are chemically dependent. So chemical dependency and substance abuse can be another key factor which results in children's oppression.

Certain social, cultural and communal factors can impinge upon children's oppression, exploitation and abuse. Attempting to discipline the children as well as to maintain social order, the adults will expect that the children will comply with their instructions and commands. If the children refuse to obey, the adults tend to coerce or use force to make the children do and behave as they want. As earlier discussed, children's oppression is partly encouraged by the deeply rooted religious and cultural beliefs that the children must be subservient to the adults. Consequently, it becomes a social norm that if the children disobey their parents, beating, harming or removing support and privileges from them as punishment are widely justified and acceptable in the society. According to the article "Beyond Conventions Towards Empowerment" published in *The Moral Status of Children: Essays on the Rights of the Child*, Michael Freeman has called this unethical tradition as the "sick culture" legitimizing victimization of children by adults. Freeman asserts that children's oppression roots more in this culture rather than in "the socio-environment stress or the parental psycho-pathology" (76). Unlike Freeman's contention, several studies have been cited and disclosed in *The Theory of Differential Oppression: A Developmental-Ecological Explanation of Adolescent Problem Behavior* that adverse neighborhood, poverty and social isolation have a tremendous impact on an increase in the adults or parents' practices of child abuse, neglect, maltreatment, or oppression (Kingston, Regoli and Hewitt 244). It has been reported further in this theory that prevalent children's oppression usually takes place in the communities where these issues are usually high: free school meals availability, unemployment rates, debts, and single-parent density.

Children respond to oppression differently. At the minimum level, they may passively accept their inferior status to the adults but in the meantime internalize their fear, pain and even hatred. Some other forms of the children's adaptive reactions may include to adopt truancy and delinquency, to bully friends, or to seek retribution against their adult oppressors (Kingston, Regoli and Hewitt 250). Whatever forms may occur or be chosen by the children to respond to the adults, oppression usually emanates positive, negative and mixed effects. These effects can automatically happen to or be chosen by the oppressed children either immediately, later or consistently. Roald Dahl, as it has been said, was oppressed by teachers and bigger students when attending schools. In addition, as discussed in the previous section,

children's oppression has been deep-rooted in the society and it continually and increasingly happened in the period Dahl turned to write fiction for the children. Writing children's stories which are full of the portrayal of the maltreatment and cruelty that the adult antagonists inflict upon the child protagonists can be regarded as both Dahl's reaction to the bitter experiences he received and the campaign to call for attention and solutions for this social problem. In the following section, Dahl's ten literary narratives of the oppressive events are discussed.

The Portrayal of Children's Oppression

Children's oppression has become an outstanding trait of Roald Dahl's writings for the children. He wrote seventeen children and young people's stories altogether and ten out of all these works display the adult characters and the metaphors for the adults who abuse and exploit the children physically and mentally. These works include *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *The Magic Finger* (1966), *The Enormous Crocodile* (1978), *The Twits* (1980), *George's Marvelous Medicine* (1981), *The BFG* (1982), *The Witches* (1983), *Matilda* (1988), and *The Minpins* (1991). Therefore, in this section, I contend that these chosen Dahlian texts are used to be the tools to expose the dangers and negativities of children's oppression to his readers. Oppression when he was young caused Dahl to be confused and tormented (Dahl 144-145). He did not understand why some adults who were supposed to be the child's caregivers and protectors could do such bad things to the fragile and defenseless children. Dahl could not forget all the unhappiness and distress he used to feel. Even when he became grownup, the grieves and pains from the oppression in his early age kept haunting him. Thus, in this part of the dissertation I discuss that writing the ten selected children's stories not only helps oppressive situations become comprehensible to Dahl, it also heals him. In other words, it can be said that all the adversities and bitter feelings caused by children's oppression had been eliminated from Dahl's life. Dahl could recover completely from the haunting childhood agony by creating the literary texts focusing on children's oppression. Besides, I also claim that through writing these children's books, Dahl has declared his significant role as the children's advocate who tries to

protect the small persons from harm, neglect, abuse and exploitation instigated by oppression which prevail the American and British societies.

As it was said of late in the theory of oppression, it is difficult to define and classify the terms and forms of oppression. Scholars from several relevant fields and people from different cultures whose works engage the children's welfare and development rarely have the same ideas about and attitudes towards the definitions and types of children's oppression. Moreover, when oppression takes place, it rarely takes place in an isolated form but several forms of oppression are usually found to happen concurrently. To prevent such aforementioned problems to confuse the readers, the researcher has resolved the problems by simply defining that any situations and actions which are done and have an impact on the child characters' body will be regarded as physical oppression. On the contrary, if any situations, actions and forms of oppression do not affect the body of the child characters but they have effects on the child's psyche, they will be regarded as mental oppression. The discussion of Dahl's works with respect to child's oppression is based on these two categories.

Physical Oppression

Physical oppression in Roald Dahl's selected children's stories is reflected through the relationships between the child protagonists and the adult antagonists. These two groups of characters are depicted to stand for one particular party whose functions involve children's oppression: the child protagonists as the oppressed and the adult antagonists as the oppressors. In these works, the lead child characters are specifically created to share some qualities and experiences of oppression which their author possessed and underwent. Once again, with reference to Dahl's first autobiography *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, Dahl has confirmed that the oppression impinged on him by the bigger school boys, the teachers and matron has deeply hurt him, and it is very difficult for him to get rid of the fear from oppression, "By now I am sure you will be wondering why I lay so much emphasis upon school beatings in these pages. The answer is that I cannot help it. All through my school life I was appalled by the fact that masters and senior boys were allowed literally to wound

other boys, and sometimes quite severely. I couldn't get over it" (Dahl 144-145). Inspired and stimulated strongly again by the cruelty of children's oppression he observes in the British and American societies in the twentieth century, Dahl has to deploy his writings for the children to manifest the dangers of children's oppression to his audience.

The portrayal of the life of James Henry Trotter, the main character in Dahl's first children's book – *James and the Giant Peach*, mirrors how Dahl's fiction for the children is configured by an oppression of the children. Roald Dahl can recall vividly the physical pains he underwent as a child. In this children's story, Dahl illustrates clearly the four-to- seven-year old boy who has been taken away all the basic needs required to nourish his body to survive and grow as a strong adult. At the opening of the book, James is forced to confront a child's most unfortunate situation when his parents are killed unexpectedly by the rhinoceros that escapes from London Zoo. Being an orphan, James becomes homeless. Thus, he has to move out from his parents' house "carrying nothing but a small suitcase containing a pair of pyjamas and a toothbrush" (Dahl 7) to live with Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spikers who "... right from the beginning [...] started beating poor James for almost no reason at all" (Dahl 8). Living with these cruel aunts, James is put to sleep in the tiny, unfurnished bedroom. Intending to neglect James, these aunts do not feed him properly and even they mercilessly and selfishly enslave James to do chores for them. As his body needs the energy to function daily activities, it braves James to plead his self-centered aunts for a meal, "Could I please have something to eat first? He asked. 'I haven't had a thing all day'" (Dahl 34). With nothing in his stomach, James has to chop woods for kitchen stove amidst hot weather and pick garbage in the dark. A small kid in preschool age like James has been deprived of all suitable living conditions during the three-year stay with his aunts. The narrow and unequipped room cannot facilitate and stimulate his daily activities. He can neither move around nor rest comfortably in this room. Hunger or the frequent deficiency of food will cause him to become small and underweight. He may develop some diseases or health problems because of the undernourishment. Indeed, on the basis of five forms of oppression categorized by Iris Marion Young, the most violent oppression which James aunts impinge upon his body must be the unreasonable beating (1). Being insanely paddled, James' body is

severely hurt. In spite of the fact that the bruises, wounds, and bleeding on James's parts are not elaborately described in the this story like what Dahl usually does with the caning scenes in *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, readers can easily visualize and make the accurate prediction of what kind of brutal marks and injuries appearing on poor James' skin. By creating the parentless boy who is abusively whipped and rapaciously taken advantages of by the big adults, Roald Dahl can successfully draw sympathy from his readers for his first child hero.

According to *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943) proposed by Abraham Harold Maslow, people are prompted by a series of needs to act and do things. These needs have become our motivations which can be classified into hierarchical levels: some needs come before other needs. Our most basic needs are for physical survival. When the needs in this early group are satisfied, people will be instigated to do things by the higher needs (375). Based on Maslow's motivational theory, children are not supposed to be able to survive, grow and aspire for higher achievements in their lives unless their primary biological and physiological needs such as air, food, drink, sleep, shelter and clothes are met. Dahl's first two stories for the children apparently reflect the notions from Maslow's psychological and behavioral concepts since the portrayal of the child protagonists in both *James and the Giant Peach* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* emphasizes how important these requisites are for the children's existence and well-being.

Similar to James, Charlie Bucket is presented as the skinny boy whose fundamental factors of successful physical development are impoverished. Due to his family's destitution, Charlie, his parents and other four grandparents have to live in a small, ramshackle house subsisting on meager diets including only bread and margarine for breakfast, boiled potatoes for lunch and cabbage soup for supper. Moreover, they cannot afford even second helping in each meal except on Sunday. Only on his birthday will Charlie have a six-penny bar of chocolate and he usually makes it "last for more than a month" (Dahl 17). The family suffers more when Mr. Bucket, the sole breadwinner, loses his job causing Charlie to become thinner and sicker. In order to survive, as depicted in the book, Charlie has to do everything "slowly and carefully, to prevent exhaustion," (Dahl 59). In contrast to other four Golden Ticket winners, the physical oppression which Charlie confronts, as adhering

to the *The Theory of Differential Oppression: A Developmental-Ecological Explanation of Adolescent Problem Behavior* reported earlier (Kingston, Regoli and Hewitt 244), mainly stems from poverty, not from the adults in his family.

In Roald Dahl's next children's book, *The Magic Finger*, physical oppression happens not to the unnamed-eight-year-old girl who is the main character, but to the metaphor for the children, the ducks. This time the children's safety, not their biological and physiological needs, is a focus of the story. Despite its thinness containing only 57 pages and lots of drawings, the reciprocal roles of the oppressed and the oppressor vividly and wisely portrayed are very effective for creating apprehension of oppression to the readers. In this story an excessive shooting of the ducks and other animals by the Greggs outrages the girl. The Greggs are comparable to the adults who are embodied with more power and better equipped with weapons according to their size, strength, and the guns. Hearing the bangs, the girl realizes that the Greggs do not stop hunting in spite of her warning. Thus, she uses her magic finger to cast a spell to convert all the Greggs into ducks. They become very short, small having two wings and feathers instead of long arms, hands and fingers. Certainly, at the same time the ducks are transformed to become big and strong having two arms like humans. The happenings have switched the Greggs' lives to those of the ducks, and vice versa. Becoming ducks, the Greggs family is thrown out of their house to live on the tree, learning to build the nest and sleep in it. From what Dahl depicts, their living as ducks is very difficult and miserable whereas the ducks who live the human's lives appear to be very joyful, comfortable and happy. Residing in the Greggs' house, the ducks swim and bathe in the tub, cook on Mrs. Gregg's stove, and sleep comfortably in William's bed. When they all wake up in the morning, the enormous ducks walk out of the house carrying the Greggs' guns to kill the Greggs. Being afraid of dying, the Greggs have to beg the ducks not to shoot them. Their conversation highlights the two paradoxical statuses of the people in our global society: the powerful and the powerless. At this moment, the Greggs are figuratively turned to be the powerless children. The plight of their lives will depend on the ducks' mercy who are pointing guns at their heads. When the Greggs promise not to shoot animals again, they are allowed to survive and everything is back to normal. No explanation is given why the girl is so enraged by the hunting of animals. However,

if readers put themselves in the girl's shoes they can comprehend that shooting or mistreating someone smaller and less powerful for fun is wrong and unfair. If shooting animals is not restricted, these animals will be extinct in the long term and we would not have meat to consume. In similar fashion, if children were hurt, attacked, or killed, we couldn't maintain human species. Or if the damaged children survive, they will not grow fully and healthily. Then, our world would become an unpleasant place to live as it would be inhabited by deformed people who were physically wounded by dangers from unkind adults.

The social issue of children's safety is emphasized again in Roald Dahl's subsequent children's picture book, *The Enormous Crocodile*. At its opening, the Enormous Crocodile living in the muddiest river in Africa tells the average-sized crocodile how much he craves for capturing one or two fat and juicy children for lunch. On his way from the jungle to town, all animals he meets are informed about his "clever tricks and plans" to which they all disagree (Dahl 3). To lure the children, the Enormous Crocodile pretends to be the coconut tree, the seesaw, the seat at merry-go-round, as well as the picnic bench. Luckily for the children, all these plans are foiled by Humpy-Rumpy, the hippo, Muggle-Wump the monkey, Roly-Poly Bird, before Trunky the Elephant swings the Enormous Crocodile around and throws him up to crash into the sun and explode. When associating those large anthropomorphized animals such as an Enormous Crocodile, the hippo and the elephant, they can represent the adults. Since the children are targeted to be the crocodile's food but they are saved by the hippo and the elephant, the reflection of these adults' actions conveys the message to the child readers that this world is composed of both kinds of the grownups who can be either the children's friends or foes. Nevertheless, being minors who are inexperienced and weak, they must be cautious and careful because anywhere they go, there can be pretentious kind adult whose malicious oppression is covered inside like the Enormous Crocodile. In the meantime, the adults who are bigger, stronger and more experienced should help and protect the children like what the hippopotamus and the elephant do in *The Enormous Crocodile*. Based on *The Enormous Crocodile*'s storyline of safety, it can be inferred that children are prone to all kinds of dangers and accidents. Hence, the adult caregivers have to be very well aware of their potential for high risks. Wherever the

children live and go, according to the implication from many dangerous settings, children deserve to be watched and take care of fully.

Written for older children, Dahl's next story, *The Twits* does not emerge into the children's reading market as a picture book like *The Enormous Crocodile*. Besides it is pretty much longer than *The Enormous Crocodile* containing two hundred and eight pages in total. Nonetheless, this book shares the theme of children's safety with its predecessor, *The Enormous Crocodile*. *The Twits* presents the story of a nasty and childless couple who regularly play pranks on each other but will immediately co-work only when they want to oppress the children and the animals. Both Mr. and Mrs. Twits are portrayed as child and animal haters who are in their sixties. Although Mrs. Twit used to be beautiful, she develops her physical repulsiveness more and more because of her ugly thoughts. Mrs. Twit always carries a staff in her right hand with an intention to hit "dogs, cats, and small children" (Dahl 8). A lot of "spiky thistles and stinging nettles" trees are grown in her garden to keep out "nasty nose little children," (Dahl 38). As for her husband, Mr. Twit is depicted as a very hirsute and filthy old man. Instead of their familiar Bird Pie, Mr. Twit prefers to have Boy Pie which will be freshly cooked from four little boys who sneakily climbs The Dead Big Tree to see the caged monkeys which are kept in their garden. Both Mr. and Mrs. Twits were once the circus trainers. They had dreamt that someday they "would own the first GREAT UPSIDE DOWN MONKEY CIRCUS in the world" (Dahl 45); therefore, the Mugle – Wump family (the monkeys) is forced and tortured to do everything upside down in their house for at least six hours a day. Practicing these activities with their hands on the floor and feet up to the ceiling is really excruciating but the Mugle – Wump family cannot resist since disobeying means they will be beaten brutally with a stick. Allegorically, the caged monkeys in this story are like the children because they share similar characteristics. Both the monkeys and the children are playful, mischievous, naughty, fragile, impish and hardly staying still. It can be said that because the Twits could not have the "GREAT UPSIDE DOWN MONKEY CIRCUS" before their retirement, they try as hard as they can to make the monkeys redeem their unattainable ambition. To remind parents and adults that forcing children to compensate your unachievable dream in the past can engender melancholy and disaster to the children's lives beyond what we could imagine, Roald Dahl has

portrayed how horrible the lives of the Muggle – Wump monkeys and the birds are under the Twits' oppression and control.

Sometimes a child's reactions to oppression are unpredictable. A response chosen by George Kranky, an eight-year-old boy protagonist in Dahl's next book, *George's Marvelous Medicine*, does not conform to the adaptive responses described in the differential oppression theory. This time the topic of children's physical oppression is not about their safety either, but it is shifted to an exploitation of the child's labor. Whenever his parents are away, Grandma will boss George around, frighten and mislead him with absurd instructions concerning his eating habits, health and physical development. She tells George to stop growing by ridiculously explaining to him that growth or getting taller will make him become lazy, sloppy, untidy and stupid. Eating slugs and caterpillars is also suggested to her grandson. George thinks that his grandma acts weirdly and differently from most typical grandmas because she is sick. To cure his own grandma from her disease, George concocts his special recipe made from hair shampoo, toothpaste, paraffin, and anything reachable in his house hoping that after taking this cooking she will no longer mistreat him. Unexpectedly, after taking doses of his remedies, grandma is metamorphosed and vanished.

As this story reflects, children's oppression cannot completely be prevented to happen to the children even when they are left in their own residence with their own biological senior relative. As soon as George's parents depart from the house, George's grandma cannot wait to bellow her command and control over her little grandson, "You can make me a nice cup of tea for a start" (Dahl 2). George is a good boy so he asks how his grandma prefers to have her tea and he follows his grandma's preference strictly: one spoon of sugar and no milk. Anyway, when he brings it to his grandma, she complains that the tea is not sweet enough so she orders him to go back to the kitchen to add another spoonful of sugar into her tea. One more time, George obeys his grandma's instruction. Unfortunately, George's grandma is not satisfied yet. After an addition of one more spoon of sugar, she still picks on her own grandson stating that she cannot drink tea from a cup with no saucer. Another more time, George's grandma is not ready to drink her tea; she requests for a tea spoon even though George has explained to her that the tea has been already well-stirred. She

insists that George must fetch a spoon for her. The way that this nasty grandma demands and controls a small boy like George to unnecessarily redo the one simple job of tea making for four times can be regarded as an exploitation of the child's labor, another form of children's physical oppression (Young 1-2). As a matter of fact, asking children to do chores or some trivial jobs for the adults can be helpful to train them to become diligent and learn to be responsible. However, the sarcastic tone and abusive approach which George's grandma uses with her grandson seem to do harm rather than good with the boy, else he will not try to cook several formulas of medicine to heal her.

Children's oppression is employed very early to be the backdrop of Dahl's next fiction *The BFG* when introducing the girl protagonist, Sophie. As narrated in the story, "You got punished if you were caught out of bed after lights-out. Even if you said you had to go to the lavatory, that was not accepted as an excuse and they punished you just the same" (Dahl 2). According to this description, we have been informed that all girls have to physically endure multiple strict practices at the orphanage. Being forbidden to use toilet during the night time may cause the orphaned children to wet their bed leading to many health problems like sleep disorders, enlarged bladder, bladder tract infection, urinary retention, and kidney disease. Apparently, it is rather difficult for a very young girl like Sophie to sleep. Unlike general children who are supposed to sleep easily, Sophie stays awake until midnight. Being prompted from the inability to close her eyes during the witching hours, Sophie approaches the windows, peers out, and surprisingly, she sees the giant blowing the dreams into the children's bedrooms. This causes her to be kidnapped from the orphanage by the giant. For his safety, the BFG (Big Friendly Giant) has to take the girl back with him to his residence in the giant land. The BFG is afraid that if he allows Sophie to live on in the human town at the orphanage, the girl will tell other people about his story and he will be hunted for his life by these cruel human beings.

At first the girl thinks she must be dead from being eaten by this giant. But BFG is a vegetarian; he eats only "snoozecumbers". However, in the giant land there are other nine human bean eating giants whose names convey their favorite foods: the Fleshlumpeter, the Bonecruncher, the Manhugger, the Childchewer, the Meatdripper, the Gizzardgulper, the Maidmasher, the Bloodbottler, and the Butcher Boy. The BFG

is kind so he wants to protect a child like Sophie. To keep Sophie safe from his friends, the BFG has to hide her in his own cave. As a matter of fact, it is not easy for the BFG to protect Sophie because other giants are four times bigger than him. That's why the BFG is referred to as "Runt" by other giants. As it normally happens in the society, when someone behaves differently, she/he is discriminated from the rest. Eating "snoozecumbers" makes the BFG become "other" to his giant friends. He cannot fit in his society due to his inferior size and feeding. So he is often picked on and bullied by these bigger giants. Like some bigger, stronger but imprudent adults, the bigger giants often bully the smaller BFG by using him as the toy ball and throw him here and there whenever they want to without caring if his body aches or hurts. Even though the BFG does not like the way he is ill-treated, he can do nothing to stand against these bigger giants. Many times, he thinks that if one of them cannot catch him, his limbs will be broken. Still, he has to tolerate their physical mistreatment. One day Sophie and the BFG happen to know that these human-eating giants will catch the English school children for food. So both Sophie and the BFG have to hatch a plan to help save the children. Initially, the BFG is afraid to do it. He agrees to help after Sophie stimulates and assures him of her careful plan. With cooperation from the Queen of England and her army, all giants are imprisoned in a huge pit and they are fed only by snoozecumbers. In terms of their size and power, other giants can be regarded as the allegory for the adults. Like many Dalian stories, leviathan, enormity, power, strength, and authority, can frequently be associated with negativities. So except for the BFG, the bigger giants, the enormous crocodiles and many adult characters are portrayed as wicked, ugly, selfish, cruel, for example.

Another adult character in *The BFG* who can be exemplified to help evince this Dalian concept of linking adversities with large size is an orphanage manager, Mrs. Clonker. According to Sophie's narration to the BFG, this landlady runs the orphanage heartlessly. When asked by the BFG if she and other girls were happy residing at the dormitory under Mrs. Clonker's supervision, Sophie replies abruptly that she "hated it" (Dahl 30). Indeed, Mrs. Clonker deserves hatred from all the child residents at the orphanage. The children there including Sophie were often penalized even for breaking trivial rules like not folding clothes. Living there, as Sophie continues, "[Mrs Clonkers] locked us in the dark cellar for a day and a night without

anything to eat or drink” (Dahl 31). Theoretically, food and drink are included in the list of human beings’ basic needs (Maslow 375). Besides oxygen (air), sleep, the place to stay (shelter), and clothes, all of us must eat food and drink water. If the deprivation of oxygen, food and drink has been imposed on us, we will suffer terribly. The situation is worse for the small children. They cannot be motivated to aspire for higher achievements unless their primary physical needs are met. In Sophie’s case, had she not be snatched from the orphanage by the BFG, on the basis of the study conducted by Robert S. Scholte, Gerard J. van den Berg, Maarten Lindeboom, she could have faced with malnutrition which would be followed by many health problems such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and hypertension (2). It will be very difficult to any children to grow fully and live their life happily and efficiently if their stomachs are empty.

On the aspect of using an imaginary creature to be the antagonist in his children’s story, Dahl’s next book *The Witches* is very much similar to *The BFG* and as the title of the story conveys, the witches are employed to be the main fictional villains who intend to physically oppress the children. However, what makes *The Witches* different from *The BFG* is the representation of genders. As stated in both stories by their author, “Giants is always men,” (Dahl 42) while “REAL WITCHES dress in ordinary clothes and look very much like ordinary women” (Dahl 1). While the giants are figuratively referred to males, the witches, on the contrary, are figuratively used to refer to females. Based on the ground that both males and females are portrayed badly as the villains who mistreat children in Dahl’s stories, the accusations of sexism and misogyny thrown against Roald Dahl by some feminist critics and scholars as mentioned of late in chapter one (Klugová 90) are voidable. Starting at the very beginning of *The Witches*, Dahl describes that the significant mission of all witches is to eradicate the children from this world, “A Real Witch hates children. . . . A Real Witch spends all her time plotting to get rid of children in her particular territory” (Dahl 1).

Again, a parentless-unnamed-seven-year-old boy takes the role of the fictional child hero representing the children to battle against lethal oppression impinged upon their lives by these female adult enemies, the witches. Stories about the witches are informed to the boy by an experienced witchophile, the boy’s

Norwegian grandma who becomes his custodian after his parents died in a car accident. Because the witches in England are the most dangerous kind, the boy's grandmother wants him to be on full alert when leaving Norway to inherit the house in England from his late parents. Unfortunately, after staying in England just for a short while, the grandmother gets sick. For recuperating reason, they have to take a trip to spend their vacation at the Bournemouth Hotel, a fancy beach hotel located in the south of England. There, while secluding himself to train his pet mice in the hotel ballroom, the boy is inadvertently caught and transformed into a mouse by the Grand High Witch, the world leader of all witches, who is chairing the annual meeting of the witches' foundation disguised under the name the "Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children" (Dahl 51).

Indeed, the portrayal of children's physical oppression in *The Witches* is discernibly intensified. In the previously discussed Dhalian children's stories, children are oppressed and some metamorphosed into animals such as talking arthropods in *James and the Giant Peach*, transfigured pets in *George's Marvelous Medicine* or even giants in *The BFG* are presented albeit without a well-structured institution. In contrast to Dahl's earlier stories, the witches of *The Witches*, have their well-organized association run internationally with an abundant fund (they have money machine). Similar to most successful business firms, the motto for a syndicate of all witches is distributed to help boost the morale of its members so that these witches will have a concrete purpose for functioning their jobs efficiently, "One child a week is fifty-two a year. Squish them and squiggle them and make them disappear" (Dahl 2). As a matter of fact, the witches' yearly gathering at the Bournemouth Hotel is held to announce the Grand High Witch's master plan for killing all English children by adding her magic potion of "Formula 86 delay mouse maker" in the candies sold around the nation to feed all the English children. The Grand High Witch hopes that when the children have become mice, the children's teachers and other adults will kill the mice for them. Overhearing this horrid plan, the boy steals a bottle of a potion from the Grand High Witch's room and pours it into the soup which is in the witches' menu. After taking the soup at the hotel, all English witches are transformed into mice and they are killed by the hotel guests and hotel attendants.

Another point concerning the depiction of physical oppression of the children in *The Witches* is Dahl's deployment of metamorphosis. As asserted by Nancy Gray Diaz's *The Radical Self: Metamorphosis to Animal Form in Modern Latin American Narrative* (1988), metamorphosis can be a metaphor for death as the being of the person and his consciousness are washed out from existing (5). Altering the child protagonist of *The Witches* into mouse, albeit his human consciousness is maintained as the mouse-boy are able to communicate and socialize with his grandmother and other people, will subsequently be regarded as marginalizing the child from the society and automatically, according to the oppression theory, a child will become the "other." In the form of the mouse, the boy protagonist who represents the children can absolutely not be accepted even as human being by other people, except by his own grandmother who is created to be the child's supporter and protector. When tracing the intensity of Roald Dahl's children's physical oppression as portrayed in the selected stories, it can be said that the amount of his concepts of children's physical oppression has concretely increased and better-structured story by story.

After *The Witches*, children's physical oppression continues to be depicted even more fiercely and densely in Dahl's *Matilda*. In almost every chapter of this story, the extremely crazy and fierce forms of oppression have been imposed on the children's bodies by the persons who are closely related to them: their own biological parents and teachers. Through the adult antagonists' ill-treatments of the children, Dahl successfully uses this children's fiction to disclose the incompetence of two main social institutions in the twentieth century, the family and school. As soon as the story opens, readers will immediately encounter an unjustified childhood of the lead character, Matilda. Being a small child, Matilda is supposed to gain love, care and attention from her own father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Wormwoods. But the Wormwoods are "doting parents who looked upon Matilda in particular as nothing more than a scab. They are both so 'gormless' and so engrossed with their own silly little lives that they failed to notice anything unusual about their daughter. They would not have been noticed even when Matilda had crawled into her house in a broken leg" (Dahl 4). Mr. Wormwood is a crooked used car dealer. He loves and pays interest in only his elder son whom he intends to be his heir. Similar to her husband, Mrs. Wormwood is obsessed only with bingo and TV soap-opera. In spite of keeping

her *Easy Cooking* books in the kitchen, Mrs. Wormwood never really cares about cooking nutritiously good meals for her husband and children because the afternoon bingo always exhausts her physically and emotionally. Therefore, if it is not the take away fish and chips, it has to be TV dinner trays. The processed suppers in “floppy aluminum containers” on everyone’s knees with Mrs. Wormwood’s “eyes glued to the [television’s] screen” (Dahl 19) imply that Matilda’s will have a slim chance to eat fresh and rich homemade meals. Compared to unprocessed diets, these hydrogenated junk foods contain the great amount of calories and are usually high in sodium, trans fats, and sugar. The long intake of these inexpensive and convenient foods will adversely affect Matilda’s physical development. Within no time, Mrs. Wormwood’s abandonment from her motherhood’s cooking duty, as confirmed by many health and nutrition studies, will inevitably push Matilda to confront with several health problems such as obesity, high blood pressure, cholesterol, and heart diseases (Willett & Ascherio 722 – 724).

Physical oppression of the children has been maximized as *Matilda* proceeds. Like the Wormwoods which represent the contemporary consumerist family, the rigidity and other dark sides of the British educational system has become the object of Dahl’s social ridicule. There, the situations of the lives of all children and teachers at Crunchem Hall School are not less detrimental than at Matilda’s house under the tyrannical administration by its headmistress who used to be the Olympics hammer thrower champion, Miss Trunchbull. The children and the teachers alike have to speak, behave and do everything cautiously in order to survive and not to be punished inhumanely. Challenging the Trunchbull’s command, children can be hurled out of the school building’s window or locked up in the Chokey – a tall and narrow cupboard with bits of broken glasses and spiky nails. The children’s legs and arms can be broken and they will certainly get nasty bruises and wounds throughout their bodies from Miss Trunchbull’s brutal deeds. Not different from the Wormwoods, the Trunchbull does not care for the school children’s health or their physical well-being. She allows them to have bad and tasteless cake while keeping the good pieces for herself. When catching that Bogtrotter steals her rich and delicious cake, she forces him to eat a colossal chocolate cake in front of the whole school children before hitting hard on the boy’s head with the cake platter. Even with the girl Honey who is

her own niece is traumatized to do chores for food and drown her head under the bathtub water if Miss Trunchbull finds she does not bathe properly. As described by Matilda and the school children, this school principal's relationship with the children is "like a war" (Dahl 103). The apparent, aggressive and bizarre scenes of Miss Trunchbull's cruelty to her school students and the child Honey in *Matilda* highlight and validate the typical theme of children's physical oppression which is usually found in Dahl's children's literature. In *Matilda* in particular, Dahl has deployed his literary creation to make comments and severely reprimand the social issues happening in the British education and the smallest unit of human community – the family.

Dahl's last children's work, *The Minpins* (1991) is very much similar to *The Enormous Crocodile* because besides being a picture book, the social issue of the children's physical security has also been dealt with in the story. Published posthumously, *The Minpins* illustrates and describes an adventure of Little Billy, who breaks his mother's order to stay only in home and escapes to meet the Minpins, a group of diminutive people inhabiting in the trees of the Forest of Sin which is located just behind his house. In the Forest of Sin, these small tree-dwellers and Billy cannot travel on land freely because they will be eaten up by the Smoke-Belching Gruncher. Air transport by birds is the single option left for them to go here and there while living in this jungle. Billy wants to return home but he knows that he cannot do so without getting rid of the Gruncher. Little Billy has to find a way to kill it. Therefore, Little Billy cooperates with Don Mini, the Minpins leader. Don Mini calls the swan to let Little Billy practice his riding. Setting off on the back of the swan to lure the Gruncher with his smell, Little Billy leads the Gruncher to be drowned dead in the lake. As a gift for helping eliminate their most pernicious foe, the Minpins send the swan to serve as Little Billy personal transport every night until he is too big to ride the animal. With the swan service, Little Billy can enjoy visiting his secret tiny friends as well as exploring the vast amazing world as often as he wants. With reference to the small size of Little Billy and the Minpins, it can be inferred that both of them are created to represent all children. Meanwhile, on the ground that the Gruncher has strength and bigger size, it can be regarded as the metaphor for the adult. As stated by Don Mini, "Our large trees are like your cities and towns, and the

small trees are like your villages” (Dahl 25). Thus, reading *The Minpins*, the child readers will be taken completely into their own dream world – the world populated by only the little people. For the child readers, residing in the Minpins’ world while reading this books, they can identify with the miniature population appreciating their liberated life which command, control and physical oppression from their parents and other adults will no longer annoy them. In this final children’s story, Dahl has successfully inspired his young audience to develop their sense of freedom, equality or even superiority:

Watch the birds as they fly above your heads and, who knows, you might well spy a tiny creature riding high on the back of a swallow or a raven.

Watch the robin especially because it always flies low, [. . .] And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlike places. Those who don’t believe in magic will never find it. (Dahl 48)

The implication from the quoted message is that fantastic things sometimes can embody in your childhood. Just embrace being a little kid. Like Little Billy, as soon as he grows bigger, he will lose his transport prerogative of bird riding. With their small size, children can physically be oppressed since they cannot do many things like big grownups. In the same vein as Little Billy, children can figure out how they can enjoy themselves making use of this inferiority of being tiny.

As discussed above, the selected Roald Dahl’s children’s stories are prevalently intermingled with the depiction of children’s physical oppression due to the influences from the author’s personal life and the ongoing social situations. In these Dahlian stories the child characters and their metaphors are physically mistreated by the adult antagonists and the metaphors for the adults: they are deprived of food, clothes, and shelters. They have been bossed around, forced to work, caged, tortured, beaten, killed, and locked up in the narrow and thorny box. They are also figuratively killed, transformed, metamorphosed, etc. Witnessing the problems and difficulties which occurred to the children in the British and American society of the twentieth century, Roald Dahl deploys his stories to demonstrate to the public how painful and difficult it would be if the vulnerable and defenseless children were oppressed inhumanely or taken away unfairly a number of requisites for their

physical wellbeing and development. Certainly, oppression hurts and ruins the child's life either bodily, mentally or emotionally. In the next part of this chapter, the portrayal of the children's mental oppression is discussed.

Mental Oppression

Physical oppression, according to the recent discussion, can be harmful to the lives of the oppressed children. In addition, they will suffer socially, emotionally and psychologically. Furthermore, even though they are not hurt physically, the children's cognitive and mental beings can certainly be damaged if they are neglected, verbally abused or belittled by the adults' misdeeds. According to the report in *Child Abuse and Neglect in the United Kingdom Today*, children can suffer emotionally merely by being scolded, called names, belongings taken or broken or informed that they are not wanted (Radford 45). Throughout the ten selected Roald Dahl's children's stories, the mentalities of the child protagonists and the metaphors for the children have been destroyed in different ways by their adult villains.

Losing his parents and moving in to live with the incredibly vain and malicious aunts, James Henry Trotter in *James and the Giant Peach* has to confront with several mental tortures that a small boy like James feels almost unbearable. He is not called by his name "James" or the words most adults use to cordially address small children like boy, kiddo or little hero, champion, etc., have never been properly employed to boost the child's morale and self-esteem. Instead, James is insultingly referred to as "you disgusting little beast, filthy nuisance, miserable creature" by Aunts Sponge and Spiker (Dahl 7). They regularly yell at James and the foul expressions like 'little twerp', 'shut up', 'get out' and 'none of your businesses' are frequently adopted to be spoken to their small nephew. Although we may argue that language cannot really break anyone's bones, but words, especially profanity can cause deeper emotional pain and psychological trauma that may last even longer than any kind of physical attack. According to Philip G. Ney's "Does Verbal Abuse Leave Deeper Verbal Scars: A Study of Children and Parents" published in *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* (1987), children's world view and their self-perception are changed when children are spoken to badly using sarcasm, swear, obscene words, or

vulgar terms. It has also been claimed that the impacts of verbal harassment and any offensive words will have greater and more serious impacts on the children than on the adults based on the ground that children lack the potential to protect and fend for themselves (371 - 378). So verbal abuses are as destructive as physical abuses. Besides the shifts of their self-conception and global paradigm, children who are victimized verbally can lose their sense of security and self-confidence. In the meantime, their trust of other people will be lessened and negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and depression can easily be developed (Helfer et. al. 160). Thus, verbal oppression causes James to suffer and it could turn him to be a mentally unhealthy citizen of the society.

In addition to verbal offences, James has to stand other forms of mental injuries imposed on him by these malicious senior relatives. As described by Radford et. al., poor supervision and unresponsive action to the child emotional needs are deemed the negligence and lack of care and it was found to be the most abundant kind of domestic maltreatment happening to all age groups of the children in the United Kingdom (43). During his three - year stay with them, Aunts Sponge and Spiker gave James no toys nor any picture books. They never take him out for small walk or a picnic. Neither the children nor any cat or dog is allowed to play with James or to keep him company (Dahl 10). One can feel deeply depressed reading the story and imagining along the author's depiction of James' total social isolation, "And as time went on, [James] became sadder and sadder, and more and more lonely, and he used to spend hours every day standing at the bottom of the garden, gazing wistfully at the lovely but forbidden world of woods and fields and ocean that was spread out below him like a magic carpet" (Dahl 10 - 11). The effects of child's isolation have been vividly penned up; even the young audience can understand clearly how lonesome, empty, unloved and unwanted James has felt by the mistreatments that his aunts have impinged upon him.

Mental oppression in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is not demonstrated through the verbal abuses and social isolation which the adult villains inflict on the child protagonist as in *James and the Giant Peach*, but is indirectly reflected through the poverty that the child protagonist, Charlie Bucket, has to endure. As discussed of late in the section of physical oppression that the destitute living conditions of

Charlie's family hinder the child from accessing his basic physical needs. The lack of physical necessities like food, clothes and good shelter caused by impoverishment automatically ensues a number of mental regression. As reported in *Low Socioeconomic Status and Mental Disorders: A Longitudinal Study of Selection and Causation During Young Adulthood*, several psychological ailments are significantly related to factors indicating low socioeconomic status of the family (Miech, Wright, and Silva 4). In addition, poverty-stricken people have a very high tendency to suffer from anxiety, emotional and behavioral disorders than nonpoor children (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan 62). Genetic alteration can be linked to someone undergoing early childhood's poverty. It has been notified that those encountering with poor economic issues during their early childhood, in the long run, will have the possibility to develop cancers and other heart diseases when they become the grownups. Also, it is found that children who are brought up in the neighborhood of lower than average socioeconomic status display continuous degradation in their education owing to the dysfunctions of their language commands, cognitive control, narrow attention span, and poor decision making (Mani et al. 976 – 980).

According to the case of Charlie in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the penniless situation seems to affect his life in terms of his mentality. Like many poor children, Charlie lacks self-confidence and is most of the time likely to be quiet trying to dissociate himself from other friends who seem to come from wealthy families. Except for his parents and grandparents, Charlie does not associate with any children of the same age at all. This will cause his life to become dull, lonely and inexperienced. Charlie's timidity and unassertiveness, therefore, could be regarded as this problematic mental health influenced by the financial deficiency of family. Without the magic endowed to him by his author to win Mr. Wonka's chocolate factory, Charlie would be a poor and voiceless child forever.

As for *The Magic Finger*, mental oppression takes place when the unnamed girl is offensively spoken to by her teacher and neighbors. In her class the girl is insultingly called "a stupid little girl" by Mrs. Winter, her teacher, after she has misspelled the word 'cat' (Dahl 5). Feeling very mad from such a thoughtlessly verbal abuse, the girl casts a spell to convert Mrs. Winter to be physically catlike having whiskers on her face and a tail from her bottom. Another derogatory treatment occurs

to the girl protagonist when she tries to warn the Greggs to stop hunting animals particularly birds and ducks for fun. Besides deriding her warning by making their faces and laughing, Mr. Gregg tries to instruct her by informing the girl to “go home and mind your own P’s and Q’s” (Dahl 4). Provoked by such a belittling remark, the girl uses her magic finger to turn the Greggs into ducks. As it has been aforementioned, children will be mentally and emotionally hurt when they are called names. “Stupid” is the most easily and frequently addressed to them for naturally children are likely making mistakes owing to their immaturity, naivety, and unawareness. According to Megan Sullaway and Arnold H. Buss, name calling and nastily criticizing the children can bring about serious effects on different aspects of the child’s both for their immediate and future life. In his *Aggression Pays*, Buss describes that verbal attacks are “sharp” and can “bite like the serpent’s sting” (7). Not less painful than physical assaults, if verbally abused, similar symptoms of posttraumatic disorders like panic, fear and nightmare may occur to the children (Sullaway 250). More or less, immediate and long lasting, all children suffer psychological consequences of these indignant and denigrating calls (Jay 85 – 86). Children will be embarrassed and discouraged by verbal offences. Their attitudes towards themselves, the society and the world around have been negatively altered. As confirmed by many studies, sometimes the damages from these verbal oppressions could be even more harmful to the children than those caused by the physical oppression. Children will be embarrassed and discouraged by verbal offences. Their self-esteem is decreased; their attitudes towards themselves, the society and the world around will incline toward negativity.

Fear becomes the focal issue of mental oppression depicted in the next chosen story, *The Enormous Crocodile*. Psychologically, according to what have been stated earlier about Abraham Harold Maslow’s hierarchy of needs in *A Theory of Human Motivation*, after the children’s physiological needs for food, air, water, clothes and shelter are fulfilled, they will acquire for the sense of safety and security (375). Therefore, it is common for the children to be instinctively fearful from time to time as they are stimulated by these primary needs. To remind and alert his readers that dangers may be lurking wherever they go, Roald Dahl allows the children to encounter a dangerous animal like the crocodile at the locations frequented by the

children: the river, the jungle, the town, the merry-go-round, and the picnic place. This idea can also be considered as Roald Dahl's shrewd warning technique to the audiences that even visiting their familiar destinations, the kids and their parents must always be cautious because we cannot tell when and what hazardous event could befall us. By identifying themselves as the fictional children who are targeted to be eaten by the dangerous Enormous Crocodile, the child readers will learn how they can cope with fears and perils that may happen to them in their daily life.

Apart from the animal imagery, the real human children are the target of the adults' victimization in the upcoming Dahl's selected book, *The Twits*. The threat, beating, caging and other kinds of tortures committed on the children, the Muggle – Wump monkeys and the birds by the unkind spouse, Mr. and Mrs. Twits, can cause grievous mental harm to these victims. Glued to The Big Dead Tree and told by Mr. Twit that they would be used as the main ingredient for cooking Boy Pie, the four small boys who climb to sneak peek at The Twits' monkeys become so shocked and petrified. The scary thoughts of being chopped, boiled and baked for The Twits' fresh dinner make them wail in panic, "He'll stew us alive! He'll cook us with carrots!" (Dahl 43). Although these curious children are not really caught to make food, they all feel so scared stiff from perceiving Mr. Twit's fury and at the same time hearing his frightening speech of Boy Pie recipe. They can hardly move or figure out how to get away from Mr. Twit's trap. If one of them does not work out of the way to escape from such a danger in an emergency, fatality could befall them. Far worse than the children, the confined monkeys and the glued birds have the high possibility to undergo severe emotional and psychological sufferings.

As it has been reported in *The Harmful Effects of Detention and Family Separation on Asylum Seekers' Mental Health in the Context of Bill C-31*, minors and juveniles who are frightened with stories and violence, detained (even in a short period of time), forced to do things against their will, whipped, and tormented will confront with a multitude of negative mental health implications (Cleveland, Rousseau & Kronick 3). Damaged emotionally and psychologically by such agonizing abuses, these problematic symptoms can be predicted to bring about the detrimental impacts on the victimized children: bedwetting, nightmare, isolation, anxiety, sleep disorders, depression, and, in the worst case scenario, suicidal

behaviors (Cleveland, Rousseau & Kronick 4-5). It is also revealed that whipped children, on the average, have the tendency to misbehave more in the future, while, the unwhipped children, on the contrary, are likely to misbehave less. In addition, since the oppressed children's learning development is delayed from these emotional and psychological outcomes, their academic performance will decline, too. According to *Reduced Prefrontal Cortical Gray Matter Volume in Young Adults Exposed to Harsh Corporal Punishment* conducted by Akemi Tomoda and others, the decrease in this part of the oppressed children's brain results in an ineffectiveness of their cognitive performance (66 – 77). Thus oppressed children tend to study, concentrate and memorize things badly because the disturbing feelings of terror and distress always haunt their minds. Similar to most of the Dahlian children's stories, even though Dahl does not pen most of these horrific and deadly consequences of children's oppression in *The Twits* so as to maintain the entertaining benefits for his child readers, their malignant effects of the Twits' brutal acts upon the mentality of the children and their metaphors can be speculated by the following elaboration of the monkeys' loathsome responses to the Twits' cruelty: "They hated Mr. and Mrs. Twit for making their lives so miserable. They also hated them for what they did to the birds every Tuesday and Wednesday" (Dahl 46). When the children are tormented by fears of intimidation, corporal punishment, coercion, imprisonment and any painful treatment, their mental health will definitely be affected on a large scale.

The state of the children's mental health will be downgraded while unexpected reactions against fear and terror can take place when the adults try to mess with the vulnerable and naïve children. As previously discussed, an eight-year-old boy George is oftentimes unnecessarily dominated and terrified with scary stories from his biological grandma. She either nitpicks, bosses about or belittles her grandson by calling him names: "Hey you! she yelled. George! Get me a cup of tea this minute, you idle little beast!" (Dahl 69). Besides, she frequently misleads George with false concepts and absurd teachings. Some of George's grandma's ridiculous advice includes telling George to eat slugs and worms, ordering George to grow down instead of naturally grow up. Due to grandma's nonsense and mistreatments, George has harbored his abhorrence and contempt for her: "He was shaking a little. Oh, how he hated Grandma! . . . that horrid old witchy woman" (Dahl 12). Although George

tries to convince to himself not to be “frightened by her”, in reality, he completely realizes and admits his own fear like most small boys that, as portrayed in the story, “he was frightened” (Dahl 12). With reference to the discussion made of late in *The Twits*, a number of adverse mental and emotional effects will be instigated to happen to the oppressed children through the adults’ verbal abuse and domineering treatment (Gunnoe & Mariner 768 – 775; Radford 45; Cleveland, Rousseau & Kronick 4 – 5). Although the abusive incidents happening to George are not as severe and dangerous as what the Twits have done to *The Twits*’ children and animals, it is understandable that nobody, even a child, would like to be bossily manipulated or insultingly depreciated. The impolite speech and authoritarian deeds impinged on George, therefore, have instigated George’s feelings of anger and dissatisfaction to revolt against his senior relative. While reasoning to his grandma that he is doing the kitchen chores, George visualizes the plan to make his grandma pay back her sheer meanness. Before ending up with cooking the magic medicine, the illusions about shocking the old woman in retaliation by putting the green snake in her dress or locking her up in the room with six bags of black rats are germinated inside George’s imagination.

In *The BFG*, the succeeding Dahl book, two main characters, Sophie who is the girl protagonist and her protector, the BFG, have been mentally oppressed through discrimination, bullying, and confinement. As discussed in the previous section that the BFG is discriminated against by his giant friends because he is different from them all; he does not feed on children, and unfortunately, he is four – times smaller than them. These differences make other giants to acutely dislike the BFG. His inferior size in particular facilitates bigger giants to mistreat him. At the cost of the BFG’s misery, other giants are very fond of throwing and tossing the BFG around like he was their toy. The Bloodbottler, for example, prefers to offensively calling him names: Runt, Runty little scumscrew, Squimpy little bottlewart, or Prunty little pogswizzler. When suspecting that the BFG might hide a human bean in his private cave, the Bloodbottler just boldly and disrespectfully intrude into the BFG’s personal residence to search for Sophie. He grasps the BFG’s arm firmly threatening the BFG to tell where he is hiding the child. According to the “Predictors of Bullying and Victimization in Childhood and Adolescence: A Meta-analysis Investigation” published in *School Psychology Quarterly*, a number of pernicious

consequences of harassment and bullying among the children have been reported in several studies. Loneliness, low self-esteem, psychosomatic complaints, and depression are often found to occur to the bullied children in the long run. In some extreme situations, suicidal ideations and attempts could be expected (Cook et al. 66). Additionally, other studies have pointed out that the bullied persons, either the children or the adults, are prone to experience illness, emotional and behavioral problems. Usually, it will be very difficult for the victims of abuse and oppression to connect with others and to adapt themselves into the environment and the society (Arsenault et al. 130).

Friends' mistreatments and discrimination, in compliance with the studies reported in the above paragraph, cause the BFG to develop hostile feelings towards the giants' social community driving him to dissociate himself further away from them. Apart from social isolation, his self-confidence is reduced by the other giants' aggressive and indecent conducts. Similar to George of *George's Marvelous Medicine* and other victimized children, negative feelings and attitudes have been stimulated to occur to the BFG: confusion, mistrust, resentment, fear, loneliness, and distress. He stammeringly tells the Bloodbottler, "W-why don't you l-leave me alone?" because he feels so unhappy, nervous, and terrified altogether from how he is treated (Dahl 49). When Sophie's sad life of all the abuses and mistreatments at an orphanage is narrated to him, it is easy to understand too why the BFG reacts so sensitively. He is very well-aware of the injustice and bitterness caused by bullying because he directly experiences all these things. By identifying himself with Sophie, the BFG's sympathy is initiated leading him to cry for the small girl: "The filthy old fizzlewiggler! . . . That is the horriddest thing I is hearing for years! You is making me sadder than ever! All at once, a huge tear that would have filled a bucket rolled down one of the BFG's cheeks and fell with a splash on the floor. It made quite a puddle" (Dahl 31). If the BFG and Sophie were more powerful, they would not allow such victimization to happen to them easily; they would fight back. Realizing the lesser position in terms of their size and strength, the best way that these oppressed partners, the BFG and Sophie, can do while living in the giant land is trying to avoid confronting these oppressive tormentors and learn to strengthen their mental endurance in order to cope with the pain and grief inflicted unfairly upon their lives.

Slightly different from *The BFG* -- its foregoing Dahlian children's story, two main harms have affected the unnamed boy protagonist's mentality in *The Witches*: losing his parents and being hunted by the witches. Like Dahl whose father died when he was four years old, James of *James and the Giant Peach*, Sophie of *The BFG*, and this boy of *The Witches* become orphans when their parents are killed in the accidents. As for *The Witches'* boy protagonist, he does not have to reside in an orphanage like Sophie or move to live with any heartless aunts like James because his parents leave him the house in England and his kind Norwegian grandmamma takes legal custody of him. Despite these lucks, encountering orphanhood at very young age is not very easy for a seven-year-old kid. Several advantages will be taken away when a child's biological father and mother are gone: love, warmth, role models, including other psychological securities. Moreover, there is a high possibility that financial support as well as several physical comforts like sheltering, clothes food, etc. will be gone with the deceased parents too. If these deprivations happen to any parentless child, his/her living will be more psychologically oppressed due to the lack of these physical necessities. Definitely, what will befall to any child at the very beginning of the loss of one's parents is to confront with bereavement. To deal with the immediate pain caused by a sudden parental death, the main boy character in *The Witches* remembers clearly that both him and his grandmother cried the whole night. In order to suppress his negative emotion and to protect himself from confronting such traumatic event again, he tries to avoid talking about this tragic situation. As described by *The Witches'* boy protagonist in the story himself, "I won't go into the horrors of that terrible afternoon" (Dahl 13). Experiencing grief, the boy's mental well-being is affected and it is reflected through his physical reaction too, "I still get the shivers when I think about it" (Dahl 13). Trembling, shaking, or sometimes numbness are reported by many studies as the uncontrollable physical reactions that usually occur to anyone who is exposed to traumatic incidents and these bodily symptoms can indicate the persons' anxiety, fear, shock and distress. Thus, the extremely painful consequences of the passing of his parents on the boy are discernible from the aforementioned fictional depiction. So the boy who is also the story's narrator rejects to elaborate such a horrific situation because he wants to protect and prevent himself not to undergo or sink too deep into these adversely

harmful feelings caused by his parents' demise.

Nevertheless, the boy has to face with frequent fears of the witches after he and his grandmother leave Norway to England. Every encountering with the English witches here, the boy's trepidation and terrors for the harmful magic powers of the witches are evidently seen. For example, while building the tree-house alone in his best friend's garden, the woman wearing a small black hat and black gloves with a strange smile tries to deceive him to come down from the tree to get a small tamed green snake. Realizing from his grandmother's warnings that this woman can be a witch since her descriptions match all the characteristic traits of the witch, the boy "froze all over" (Dahl 43). In addition, he drops "the hammer and shot up at enormous tree like a monkey" with panic (Dahl 45). Getting up high to the tree top within a second and staying there for hours, the boy resonates his apprehension by the following statement: "[I was] quivering with fear" (Dahl 45). Because the boy's psyche has been implanted firmly with his grandmother's frightening stories of the witches, whenever he finds out that the witches are around searching to get rid of the children, his reactions to the existence of the witches always demonstrate caution, stun, and shock. If his grandmother does not come to fetch him to get back into the house as she sees that it is getting dark, the boy will not dare to come down from the tree top.

After this potential danger from this first meeting of the witch, his grandmother become more alert realizing the existence of the witch, the dangerous enemy of the child in the vicinity. From then on, she does not allow her grandson to walk to school alone. However, the boy and his grandmother have to encounter with more harmful witches when he and his grandmother take a summer trip to the south of England for his grandmother's health reason. At Bournemouth resort hotel where they stay, the witches' annual convention chaired by the world leader of all witches, the Grand High Witch is also held with the purpose to distribute "Formula 86 delay mouse maker", her latest liquid weapon for turning all the English children into mice to her minions. Unfortunately, this time the boy and another boy guest of this hotel, Bruno Jenkins cannot get away from the Grand High Witch's hostile power. Both of them have been transformed into mice by her Formula 86. As earlier discussed in physical oppression, the children can be deemed marginalized from the society or

completely oppressed when they are turned into mice since their existence is eliminated (Díaz 5). Adhering to this idea, *The Witches'* boy protagonist feels that he is losing his being while undergoing the transformation process from the power of the Grand High Witch's Formula 86: "I am not myself any longer! I have gone clear out of my own skin!" (Dahl 116). Like most oppressed children, when the abuse and mistreatment occur to them, the feeling of "otherness" will replace their being; that is to say, their sense of selves is gone. To put it another way, it can be said that the boy cannot be included in human community because he has been turned to be an outsider in the mouse form by the Grand High Witch's metamorphosis. He will no longer fit in any children's society, either.

Similarly to *The Witches'* unnamed boy protagonist, Matilda Wormwood of *Matilda* and the school children at Crunchem Hall School feel like they do not exist in this world because Mr. and Mrs. Wormwoods, Matilda's parents, and Miss Trunchbull, the school headmistress, always neglect, belittle, and punish them violently and unreasonably in the two places where they are supposed to gain love, stay safe, and receive full support for their psychological and intellectual needs. Obviously, those children are oppressed not only physically, but also mentally. In contrast to the idealistic parents and teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Wormwoods and the headmistress often scold and call Matilda and her schoolmates rudely and insultingly as an ignorant little twit, squirt, cheater or moron, for example. Feeling unwelcome and unwanted in her own family, Matilda always secludes herself for reading in her own room or in the community library. Without her parents' acknowledgement, the small- four- year-old girl risks her life walking alone far from home to find the good books to read. When Mrs. Phelps knows that Matilda's parents do not recognize their daughter's frequent visits to the library, she suggests Matilda tell them because she is concerned for the girl's safety. However, Matilda refuses to follow Mrs. Phelps' suggestion explaining sadly that they neither endorse her reading books nor "really care what I do" (Dahl 10).

As described in *Neglected and Abandonment*, children whose needs are ignored suffer hurts, apart from in their bodies, but also in their minds, emotions and spirits (Munkel 115). Like many mentally oppressed children, the resentful and loathsome impulses for her father and mother have been increasingly ingrained in

Matilda through the negligence and foul language which her parents repeatedly do and use with her. As illustrated in the story, “She could feel the anger boiling up inside her. She knew it was wrong to hate her parents like this, but she was finding it very hard not to do so” (Dahl 22). While feeling detached from her own parents, Matilda has learned to develop trust, love and close relationship to another kind, caring and understanding school teacher—Miss Honey who, coincidentally, also used to experience childhood negligence, verbal and emotional abuses from her senior family member, Miss Trunchbull. Both Matilda and Miss Honey share similar experience; they are mentally oppressed by adults.

Adopting false speech, together with failure to provide emotional and psychological needs will make all the children feel terribly oppressed. Far worse than at the Wormwoods’ residence, Miss Trunchbull commits a number of serious physical mistreatments that result tremendously in her school children’s emotional and psychological damages. Besides enslaving the girl Honey who is her own niece, she berates, tortures and dangerously punishes her students. Previously discussed, Miss Trunchbull’s forms of misdeeds can range from yelling at the children to stretching the students’ ears, hitting the student’s head with a tray, locking up girls in the small nailed box, and throwing both boys and girls out of the windows. In many cases, the headmistress’ cruel treatments could kill the school students. Luckily, no death happens with Crunchem Hall children. However, as it has been posited by psychologists that apart from being hurt on their bodies right away on the spot, the adults’ brutal and bizarre abuses will certainly affect the children’s mentality. Naturally, no child would like to confront with such adversities. When afflicted by repulsive speeches, negative attitudes, and violent penalization, according to *The Theory of Differential Oppression*, decreasing self – confidence, low self-esteem, fear, agony or hatred, or psychiatric disorders will automatically take place to the oppressed children as the responses to all psychological hardships (Kingston, Regoli and Hewitt 249-250). At Crunchem Hall School, sheer fear and passive acceptance are most witnessed as the common responses to Miss Trunchbull’s threat, violence and contempt. The teachers and small students are forced to be submissive in spite of their dislikes to the principal’s mistreatments. For instance, when the girl Amanda Thrupp is blamed severely and she is about to be tossed out from the school window,

what the poor little girl can do is just to, “[. . .] stood quite still, watching the advancing giant, and the expression on her face was one that you might find on the face of the person who is trapped in a small field with an enraged bull which is charging flat-out towards her. The girl was glued to the spot, terror struck, pop-eyed, quivering, knowing for certain that the Day of Judgement had come for her at last” (Dahl 106 – 108). Appearing “paralysed,” Amanda “managed to stutter” her explanation that wearing pigtails is her mother’s idea to which the headmistress does not listen at all. In a similar response, Miss Honey remembers that when she was a child under Miss Trunchbull or her aunt’s custody, she seemed to be, according to what she describes herself to Matilda, “. . . so completely cowed and dominated by this monster, no matter what it was, I obeyed it instantly. I lived in fear and cried all the time” (Dahl 193). Under the Wormwoods’ heartless and indifferent child rearing and Miss Trunchbull’s uncaring and dictatorial administration, all lives of Matilda, Miss Honey and other school children have been saddened and miserable. The wounds on the children’s bodies can be healed within time; however, to quote Miss Honey’s attempt to prevent Miss Trunchbull not to mistreat the school children, “You could do them permanent damage” (Dahl 149). Or, to put it differently, the wounds in the oppressed children’s mental well-being will last longer and perhaps forever.

As for Little Billy, the boy protagonist of *The Minpin*, the psychological oppression can happen to him easily because of his mother’s overprotection. Based on the opening of the story, his mother is characterized as a very controlling and excessively caring parent who “was always telling him exactly what he was allowed to do and what he was not allowed to do. [. . .] Every now and again his mother would call out to him saying, ‘Little Billy, what are you up to there?’” (Dahl 5). Despite her good intention to make sure that her boy must always be safe, studies have shown that parenting the child using restrictive or domineering style is likely to lead to several deleterious effects (Espinoza 26). According to the reports, when parents try too much to take care of their children, they will intrude into the children’s personal lives and doing this can convey the message of distrust to their children causing them to lose their self-efficacy and at the same time to increase their dependency characteristic traits. Also, the children will become more at risk for developing less behavioral autonomy if their parents pay too much care and attention

to them. In the meantime, children can become anxious and depressed by the constant guidance and high degree of supervision they unnecessarily receive from their fathers and mothers. In terms of problem solving, scholars also point out that with the handy assistance from parents, children will become overprotected and spoiled and they will not learn how to cope with problems by themselves. In addition, some of them will even externalize the problems so as to get more attention from their parents (Espinoza 31-32).

In the case of Little Billy, the negative outcomes of his mother's overprotection can be indicated from the way he responds to his mother's prohibition on entering the Forest of Sin. As it has been depicted in *The Minpin*, because Little Billy's mother is always concerned for his well-being, whenever she notices that her boy has been very quiet for a long period of time, she will call once in a while to check what and how Little Billy is doing. From time to time, Little Billy's full conformation to his mother's instructions and rules can be reflected by the following portrayal: "And Little Billy would always call back and say, 'I'm being good, Mummy,'" (Dahl 5). One day, out of the blue, Little Billy just feels sick of being a good boy. He violates his mother's order and walks into this Forest of Sin. When he comes back home after a dangerous but exciting and successful adventure in the forest is over, he is questioned by his mother why his clothes are so filthy. To make his mother believe that he always follows her regulations and orders, Little Billy has to answer to her that "I've been climbing trees" (Dahl 41). Even though this answer is partly true, the whole significant truth is withheld. Through the case of Little Billy, it is discernible that besides creating mental oppression to the children, overprotective parenting has driven a very brave and good boy like Little Billy to become a liar. As it has been earlier mentioned, children can adapt and respond to oppression differently (Kingston, Regoli and Hewitt 250). Strict control and excessive instructions, as it can be seen from Little Billy's mother's actions, may be used to force the children to listen and follow the adult's rules and commands for a while. However, whenever the children's needs contradict those of the adults, they may deny to obey and revolt against the adults' restrictions and demands.

It can be seen from the discussion in this chapter that children's oppression has been prevalently portrayed in Roald Dahl's selected children's stories making scenes of children's oppression become the crucial attributes of his children's literature; all the child protagonists and the metaphors for the children in the stories have been abused, neglected and mistreated physically and mentally by the adult antagonists and the metaphors for the adults. Based on his first autobiography, *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, the depiction of children's oppression which permeates Dahl's writings for the children is initially influenced by the author's painful childhood experiences gained from the boarding schools. That is to say, Roald Dahl's identity has been partly shaped by being ill-treated at an early age by his school masters and older school students. Being an essential element of Dahl's selfhood, oppression which is the main source of his ideations for his writing, has been demonstrated in many of his stories.

Apart from the writer's bitter childhood experiences, the contemporary child abuse and maltreatment which happened vastly in the British and American societies during the 1960s – 1980s, the time Dahl was writing his children's stories, can also presumably be deemed as the stimulators for Dahl's fictional creation. As reported by many scholars, child abuse and maltreatment had also emerged as one of the important social issues. Many movements and rallies were staged by the social activists to call for the rights, equality, freedom and better living situations for the marginalized peoples such as women, gays, black people, students including the children (Anderson 21; A Hunt 147; Marwick 39; Shaw 17-19; 454- 455). These movements implied that those who used to be oppressed physically and mentally or people whose rights were violated had attempted to call for changes in our societies. They needed the public to acknowledge their existence and rights. They requested that their voice should be heeded whereas their needs should be attended to as well. Inspired by both these social incidents and his own personal life, various forms of children's oppression have been repeatedly incorporated into Roald Dahl's stories for the children. These stories are also for adults to realize that children, albeit with their innocence and immaturity, are also oppressed physically and mentally by adults.

CHAPTER THREE

COPING WITH AND RESISTANCE TO OPPRESSION: PSYCHOLOGICAL MACHANISMS AND FANTASY AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION IN DAHL'S CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

In chapter three, the effects of children's oppression and defense mechanisms are discussed. Then, the dissertation examines how the child protagonists in the selected Dahlian stories cope with and resist oppression inflicted upon them by the adult antagonists. In the last part of the unit, fantasy as a means of expression, the researcher proposes that with the writer's intent to voice for the rights of the oppressed children, fantasy fiction is purposively chosen by Roald Dahl to become the literary genre he will create for the child readers.

As elaborated in the former chapter, the portrayal of children's oppression dominates other issues in all ten selected Dahlian stories. This prevalent emergence of the scenes of physical and mental maltreatments to the children depicted in Roald Dahl's literary texts indicates that the writer's psyche is deeply ingrained with the painful experiences he underwent during his childhood. In addition, the growing child abuse and neglect occurring in the British and American societies in the twentieth century have functioned as the significant catalysts for Roald Dahl's fictional creation. Consequently, Dahl's children's stories have been craftily employed by their writer to vent out his deeply rooted sorrow and express his strong opposition against the imposition of any kind of cruelty acted upon the small and vulnerable children. In other words, Dahl's battling against children's oppression has been transformed into his literary works. In the course of Dahl's writing creations for the young audience, the author's resistance to different forms of child abuse and neglect has been resonated through the fictional elements of his primary texts. Tracing these stories, readers will easily discover in almost every literary aspect of the Dahlian fiction that the adult villains' unkind actions have been accused, condemned and even penalized. That is to say, his protection and advocacy for the children's safety and

well-being via writing his children's stories. In this chapter the researcher discusses how Roald Dahl has tried to handle with the impacts of his childhood oppression by writing children's literature. Thus, it is noticeable that the selected stories for the children function as both a healing potion and an adaptive reaction for Dahl's traumatic childhood experiences. Besides, it can be claimed further that writing children's books provides a platform for Dahl to project his criticism and comments on oppression of the children. In spite of the adult antagonists' superiorities, fantasy elements are employed to transform and empower the fragile child protagonists to become strong so that they can stand up for themselves and fight against the powerful adults. Therefore, the discussion in the second part of this unit will focus on exploring how supernatural power and magic devices of fantasy fiction have been used as Dahl's means of expression as a defender and supporter of the abused children.

Effects of Children's Oppression and Defense Mechanisms

According to *The Theory of Differential Oppression: A Developmental - Ecological Explanation of Adolescent Problem Behavior*, children's oppression begets adaptations (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt 249). In order to live on, children need to adjust themselves appropriately amidst pressure, tension, and pain caused by oppression. As previously discussed in brief in chapter two, there are different ways which children choose to respond to their oppressor's restrictions and brutality. They may opt to accept the ill-treated situations by completely conforming to the oppressors' commands and orders. Owing to the report in Darrell Steffensmeier's *National Trends in Female Arrests*, it was found that this adaptive trend appears to be taken by women and girls rather than men and boys (411 – 441). This must be resulted from the patriarchal culture which males usually hold primary power or take a leading role causing women and girls to get used to being led or instructed to do things. Psychologically, even though most children appear to obey and consent to the adults or the superiors' commands on the surface, deep down in their mind they usually develop their grudge, resistance, and hatred against the oppression imposed on them. If the oppression continues, the hidden and buried opposition will later emerge in the forms of revolt or strike back. Some children may be drawn towards the

attempt to violate the laws and regulations which have been set up to control and oppress them. By breaking the impingement of oppression and rules, the coerced children can monitor their sense of autonomy or self-control. To some degree, they will feel that they are liberated. In the meantime, the power of the adult status is executed from the thrill of these delinquent behaviors. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find that the incidents of shoplifting and vandalizing are performed mostly by the children and adolescents who used to experience abuse and some forms of maltreatment.

Another way of children's response to oppression is to transfer the feelings of inferiority and powerlessness from oppression to their own peers and other people (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt 250 -251). Getting oppressed under the adult's hands, the child will aspire for compensating their sense of strength, authority and control by manipulating their own friends or others. This form of dislocating the sense of power can be witnessed from a number of the bullying taking place in educational institutions; smaller and younger students are picked on, bossed about and attacked by bigger and older students, while school girls are verbally abused by school boys (gossiping, talking to rudely, taunting, harassing, etc.). Among girls, spreading bad news or bad mouthing others are frequently adopted to release tensions from abuse and oppression received from adults, and they could be considered the least harmful. In his *Adolescent Powerlessness and Delinquent Behavior*, Gerard Marwell states that children or adolescents who are generally or at least thought to be strong may use their "strength, at any given point of time, to manipulate others" (41). With nothing much they can do or fight back to their senior adults at home, children who have been mad at by their parents may displace their own anger by manipulating their own peers at schools. They will enjoy themselves by gaining reputations or having some kind of prestige in the eyes of others if they become the source for disseminating bad news about their school mates. Likewise, boys who are saddened because they are often humiliated and belittled by the adults in their families can feel more important if they could just verbally abuse some fragile females in their classes. As proposed by Paulson et al., in order to earn higher social hierarchy in school which is better than what they have at home, children who are domestically abused and oppressed will deploy different strategies to adjust themselves to get by and survive. Nevertheless,

the aforementioned adaptive reactions are not practically harmful to anyone. What can be considered genuinely serious and dangerous reaction to the oppression is the last adaptive option, retaliation. In revenge for the adults' consecutive and excessive maltreatments, children may commit crimes by damaging the oppressors' property or directly assaulting their adults whom they see as their enemies. Being extremely and vehemently abused for a long period of time, this group of children may decide not to tolerate the sufferings from oppression any longer. To end the painful oppression unfairly imposed upon them, these children can even commit crime by murdering the cruel adults (121 – 133).

As discussed above, oppression certainly brings about pressure, stress, tension and anxiety to the ill-treated children. To reduce these unpleasant feelings, the oppressed children learn to adjust themselves into the unwanted situations both consciously and unconsciously. With a conscious attempt of adjustment, the oppressed children may try to master, minimize or tolerate the unhappy feelings as long as and as well as they can as discussed in the earlier section. In *Personal Coping Strategies* (2009), Linda Brannon and Jess Feist argue that older children can employ positive and proactive techniques to cope with different kinds of oppression imposed on them (121). They may anticipate what is likely to happen to them. Then, physical and psychological preparations are constructed and the children will get ready to confront such awful situations with patience and courage to overcome stress. Some children may seek social support from others. All in all, different strategies must be schemed so that these unfortunate children can live and survive the oppressive circumstances.

In contrast to conscious attempt, children, particularly the small ones, can be driven to adjust themselves unconsciously to decrease anxiety and mental conflicts caused by oppression. Based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the cognitive processes known as defense mechanisms will function automatically to protect the oppressed children whenever negative emotions like anxiety and tension occur (Cramer 11). Due to these cognitive processes, the children's mental conflicts instigated by oppression can be compromised. In spite of the fact that the oppressed children are completely unaware of what is functioning internally in their psyche, the children can feel better because their pain and anxiety will be lessened through the

concealed operations of these defense mechanisms. As described in Phebe Cramer's *Seven Pillars of Defense Mechanism Theory* (2009), it is quite common for normal individual to deploy defense mechanisms to tackle with stress and disappointment in his daily life (1). However, it can be postulated that the person may be developing psychopathology if these defenses are provoked to activate unnecessarily and repeatedly or if only certain defenses have been used excessively by that person. Besides, each individual does not employ all defense mechanisms and not all defense mechanisms are employed by all people (Cramer 1). Thus, the notion of unconscious mental processes enables us to understand the neglected, exploited, and ill-treated children's complicated and unexpected behaviors.

Initially, the concept of mental defensiveness could be traced from Sigmund Freud's 1894 paper "Neuro-psychoses of Defense". In this paper, Freud elaborated on his observations of the patients who underwent various psychological maneuvers outside their awareness with the purpose to protect their own mind against an "unbearable idea together with its associated effect" (72). Although the functions of the unaware mental defensiveness were introduced by Freud, it was his daughter, Anna Freud who collected and structuralized her father's observations into a comprehensive conceptualization of ego defense mechanisms. Owing to Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud's introduction and concept of the unconscious mental operations, anxiety which used to be believed as the outcome of repression is turned to be something which is initiated by repression as the person's psychological "defense" instead. Later on, other psychologists have additionally theorized that the person's defensive operations can be perceived as his or her character traits or personality which can be linked and analyzed altogether with that person's associations, memories, dreams as well as feelings. The functions of these defense mechanisms can also be interpreted as the person's opposition to and disapproval of changes. To handle the unacknowledged stress, the person's defensive operations will be unconsciously activated to protect his or her mental health whenever the loathsome social situation comes up (Hock 233 – 238). It can be said that the operations of these mechanisms are of non-voluntarism and beyond our control. When the individual feels that the society is too demanding and our ego is not fond of being threatened, the person's mental defensiveness can be instinctively triggered as the submerged

objection in response to the unfavorable environment or dislikable treatment.

Despite no consensus of opinions among psychologists on the classification and a number of defense mechanisms, all defenses, according to Phebe Cramer's *Protecting the Self* (2006), can be classified into four levels: pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature (17). Whereas the psychotic denial and delusion projection are put together as the pathological defenses; fantasy, projection, passive aggression and acting out are categorized as the immature defenses; intellectualization, reaction formation, dissociation, displacement, repression are grouped in the level of neurotic defenses; and humour, sublimation, suppression, altruism, anticipation are categorized as the mature defense mechanisms. To lay the groundwork for the discussion in the following section, explanations and examples of typical defense mechanisms are presented as follows:

Repression, the first mental device found by Freud, is the most important and most common mechanism used for removing painful feelings and sorrowful thoughts from the mind (Gökdağ 3-4). An example can be drawn from a case in which a person witnessed or committed some brutal act and unethical behavior so his memories have been blocked from these disturbing actions as if he has never seen or done them. An employment of this defense is speculated to be launched when the soldiers are unable to recall the murder and attack taking place in the killing field. These incidents seem to be completely forgotten because the horrible experiences are buried in the unconscious part of the soldiers' mind. However, there are times when a person tries consciously to remove some unwanted information or negative feelings from his mind. This defense is called suppression. Although in some occasions, the individual is fully aware that these impulses must be suppressed because they are bad or improper for some reasons. In other occasions, the individual's suppression device can be provoked to activate out of his awareness. At that moment, an individual cannot tell himself why he tries to forget or rid some of his bad feelings or painful memories away.

Denial, the second mechanism, will be used when the person confronts an uneasy situation. To cope with this, he informs himself that what he perceives is not real. Denial is sometimes adopted to reject the disaster happening to someone. The intensity of the devastating event will be lessened dramatically and unrealistically in

order to make the person feel better or to deviate the bad action to suit his need. For example, a person addicted to alcohol or substance may refuse to accept the fact that drinking whiskey or taking drugs in the long term will cause him to suffer from cancer or other diseases in spite of results shown by many research studies. In another case, a woman whose husband died keeps telling herself that one day her husband will come back home to reunite with her and the children; she has been reorganizing things in the house to get ready for his arrival for years. In other words, an activation of denial device will be provoked whenever the truth hurts excruciatingly and tends to be unbearable to accept by the individual.

Regression, the third one, is an ego defense which the adults are turned to act childishly or primitively. This defensiveness operation engages the return to an earlier stage of development. Under tension, adults want to abandon responsibilities and problems. Thus, they move back to find refuge, pleasure, and safety they used to be endowed by the adults around during their childhood. A student who is threatened by school hoodlums might wet his pants or his bed because of fear and rage. Not knowing how to solve many obstacles in life which simultaneously surround her, a strong and experienced woman cannot help crying like a baby. It can be said that this defensive strategy is stimulated to function in the same circumstance as when denial is. Regression occurs if adults are overwhelmed with a multitude of impediments and there is no one who can lend a helping hand. Falling in such a helpless situation, the adults appear to be incapable of controlling their lives. Being unaware what they should do, age-inappropriate actions have been unconsciously employed and demonstrated to avoid the feeling of guilt. They may abandon all their duties and behave irresponsibly like small children (Baek 5-6).

Another mechanism has to do with projection which entails the passing of any negative emotions, repressed impulses or feeling of guilt to other people or things (Baek 6). An example of an adoption of projection could be reflected from this incident. When a boy does not like to take the girl recommended by his parents out, the boy will tell himself and his parents that it is the girl who does not want to or like going out with him. Likewise, students who cheat will make an excuse reasoning to themselves that many students do cheat from time to time. Therefore, they are not different from general students who do not have enough time to study because they

are always tied up with too many activities to take part and lots of homework to do. Using projection, the false, misdeed or any thoughts that will make the person feel bad will be bestowed to someone or something else.

The next mechanism is reaction formation. It refers to the demonstration of behavior or action which is opposite to one's real intention and desire. That is to say, the person's negative, wrong or unethical attitudes are hidden from the public. As a matter of fact, if we can notice the deed which tends to be overacted or exaggerated, it is likely to be a behavior launched from a defensive device of reaction formation. A colleague who consistently and excessively compliments his or her co-worker may actually hate and envy this co-worker's accomplishment and promotion. A queer guy frequently informs his pious family and friends that how much he loathes some TV actors who are gays because many boys may try to copy their behaviors. Apart from trying to prevent and protect oneself from being blamed by their associates, forming a behavioral reaction which is completely different from what the person truly wants can be regarded as a strategy employed to deceive, convince and protect oneself not to be drawn into bad attitudes or wrongdoing too deep (Hock 233-238).

Sublimation is defined as a transformation of repressed impulses and offensive emotions into the socially admirable forms. Because of opposition and refusal from the society, the unacceptable impulses may strongly motivate the person to make more effort until he can successfully construct great work and performance to gain fame and acceptance from the society. Under the operation of this mental device, an aggressive and violent person can be driven to turn his aggression into athletic competence and become a famous sport player. Similarly, some renowned artists and musicians had turned their bitter childhood or painful past afflicted on them by the social norms into popular tunes and globally influential art works. In short, sublimation becomes a strong psychological device for venting one's offensive talents, skills, and emotions into something constructive and creative (Baek 8).

Identification which is sometimes called introjections, involves integrating, sharing or taking other people's distinct and accomplishing qualifications as if they were yours. By employing this kind of defensiveness, a person can ward off the feelings of disappointment and failure. One's inefficiency can be forgotten for a while. As exemplified in Rüchan Gökdağ's *Defense Mechanisms Used by University*

Students to Cope with Stress, the inmates can deal with their stress and unhappiness from losing their freedom in jail by identifying themselves with their guardians (4). In addition, a parent who had never won any academic scholarship can be elated when his son is awarded with the best government financial endowment to Harvard. Under the impact of this unconscious psychological device, the person may even behave, speak or dress like the one he identifies himself with. The obvious example can be seen when some teenagers put on the same clothes or have their hair styled like those of their favorite movie stars.

Intellectualization is a form ego defense which an individual tries to separate himself from his negative feelings by focusing on the intellectual elements of a situation (Vaillant 274). The device is used to prevent himself not to be worried or bereaved by the stressful incident. By adopting this mechanism, the individual enables himself to maintain his self-esteem and in the meantime save his own face from embarrassment. For instance, failing examination, the student may tell his parents and himself that the test is very much irrelevant to what has been instructed in the class. Or, when a contestant cannot win the competition, instead of admitting that he is not good enough, the contestant reasons to himself that the judges are not fair trying to help other contestants to win the game. On the contrary, the defeated contestant may tell himself that losing is better than winning because if he wins, he has to work harder to keep his championship.

Displacement involves redirecting your offensive impulses and conflicts from the actual targets to other things or people (Gökdağ 5). This is similar to making a scapegoat out of someone or something less threatening or less powerful since you cannot make an outlet of your anger and tension out of your superiors. The employees and students who are frustrated because they are blamed by their boss and teacher but they cannot release their hot temper at the office or school. Coming back home these frustrated people will explode their anger on their wife and younger sibling by starting a fight that will help them feel calmer. Sometimes, objects and pets can be the targets for deviating the person's anxiety and frustration, too. Stressful people may kick the furniture, throw glasses or plates, or beat their own animals without sensible causes to do so. Certainly, with an employment of displacement, it seems more appropriate and safer for the individual to express their negative

emotions on or in front of the false targets.

Undoing is a defense named on the ground that there is an amendment, correction or fixation for any mistakes. According to his *Case Studies II* (1991), Sigmund Freud first recounted the practice of undoing when the Rat Man, his patient, took a stone from the road in case his lady's carriage should be overturned, then he felt obliged to go back and "replace the stone in the original position in the middle of the road" (70). Hence, undoing what has been done, in essence, protects one's ego against instinctual demands. The person has done something wrong, unhealthy and harmful causing him to feel sorry and guilty. So he unconsciously tries to undo or reverse the thing already done time and time again. Wrongdoer may demonstrate this defense in the forms of delivering apologies or confessions. With an attempt to alter his infidelity, for example, a husband brings home fabulous present and a bouquet for his wife after committing an affair with another woman. In light of psychiatry, this mechanism is deemed a notion useful for explaining the cause, symptoms and remedial approach of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Splitting refers to the inability to accept the polarized thoughts, feelings about, beliefs of or attitudes toward other things or people. Deploying this device, everything is perceived as either totally good or bad. All the attributes of each event or a person will be selectively divided into just the positive or negative clusters. It is believed that by splitting the characteristics and qualifications of other people and situations into two opposite groups, the person will be saved from being harmed or turned down by the ones he has viewed as the negative sides. Therefore, splitting device will be triggered to activate to protect the person from certain kind of fear. In *The Defense Mechanism of Splitting: Developmental Origins, Effects on Staff, Recommendations for Nursing Care*, Diane Carser asserts that this mechanism is commonly used by many people (21). Nonetheless, this mental device is extreme, unnatural and unrealistic. If activated; therefore, it can damage the person's work life and personal relationships. The consequence of launching this defense can be witnessed from the following illustration. The woman starts her new romance perceiving her new boyfriend as a perfect guy. Whatever he does at the beginning of their relationship is splendid and flawless in her eyes. Their romance goes on smoothly for a while. Then, one day, her boyfriend shows his bad behavior that this

woman cannot find any excuse to correct and wash out her boyfriend's misconduct. Her feelings and attitudes towards him have been overturned from then on. They have to break up finally because she cannot understand how a perfect gentleman like him can be changed completely. It is impossible for this woman to admit to herself that the whole particular person can possess both positive and negative qualities.

As mentioned earlier, modern psychologists have investigated, developed, and expanded the studies of defense mechanisms after what Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud have done. Due to the studies by later psychologists, some more types of these unconscious devices have been added up. The names and number of these devices vary according to the criteria these studies focus on. Certainly, their interpretations, definitions and explanations of these devices overlap sometimes. Since this dissertation is a literary analysis, not a psychological investigation, a few more devices which tend to be employed by the Dahlian child characters will be briefly discussed hereafter.

Withdrawal means a person avoids confronting the situations, anything or anyone which will remind himself of a painful experience. This includes running away, using drugs, drinking or not mentioning about the event which and the people who used to hurt him. *Acting out* refers to extreme behaviors the person performs to express his thoughts with an unconscious intention of releasing pressure and tension. The incidents of acting out can be indicated when a person punches or break an object, or when a child plays tantrum if he does not get what he wants. *Dissociation* involves one's identity crisis derived from trauma or serious pain. If a person's dissociation defense is provoked, symptoms similar to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder can be discernible. The signs of employing of this device include memory loss, amnesia, flashbacks, and personality disorders, and detachment from the real world. A lesser form of dissociation is *compartmentalization* which a person excludes parts of the self from awareness of other parts. A different set of dichotomized values and beliefs will be separated from each other. For example, an honest man can cheat on his income tax return without acknowledging his illegal conduct. *Compensation* is defined as trying to overachieve in one respect in order to make up for the failure or weakness in another field. An average school boy who cannot study well may commit himself to practicing sports until he becomes a famous player. *Assertiveness* is

demonstrated when a person emphasizes his needs and thoughts showing his selfness in respectful manners. The person must have strong communication skill, self-confidence and social understanding to do this. *Altruism* is to show one's sincerity and goodwill to help other persons. Regarding an argument or conflict, one may employ this defense by compromising or neutralizing the situations between the two fighting parties. *Conversion* means altering the repressed psychological beings such as anxiety and stress into physical illnesses: coughing, numbness, losing one's voice or vision, etc. *Humor*, a kind of mature defense, refers to an attempt to find the funny sides of the problematic situations which push someone to feel unhappy, nervous and stressful. *Idealization* is to emphasize and exaggerate the positive attributes of the a person, an object or a situation. An abused wife may idealize her husband as a fantastic spouse in spite of his violent actions afflicted on her. *Passive aggression* involves indirectly pay back to someone. An incident of passive aggression can be exemplified in the case which a student shows up to the English class late for a month after the teacher failed his business English sales report. *Somatization*, partly similar to conversion, means transferring unpleasant feelings about others into the physical symptoms of oneself. For example, when a young wife is angry with her husband, she unconsciously suffers from stomachache and pains in different part of her body. The causes of these illnesses are untraceable. *Fixation* refers to sticking to certain kind of reaction in spite of its ineffectiveness. A woman stubbornly insists on choosing the same recipe to bake her cake even though she has been told by family members many times that the measure of some ingredients should be changed. Likewise, a girl picks the same type of boyfriends which their relationships always last for only a few months. One more type of defense mechanism is *fantasy or day dreaming* (Steinberg 249 – 257; Hunter 205 – 213; Vaillant 238; Schacter, Gilbert, & Wegner 483; Hentschel 43-51). It is defined as using one's imagination to experience something unobtainable. Further discussion of how this device has been employed to help Roald Dahl achieve his goals of defending, protecting, and speaking for the oppressed children which will be presented in the second half of this unit.

As previously mentioned, children can adjust themselves and react to oppression both consciously (directly) and unconsciously (indirectly) in order to survive and live safely and pleasantly in an oppressive environment. Forms of

conscious reactions to oppression include passive acceptance, exercise illegal power, manipulation their own peers, and retaliation. With regard to their unconscious reactions, their defense mechanisms will be activated to protect themselves from fear, anxiety or any negative feelings caused by oppression. Actually, it is certain and quite common that people including children unintentionally use a few mechanisms to reduce tension and anxiety in their daily life. However, defense devices can deceive their users from reality because they operate outside our awareness. According to the study conducted by Phebe Cramer (2009), the uses of these mental defenses are activated in connection with the users' nervous system (11). Relying on these devices for too long or using them excessively, therefore, can also decrease the person's "conscious experience of negative emotions" leading them to lose touch of the real world but to develop self-deception and psychopathology instead (Cramer 11). In addition, using a single or the same defense repeatedly is unhealthy and can be regarded as maladaptive, a harmful or inappropriate reaction. To prevent this maladjustment, the failure or inappropriateness to react, it is recommended by psychologists that a variety of defenses or newer defenses should be adopted particularly those classified as mature devices like humor, identification, sublimation, or altruism. Taking everything into account, as contended by Rüchan Gökdağ, any defense mechanisms should be considered as maladaptive only when new problems are originated by the activation of these devices or only when these devices impede the person's capability to function (6).

Coping with and Resistance to Oppression as Portrayed in Dahl's Works

Based on the discussion in chapter two, different forms of children's abuse, neglect, and maltreatment are demonstrated a great deal in a number of Roald Dahl's children's stories. That is to say, children's oppression permeates Dahl's world. To put it another way, literature for the children becomes the stage which this renowned children's writer employs as the tool to release personal pains he received from childhood and in the meantime to emancipate his disapproval of and resistance to child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment taking place in the English and American societies in the second half of the twentieth century—the period Dahl wrote his stories

for the small audience. In *The Grotesque and the Taboo in Roald Dahl's Humorous Writings for Children*, Mark I. West claimed that Dahl once asserted that “children are inclined, at least subconsciously, to regard grown-ups as the enemy. I see this as natural, and I often work it into my children’s books” (116). No wonder, a typical theme found in many of Dahl’s children’s stories, as confirmed by Jenny Hansson’s *The War of Ages*, is “children versus adults” (4). Owing to all aforementioned reasons, it can be assumed that the author’s attacks and protests against children’s oppressions will be traceable from the ten selected primary texts. In the following section, Dahl’s opposition to children’s oppression will be discussed from the child protagonists’ reactions against the adult antagonists’ mistreatments.

James Henry Trotter of *James and the Giant Peach* is only four years old when his parents die. After the passing of his parents, he has to move to live with Aunts Sponge and Spiker for three years. Living there, James is beaten, scolded, locked up in his empty room and barely fed despite doing heavy chores for these cruel aunts. He is neither allowed to play with friends nor to own any pets or toys. Since James is very young, there is nothing much he can do in response to his aunts’ unethical acts. Far worse, if James refuses to obey what these repulsive and malicious women order him to, he will be punished even more severely. Children at the same ages as James can fit in the third and fourth stages of initiative versus guilt and industry versus inferiority on the basis of Erik Erikson’s eight stages psychosocial development theory (Berger 37). Their third stage spans from ages four and five. During these years children need to find out what kind of persons they are going to be. They need to develop their sense of responsibility leading to their initiative. Otherwise they will be anxious, irresponsible and feel guilty. They fall in stage four when they are between seven to eleven years old. They will be busily learning how to be competent and productive. If the adults overstep their boundaries, they will develop the sense of inferiority and adequacy making it hard for them to successfully develop further to the following stages. One certain thing which will be good for the overall development of the children at these ages is allowing them to take part in fun activities and games by playing with friends.

Like most children at his age, James once has collected his courage trying to resist his aunts' oppression by frankly begging for what he needs, "Oh, Auntie Sponge!" James cried out. 'And Auntie Spiker! Couldn't we all – please – just for once – go down to the seaside on the bus? It isn't very far – and I feel so hot and awful and lonely . . ." (Dahl 15). Unlike other typical aunts who will raise and take care of their only orphaned nephew to grow healthily and happily, the atrociously aunts Sponge and Spiker shout back at James and call him rudely and insultingly like little beast, little disgusting worm, or lazy good-for nothing brute. Because James is still very young, small and vulnerable, what he can do is just to passively accept all oppressive situations imposed on him. Certainly, he is hurt terribly. No one, not even for a small boy like James is fond of being constantly blamed, rebuked or disapproved of for no reason. After this incident, James has never tried to ask for anything from his heartless aunts again. He knows that it will be useless attempting to gain love or sympathy from them. From then on, James avoids confronting them directly. Should any domestic harms are about to befall him, James will remove himself from the perilous scenes as quickly as he can. In several oppression events of *James and the Giant Peach*, readers will find that many times that James' aunts scold and threaten to beat him, James will run as fast he can hiding himself in the bushes. Thus, it is obvious that withdrawal is used by James more frequently than other types of defense devices to protect himself.

Unlike James Henry Trotter, Charlie Bucket of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* has never been beaten, exploited, and detained. Although he suffers from constant famine like James, the inadequacy of his meals does not stem from the adult relatives' negligence, stinginess and unkindness. Actually, family's poverty is the sole source of Charlie's shortages of food, clothes, and shelter. As discussed in chapter two, lacking all these basic requisites impedes the child's physical, psychological, and cognitive development. Children cannot grow fully and learn efficiently if their needs of these fundamental necessities are not met (Miller, et al. 14716-21; Mani, et al. 976 – 980). Children born in low-income family, according to Kingston, Regoli and Hewitt's *Theory of Differential Oppression*, are less likely to access into resources which can stimulate their experiences and enhance their overall development (246). Apart from these disadvantages, impoverished children can be

easily drawn into truancy or any wrongdoings. Sometimes they can even turn to depend on substance use to release emotional stress derived from financial problems.

Based on *Urban Poverty and Juvenile Crime: Evidence from Randomized Housing-Mobility Experiment*, poverty increases the opportunity to spend time on the street forcing the poor children to form their own gangs or associate with goons and hoodlums (Ludwig 1). Consequently, they could be led to commit stealing, robbery, violence or various forms of crimes. Luckily for the Buckets, Charlie has performed neither the problematic behaviors nor illegal deeds. In contrast to general indigent children, Charlie reacts wisely and virtuously to oppression afflicted by destitution. Nonetheless, poverty and regular starvation make Charlie begin looking like a skeleton. So his parents and grandparents are very much concerned about his health. They have attempted to urge him to eat more by giving their own portion to him. Yet, when his mother slips “her own piece of bread on to his plate, . . . he made her take it back” (Dahl 58). Based on the meanings of the defense devices of suppression and altruism, suppression is referred to as an attempt, either consciously or unconsciously, to remove unwanted feelings such as pain, anxiety, or sorrow, whereas altruism is defined as the individual’s unselfish acts intended to “enhance other people’s welfare” without receiving any rewards in return (Steinberg 249). By contemplating Charlie’s refusal to accept his mother’s bread, it is discernible that the defense devices of altruism and suppression have been activated to function inside his mentality. In spite of an acute attack of hunger, Charlie is selfless. He rejects to eat because he knows that taking his mother’s bread will cause his mother to suffer from starvation instead of him. Not many children at this young age (eleven years old) will be able to demonstrate this decent character trait by rejecting the offered food while his stomach is still empty. It can be said that Charlie who represents underprivileged children appears to develop and mature morally more than his real age. With an activation of both suppression and altruism, a very fast growing-eleven-year- old boy is enabled to care more for the his parent’ well-being rather than his own.

While Charlie seems to be caring, loving, generous, calm, gentle, and forgiving, the protagonist in *The Magic Finger* is characterized to be quite opposite from those of all Charlie’s qualities. In other words, *The Magic Finger*’s main child character is rather brave, determined, hot-headed, aggressive, and revengeful. To

respond to the Greggs' verbal abuse and negligence of her warning not to hunt the ducks, for example, the girl does her best by going over to their farm to "talk them out of it" every time she sees them shoot the birds (Dahl 2). When the girl knows that the Greggs will never stop shooting birds and ducks for fun in spite of many warnings, she makes the whole family pay back their indifference and heedlessness in a harsh manner. By harsh manner, it refers to the event that this unnamed girl uses her magic finger to change them to be ducks so that they can suffer living the ducks' lives. After the Greggs have been transformed into ducks, they learn how their lives can be dangerous, difficult, and painful if they are constantly oppressed, victimized, hunted, and killed just for fun by those who are stronger and bigger – the ducks who are metamorphosed into humans armed with guns. The situation is considered the use of retaliation to protect oneself and the birds who stand for the children. Certainly, this vengeful reaction seems to serve the Greggs right since hunting animals in abundance for their own pleasure is cruel and unnecessary. It is considered morally wrong as well because the Greggs' violent action of killing poultry destroys the environment. To put it another way, because of the girl's decision to retaliate for the oppressive birds using the power from her finger, the Greggs have been given a good lesson allowing them to understand clearly how it will be like to live in an oppressive situation of the birds, the metaphors for the children. As a matter of fact, prior to the case of the Greggs, an employment of the power from the girl's finger to resist the adult's oppression had taken place before.

At school, when she misspelled the word *cat* as *K-a-t*, she was blamed by her teacher, Mrs. Winter, as stupid. Although part of the teacher's criticism is derived from the girl's inability to write the dictated word correctly, the girl does not own up her mistake. Instead, as soon as the teacher finishes addressing the girl as stupid, *The Magic Finger's* child protagonist talks back to her teacher's contempt right away with the following argument: "I am not a stupid little girl!" [she] cried. 'I am a very nice little girl!'" (Dahl 5). With the combination of the girl's anger and aggression, poor Mrs. Winter cannot get away from being transformed to be catlike under the spell of her magic finger. Far worse than the Greggs who all are metamorphosed back into humans after they have promised that they will no longer hunt the birds and ducks, Mrs. Winter, according to the fiction, has to maintain her catlike figure for

good. Although saying that hurt people hurt people may sound like a cliché, the truth resides in this old adage can be confirmed by the findings in several studies. In *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family* (1980), for example, researchers have indicated that either “excessive demanding parents or verbally or physically abusive parents” can be aggressively counterattacked by their own biological children (Straus et al. 121). In similar fashion, it is insisted by another investigation *Youth Who Physically Assault Their Parents* (1990) that children who have been severely and consistently abused are highly motivated to take revenge on their adult oppressors (Paulson et al. 121 – 133). No wonder, passively receiving oppression is not a mechanism opted by *The Magic Finger*’s girl protagonist. With those obstinate and cruel Greggs, only the aggressively retaliatory actions will help turn the girl’s bad feelings and the oppressive situations to become better.

Instead of using retaliation, the children in *The Enormous Crocodile* employ the defense mechanism of withdrawal to help them get away from their main adult oppressor. In this story, the Enormous Crocodile serves as the metaphor for the adult who targets to eat the children. As soon as the children get some warnings to know that all the coconut tree, the seesaw, the seat at merry-go-round, as well as the picnic bench are actually the wicked reptile under his covers, the children’s survival instinct is triggered causing them to “screamed, and ran back to town for their lives” (Dahl 12). According to James Perran Ross’ *Crocodiles*, these animals are the largest predators occupying prominently in tropical or subtropical aquatic habitats (1). Apart from humans and livestock, the crocodiles prefer to eat small prey. It seems rather unlucky for the children, too, because attacking children is not an uncommon of their habitual killing. For these reasons, children including grownups should not be allowed to play recklessly near the swamps or water areas where crocodilians reside. Unquestionably, Dahl’s care for the children’s safety and well-being is demonstrated via the speeches and actions of those animals who come to save the children from an Enormous Crocodile’s traps. For instance, disagreeing with the Enormous Crocodile’s vicious plan, Humpy—Rumpy the Hippopotamus, has cursed him to “get caught and cooked and turned into crocodile soup!” (Dahl 3). Similar to the hippo, when Trunky the Elephant is told about the elephant’s nasty plan of catching the children for lunch, he blasphemously wishes the Enormous Crocodile to “get

squashed and squished and squizzled and boiled up into crocodile stew!” (Dahl 4). Considering both the hippopotamus and the elephant’s articulations, we can witness that Dahl’s opposition to hurting or killing the children has been integrated in his writing. Reading *The Enormous Crocodile*, the child readers will not only attain entertainment but they will also learn how to protect themselves from the fatal or any human-eating animals.

The use of withdrawal by the children in *The Enormous Crocodile* is stimulated by their feeling of fear. In spite of the fact that fear is deemed as one of living creatures’ innate emotions, Andreas Olsson and Elizabeth A Phelps have explained in *Social Learning of Fear* (2007) that this kind of humans’ basic feeling can be socially and culturally learnt through undergoing direct aversive situations. Based on Olsson and Phelps’ explanation, under fearful conditions, the amygdala in the individual’s brain will play an important role in the development of the person’s fear. Biologically, when perceiving dangerous or threatening stimuli, this instance of the dreadful feeling will bring about the person’s ultimate changes in his metabolism and organ functions driving a dramatic transformation in his behaviors such as hiding, freezing or escaping. As added by both researchers, responding to fear necessarily generates proper behavioral responses which can help living things to survive (1095-1102). With reference to Olsson and Phelps’ investigation, readers can understand easily why the children in *The Enormous Crocodile* have to flee when they are informed about their main adult oppressor and enemy, the Enormous Crocodile. As it has been discussed previously, we all own the innate feeling of fear so that we can survive. In other words, all humans naturally want to live and enjoy lives as long as they can; nobody wants to die young. Since their lives are threatened to be eliminated, the children have to take themselves away from the dangerous zones as fast as they can because they are automatically stimulated by their natural instinct of fear. As a result, it is obvious that withdrawal is an important mechanism used by child characters in this story.

Like *The Magic Finger*, the defense mechanism of retaliation is employed by the children to cope with oppression one more time in *The Twits*. In this story, the monkeys, allegorically referring to the children, are caged and forced to do things upside down at least for six hours per day by their owners, Mr. and Mrs. Twits. If they

do not act or behave in compliance with The Twits' demands, the monkeys will be beaten and refrained from eating. Without a doubt, under such torturing ill-treatments, the Muggle – Wump monkey family must bear a strong grudge against The Twits. According to Joel Taxel's *The Politics of Children's Literature: Reflections on Multiculturalism, Political Correctness, and Christopher Columbus* (1992), children's literature contains "statements about a host of critically important social and political questions: what it means to be human; the relative worth of boys and girls men and women" (11). Based on Taxel's stance on children's literature, it can be delineated from Dahl's *The Twits* that Dahl wants to inquire about The Twits' behaviors. In other words, it appears that the writer disagrees with and disapproves of The Twits' misuse and cruelty to the animals who are the metaphors for the children. In opposing to the Twits' wrongdoings, Dahl tries to gain sympathy from his readers by allowing the victimized monkeys to express how despondent and painful their lives are being ill-treated by these heartless spouses. As portrayed in the book, The Twits' monkeys suffer and "longed to escape from the cage. They hated Mr. and Mrs. Twit for making their lives so miserable. They also hated them for what they did to the birds" (Dahl 46). After the Roly – Poly Bird has set them free from confinement, they are not reluctant to "make [Mr. and Mrs. Twits] stand on their heads for hours and hours! Perhaps forever! Let them see what it feels like for a change! (Dahl 58). So when getting out from the cage, the monkeys scheme the plan to make The Twits stand on their hands for good and disappear at the end of the story. The ugly consequence which The Twits undergo at the ending of the fiction can also be considered as the author's condemnation and criticism of oppression imposed either on the animals or on the children. At the same time, the disappearance of these couples implies the author's wishes that cruelty and oppression of animals and children should be critiqued, condemned, and eliminated. Due to *The Theory of Differential Oppression*, children will engage in retaliation at the people or the institutions believed to be the source of their oppression (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt 251). Although this defense mechanism is considered the least common and most severe form of the children's responsive adjustment to oppression, taking revenge on these heartless spouses may be the best way for preventing oppression to happen to other animals and the children in the future.

Reacting to George's grandma's oppression, many defense mechanisms including suppression, withdrawal, conversion, and somatization are activated to function in the mentality of George Kranky of *George's Marvelous Medicine*. Listening to grandmas absurd and terrifying stories of eating slugs and earwigs, he "started edging towards the door" (Dahl 8). When grandma notices that her grandson is trying to get away from her, she calls him to come closer and listen to even more offensive and disgusting narrations from her. George is so intimidated by her threatening accounts of making him to wake up in the morning with "nails dropping off, teeth grow out of fingers or a tail coming out from behind" (Dahl 10). So he dives for the door running into the kitchen to cook a remedy to cure his grandma's sickness. While attending all these admonishing and creepy narrative course addressed to him, George who is still very young, has to suppress his anxiety from fear, as previously discussed, by informing himself that "I'm not going to be frightened by her" (Dahl 12). Adopting only suppression seems not to be effective enough to help George remove and fight against his grandma's consistent and scary oral oppressions. In addition, because his farm house is located far from others' residences, there is nowhere and no one else he can turn to or ask for help. In other words, it is evident that George is coerced to listen to all grandmas' nasty and ridiculous narrative accounts despite his intense dread and aversion. All along through this tormenting path of listening to grandma's verbal abuses, George's agonizing and panicky oppositions have been manifested by his physical symptoms: he trembles, shakes, and numbs. Many times he just stays immovable staring aghast at his grandma. That is to say, all the mechanisms of suppression, withdrawal, conversion, and somatization have to be deployed to cope with the nasty and horrid stories which this unlikely grandma has narrated to scare her own grandson.

Not different from the children of *The Enormous Crocodile*, in *George's Marvelous Medicine*, George's oppression is caused by fear. In George's case, the boy is not hunted to be eaten like those children of *The Enormous Crocodile*. Nonetheless, his mental being is endangered by his female elder's strange and frightening narratives. As it has already been discussed, fear is a natural survival response to unpleasant experiences, harms or threats. George's grandma's stories are truly blood-curdling and awful. Thus, when all the creepy and scary stories are told to

him, George has reacted to them like most scared children; he quivers and tries to move away from his grandma. Despite an attempt to strengthen up his own morale by “speaking to himself softly” that he would not allow his grandma to successfully cow him, George has to admit that he actually still feel “frightened” (Dahl 12). Indeed, being exposed to various adverse and horrifying situations will lead to an upheaval of a child’s hormones and brain chemistry (Zald & Pardo 746; Olsson & Phelps 1095 – 1102). Under the sudden changes of the substances in his brain and blood, George seems to lack his self-control. This is why he comes up with cooking a home-made remedy for his grandma-- his marvelous medicines.

Sophie and the BFG of *The BFG*, resembling George of *George’s Marvelous Medicine*, need to employ several defense devices: delinquency, retaliation, withdrawal, conversion, and somatization to counteract oppression impinged on them. Delinquency is the first device deployed by the girl protagonist of the book. There are rules and regulations which all children have to strictly obey and practice at an orphanage where Sophie used to live. Children are not allowed to get out of bed or go to the toilet after the lights are switched off. They have to fold their clothes properly. If they do not comply with these rules they will be penalized by being confined in a small room or else they are not allowed to have meals. Since these dormitory’s rules are rigorously launched, living at the orphanage will be very stressful for all the children. Being delinquent once in a while can help Sophie and other children reduce the pressure afflicted on them. This is why she wakes up during midnight to take a peek out of the dormitory’s window witnessing inadvertently the BFG blowing dreams into the children’s bedrooms. Of course, undergoing detention and starvation, Sophie cannot withhold the feelings of grudge and vengeance developing against Mrs. Clonkers, the orphanage’s landlady. So when being pried into her orphanage life by the BFG, Sophie does not hesitate to tells the BFG how much she “hated” living there (Dahl 30). In other words, we can say that Sophie’s retaliating attitude towards her adult oppressor has been ingrained through the dormitory’s landlady’s rigid management even though Sophie does not really bring this revengeful attitude into practice.

Likewise, the BFG who is often bullied by other bigger giants in many ways shows hostility towards his giant friends by gradually isolating himself from the giant community. They invade into his personal dwelling disregarding his privacy. Sometimes the BFG is used as a toy ball being thrown aloft among his giant friends. Apart from these incidents, his physical defect of being much smaller than other giants has often been scornfully mocked. For example, he is called as Runty little scumscrew, Squimpy little bottletart, and so on. From all the aforementioned abusive occurrences, it is palpable that the BFG has been singled out and discriminated by his friends causing him to live in the giant land unhappily. Based on psychological studies, oppression entails pressure, stress, tension or anxiety to the abused and neglected children. When stress, anxiety, and disappointment occur, the person will employ defense mechanisms to reduce or cope with these unpleasant feelings (Cramer 1). Indeed, friends' mistreatments aggravate the BFG's both the negative emotions and resistance against them. Thus, many defense mechanisms such as withdrawal, conversion or somatization have been activated to function to reduce the BFG's awful emotions. In the story, we have learnt that when this big friendly giant, The BFG, is threatened by The Bloodbottler to tell where he hides Sophie, the BFG answers The Bloodbottler with stutter, "There's n-no one in here,' . . . 'W-why don't you l-leave me alone?'" (Dahl 48-49). Certainly, the adverse experiences inflicted by The Bloodbottler as well as other oppressive giant friends have made the BFG's life a misery. Feeling so stressful and miserable, the BFG needs to transfer his horrible emotions into physical symptoms or illness. This is why stammering or the flow of the BFG's speech delivery is disrupted whenever he encounters the bullish giants. It can be said that, the BFG has to unconsciously adopt somatization or conversion in order to decrease his unhappiness and anxiety as a form of self-protection. Moreover, he tries to avoid meeting all his offensive and cruel giant friends by trying to reside alone in his own cave as much as he can. Since the exemplified communication disorder including other reactions of the BFG have displayed the operations of all the defense mechanisms of withdrawal, conversion or somatization, it can be inferred that to help the BFG to be able to handle with all the horrific circumstances during his stay in the giant land successfully, the activation of several defense mechanisms will necessarily be employed.

All in all, whenever the adult oppressors have maltreated the children, their defense devices will automatically be prompted to function. As for these Dahlian characters, Sophie and the BFG, it is discernible that their defense devices of delinquency, withdrawal, conversion and somatization have been launched to help alleviate and ward off the unpleasant feelings not to overwhelm them. The function of these devices, besides enabling Sophie and the BFG to continue living on satisfyingly, can be considered as their resistance to all forms of maltreatments. Not only fighting for themselves, learning that other giants are going to catch and eat all the children in England, Sophie and the BFG plot up “The Great Plan” to protect other children from these brutal murderers. After convincing to the BFG that they “can’t just sit here doing nothing,” Sophie co-works with the BFG announcing their battle with those child-eating giants (Dahl 107). Luckily for both of them, after the BFG blows the dream into the Queen of England’s bedroom, she understands what kind of deadly situation will happen to all English children. Under her majesty’s supreme command, the army has assisted Sophie and the BFG. Finally, they can deceive all the giants to be detained in the biggest and deepest pit ever.

Similar to the previous Dahlian story *The BFG*, fear of being caught, metamorphosed and killed, this time not from the giants, but from the witches representing female oppressors, has prompted *The Witches’* unnamed boy protagonist’s defense devices of withdrawal, and conversion or somatization to function. According to the discussion in chapter 2, the boy has demonstrated his actions and symptoms which imply that he is afraid of dangers and oppression impinged on him by these scary witches. Learning from his grandma how formidable and dangerous the witches are for the children, whenever he is about to be caught or at the time he confronts with the malicious and harmful witches, the unnamed boy will freeze all over, quiver, shake, numb, etc. All these physical reactions imply the person’s bereavement, agony, stress, aversion, or shock (Bryant et al. 6). At the same time these symptoms convey the individual’s resistance to the unpleasant social situation that can lead to the production of the person’s negative feelings or adverse attitudes (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt 249; Hock 233 – 238). Thus, when recognizing that all women taking part in the annual convention of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children held at the hotel which he and his grandma are

staying are actually the witches, the boy moves away to hide behind the curtains and his blood “turned to ice” (Dahl 63). Moreover, panicked that he will be discovered and caught from the place where he has been hiding, the boy has described how his body reacts to this frightening event as follows: “The hairs on my head were standing up like the bristles of a nail-brush and a cold sweat was breaking out all over (Dahl 11). As it is explained in *The Child, the Family and the Outside World*, most oppressed children’s mental and emotional difficulties will be demonstrated through physical symptoms. When the oppressed children suffer from fear, stress and strain, their defense mechanism of somatization or conversion will be stimulated to protect themselves. To lessen these undesirable feelings, their physical system will malfunction and be expressed through bodily upsets (Winnicott 129).

Unfortunately, the boy is finally discovered by the Grand High Witch’s minions. Soon after wards, he and Bruno, another boy staying in the same hotel, are transformed into mice by the Grand High Witch’s Formula 86 delay mouse maker. Being altered into mice is equivalent to being forced to endure the procedure of maltreatment and oppression because of the removal of the boys’ beings (Diaz 5). In other words, the metamorphosis forces these two mouse boys to be expelled from the human community. Of course, in order to survive, it is necessary that these mouse boys must learn and adjust themselves to live as mice. This causes him to employ a couple more devices which consist of projection and sublimation to defend himself from suffering negative emotions. Like most children, none of these boys wants to consent to be turned into mice, another form of oppression. Since the very beginning of their transformation, their unwillingness and objection to abide in their new animal status are clearly described: “I don’t want to be a mouse! . . . I refuse to be a mouse!” (Dahl 121). Undoubtedly, as soon as they learn that their metamorphosis has been cursed under the spell of the Grand High Witch’s potion, the boys do not hesitantly deliver severe reprimand and rebuke to her for bringing so much trouble into their lives: “That filthy old cow! I will get her for this! Where is she? (Dahl 122). Being incapable to admit that it is actually their own carelessness and greed for candies which take them to fall into the trap of being metamorphosed as mice by the Grand High Witch, the boys put the blame on her instead of themselves. As Baek explains, passing adverse emotions such as guilt and anger to other objects or people is

considered as the deployment of projection (6). Laying the fault of being transformed on the Grand High Witch will help both Bruno and the boy protagonist to suffer less from the discomfort and misfortune living in their new figures. When the witches' grand project of turning all children in England into mice is overheard, all the mouse boys and the lead child character's grandma concur that this vicious plan plotted by these witches will never be allowed to succeed. "We've got to stop them," said them (Dahl 130). According to their decision, we can see that their repressed impulses and offensive feelings will be shifted into something socially admirable; i.e., peace and safety for the British children. Whenever any negative feelings have been converted into the constructive actions, we can say that the individual's defense device of sublimation is eventually and successfully mobilized to launch.

In *Matilda*, retaliation seems to be the major adaptive reaction chosen by most children who have been oppressed. In fact, children's oppression is depicted more intensely in this book than in other Dahl's books for the children. As a result, the children's resistance to the adults' oppression appears to reasonably be aggravated in the story, too. Unlike the child characters in the preceding Dahlian stories, it is noticeable that the children who are oppressed in *Matilda* tend not to passively accept the oppression imposed on them. Consequently, the symptoms of sheer fear such as shiver and numbness have barely found to be demonstrated by the oppressed children. In contrast to other Dahlian stories for children, to respond to the adults' abuse, neglect and maltreatment, the child protagonist and other child characters in *Matilda* opt to aggressively retaliate or fight back their adult antagonists.

As soon as the story starts, a strong intention to react violently or to retaliate against the adults' oppression has been portrayed. In spite of her young age and tiny size, Matilda Wormwood who is regularly neglected, physically and verbally abused by her own biological father and mother has declared to make war with her parents. Strangely but true, Mr. and Mrs. Wormwoods are very much different from most parents. They consistently inform Matilda how stupid and ignorant she is. When Mr. Wormwood gets moody, he tears apart his daughter's book. Besides, Matilda is forbidden from reading, speaking and expressing her thoughts. She is also coerced to watch TV soap dramas with her parents even though she prefers to isolate herself to read. After a series of these abusive events, Matilda decides that she will not let her

parents do whatever they want to her. She promises to herself that, “. . . every time her father or her mother was beastly to her, she would get her own back in some way or another” (Dahl 23). Thereafter, actions to revenge on her parents are taken. On the forthcoming days, plans and pranks to get her untypical parents repay their mistreatments to their child are performed. Mr. Wormwood’s hat is applied with the superglue; he cannot take it off from his head even when going to bed. The talking parrot is borrowed from friend to play ghost to scare and shock her parents. Her mother’s Platinum Blonde Hair-Dye Extra Strong is switched with her father’s Oil of Violets; when Mr. Wormwood applies his hair oil before going to work, his head becomes ridiculously blonde. Likewise, at Crunchem Hall Primary School, school children adopt similar conscious and unconscious reactions to defend themselves from the school principal’s tyranny and dictatorial administration. Despite Miss Trunchbull’s harsh management, some students are not afraid of her severe and violent penalization. They spread news about how much their school principal hates small children to warn each other so that every small school children will get ready to confront Miss Trunchbull’s ridiculous and unkind treatment. Moreover, they, from time to time, break the school rules and rebel against her authority. While Amanda Thripp wears pretty braids to school which is against the school rule, Lavender challenges the Trunchbull by putting the newt into her water jug. Hortensia, apart from pouring Golden Syrup on the headmistress’s chair, scatters the itching-powder in the headmistress’s knickers as well. In addition, the headmistress’s rich and tasty chocolate cake is stolen to be eaten by one of the school boys, Bruce Bogtrotter. According to *The Theory of Differential Oppression*, delinquency, manipulation one’s peer, and retaliation can be performed by the abused and ill-treated children in order to demonstrate their autonomy or self-control as well as to release their anger towards the demanding adults who are the consistent sources of their anxiety and tension (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt 250-251). Children will be happy if they are endowed with considerable freedom to do things they want to do. On the contrary, they will be very unhappy if they are rigorously controlled being prohibited from doing things they want to do. Laws and regulations founded by the adults will limit and take away children’s freedom leading them to become displeased, stressful and less developed. Owing to these human instincts, it can be understandable why Matilda and the school

children at Crunchem Hall Primary School are tempted to violate school rules or rebel against oppression impinged on them by their parents and the brutal headmistress, Miss Truncbull.

Like the children in *Matilda*, Little Billy of *The Minpins*, the child protagonist prefers to be delinquent rather than passively accepting oppression. Instead of abiding by his mother's orders, he tends to be very stubborn and rebellious. When being instructed not to enter into The Forest of Sin, Little Billy does not obey his mother's instruction, either. Despite his mother's concern for his safety and well-being, being controlled too stiffly and overprotected causes "Little Billy to become awfully tired of being good" (Dahl 5). According to Lagattuta, Nucci and Bosacki's *Bridging Theory of Mind and The Personal Domain: Children's Reasoning About Resistance to Parental Control* (2010), children often confront with the situations which they long to do according to what they desire but these desires often contradict their parental and societal rules (616). In other words, it can be said that young children's resistance to adults' control can happen quite frequently and it can be deemed normal. To put it differently, if the children are continuously forbidden or told more frequently not to misbehave, there is a high opportunity that they will misbehave because prohibition will become stimulator. As reported by the aforementioned study, the children's capability to act in compliance with the rules and control set by the adults and their society will vary depending on the children's moral maturity and development stages (Lagattuta, Nucci, and Bosacki 616). That is why when Little Billy's mother recites the poem to remind him of the fatal dangers dwelling in the woods, Little Billy, like many young children, responds with skepticism. To make sure that what his mother informs him is true, many questions have been raised to interrogate her. Noticing that her son seems to be suspicious, Billy's mother has furthered notifying and confirming to him that the jungle behind their house is inhabited by many harmful creatures such as the Whangdoodles, Vermicious Knids, Snozzwangers, etc. Frightening stories about the "blood-thirsty wild beasts" causing many people who go in not to be able to come out is narrated to the boy over again and again (Dahl 7). This is to make sure that he will stay away from the wild area.

Nevertheless, the combination of resisting impulse and curiosity appears to have stronger influence on a young boy. In spite of his mother's constant attempts to safeguard him, one day Little Billy refuses to obey his mother's command any longer. He speaks to himself that "[I] did not believe a word of this" (Dahl 7). Under the Devil's call deep inside Little Billy's mentality, the boy eventually climbs out through the window and get into The Forest of Sin. As it has been foretold by his mother, entering into this jungle, Little Billy has confronted with danger from the Smoke-Belching Gruncher, the metaphor for the oppressive adult. The Gruncher roams The Forest of Sin's ground to catch and eat animals, humans, all living things and, certainly, the children. Thus, Little Billy has been chased around in the forest and he has to run for his life to escape this monstrous Gruncher. Fleeing from this monstrous Gruncher, Little Billy climbs up the trees to meet a community of tiny people called the minpins, the metaphors for the children. Learning that he cannot return home without killing the Gruncher, Little Billy; therefore, has to get rid of his own fear and co-work with Don Mini, the minpins head. Actually, Little Billy, the minpins and the birds who are the minpins' allies cannot be equivalent to The Gruncher in the respects of their size and power. In order to strengthen his own morale, the boy has to assure to himself and his fighting cohort that "Gruncher or no Gruncher, I've simply got to get home somehow. I will have to make a dash for it" (Dahl 22). Not different from most Dahlian child protagonists, Little Billy has demonstrated his bravery and determination to fight against someone bigger and stronger regardless of his young age and small body. In sum, after adopting delinquency as an adaptive reaction against the adults' oppression, Little Billy who represents the children has developed, as stated by Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt, the full "sense of autonomy and self-control" leading him to be able to retrieve the "restored potency" initially denied by his own mother (250). After the potential restoration, the boy's intellectual strength and spiritual capability are enabled so that he can defeat all problems and harms endangered by his more powerful enemy, the Gruncher.

Oppression will cause the lives of the oppressed children to be plagued with all forms of negative feelings; they will encounter with unhappiness, anxiety, stress, and tension. Apart from undergoing these adverse emotions, their bodies will be hurt while their mind and brain will be impeded making them to become incapable of

performing their daily activities efficiently. That is to say, it will be very difficult for the oppressed children to live happily and healthily. In other words, undergoing oppression, children cannot grow easily or develop fully like other privileged or non-oppressed children. Coping with these problematic and miserable conditions, it is necessary for the oppressed children to adjust themselves appropriately. As it has been mentioned earlier, the child's responses to the adults' maltreatments can be functioned both with their awareness and unawareness. To put it another way, we can say that children can react to oppression either consciously or unconsciously. Regarding conscious reactions, children's oppression brings about four major forms of adaptations, namely passively accepting oppression, exercising of illegitimate coercive power or being delinquent, displacing their negative emotions to their friends in different ways, and getting revenge on their adult oppressors (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt. 249). In contrast to their conscious adjustments, the defense mechanisms of mistreated and exploited children can be stimulated unconsciously to operate as the means to protect themselves (Cramer 11).

As discussed above, Roald Dahl's resistance to oppression has been mirrored through the fights and rebellions which his child characters, particularly the protagonists, stage against their adult antagonists' ill-treatments. In examining all the chosen Roald Dahl's stories for the children, the researcher has found that in order to cope with oppression, the Dahlian child protagonists and other child characters have employed both conscious or direct adaptations and unconscious or indirect adaptations to reduce their unpleasant and miserable emotions and difficult living conditions caused by the adult antagonists' oppression. Nevertheless, it is rather difficult to conclude how each child protagonist decides to employ certain forms of their adaptive reactions or what causes or factors stimulate certain defense devices to function for their adjustments. This is understandable because Roald Dahl's children's stories contain a lot of controversies leading them to obtain contradict responses from both their critics and readers (Treglown 8-9; Klugová 43-44). By and large, the ways the child characters of Dahl's early books respond to the adults' oppression are different from the ways the child characters in Dahl's latter books do.

The child protagonists in the stories which were created in the early part of Dahl's writing career tend to avoid direct confrontation with their adult enemies; they will, most of the time, either receive oppression passively or trying to suppress the pains inside their mind and body as long as they can. Taking everything into account, children are inferior to their adult opponents in every aspect: physical and intellectual developments; social and legal statuses, etc. Hence, refusing to comply with the adults' commands and instructions straightforwardly will certainly bring more harm rather than good into their lives. Therefore, we can see that James of *James and the Giant Peach*, Charlie Bucket of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the children in *The Enormous Crocodile*, the monkeys and the children in *The Twits*, George of *George's Marvelous Medicine*, the BFG and Sophie in *The BFG*, or the unnamed boy in *The Witches*, for instance, have to deploy the defense devices of withdrawal whenever they notice that their adult antagonists approach them. In addition, if these children are overwhelmed by oppression, these Dahlian child characters will try their best to accept and tolerate all the adversities imposed on them. Particularly at the beginning of the stories, readers can notice that the child characters will avoid facing their adult antagonists directly. Apart from attempting to suppress their unhappiness, these mistreated children will try to take themselves away from their adult antagonists' threat, contempt and exploitation. According to West, the books written by Dahl are mostly for very young readers whose ages are from seven to nine (16). Some of his works such as *The Enormous Crocodile* and *The Minpins* are picture books which have been created for even illiterate preschoolers. So the ages of Dahl's child protagonists also range from preschoolers to seven and nine years old. Certainly, whenever these small children are bombarded with either lethal harms and verbal, or mental assaults, their fearful symptoms will be shown like many little children of their ages who are naturally fragile. Consequently, shaking, quivering, numbing and other similar bodily reactions activated by the defense devices of conversion and somatization are frequently found to be used to describe the character traits of these children.

Nonetheless, the cases of disobedience, delinquency, friends' manipulations and particularly retaliation have also been employed by the child protagonists in many stories especially those which had been created in the later section of Dahl's

writing career. Readers can notice that all the unnamed girl in *The Magic Finger*, Sophie of *The BFG*, and Little Billy of *The Minpins* do not submit themselves to the adults' demands and orders. The most obvious example can be perceived from the characterization of the child characters in *Matilda*. Matilda, the lead character, shows neither weakness nor fear of her parents and teacher even though she is a very small girl of only five years old. As recently discussed, when being ill-treated, she always has her parents and the schoolmistress pay back their misdeeds. In the same vein as the story's lead child protagonist, the school children at Crunchem Hall School do not passively receive their school principal's absurd treatment and violent penalization. They join hands to get even with Miss Trunchbull until she has to leave Crunchem Hall School eventually. All things considered, it can be said that the timid and obedient children seen in Roald Dahl's early stories have been transformed to become stronger, more independent and more capable. The transformation of the Dahlian child characters who represent the children of the twentieth century will be discussed more in the succeeding chapters.

Fantasy as a Means of Expression

Based on Ross Levin and Hugh Young's *The Relation of Waking Fantasy to Dreaming* (2002), the person with "physical abuse and early punishment in childhood" like Roald Dah is reported to be high-fantasy prone (203). Psychologically, fantasizing or dreaming helps the abused and oppressed child to get away from the unhappy and miserable situations. It can be said that dreams and fantasies have been used by the maltreated children as the means of escape and wish-fulfillment. As Sigmund Freud posits in *On Psychopathology*, both conscious and unconscious phantasies and day-dreams are "cathected with a large amount of interest" (88). Fantasies are subsequently the psychic retreats for Dahl. He revives his painful childhood memories and turns them into the creative fiction for the children. In the meantime, his children's stories have been employed as the tools to make his dreams become true, the dreams about winning the cruel adults who oppressed him at his early ages. With his resolution to retrieve the selfhood, voice, victory, happiness and freedom taken away during his boyhood, Dahl has created the stories which the

child heroes have always conquer their battles and rebellions against their adult enemies. Nonetheless, there is a very slim chance for the children to win their fights against the adults in the real world. To make the impossible dreams possible, it is necessary for Roald Dahl to employ fantasy, a genre of art that “contains an element of unreality” (Bromley 27).

Fantasy is a perfect choice of literary genre that can help Dahl be endowed fruitfully with his dream children’s fictional world. It originates from an oral tradition by the unknown authors whose folktales, legends, and myths of the ancient people are passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. The archaic fiction involves stories about magic and supernatural power. Their characters include king and queen, prince and princess, giants and witches, and angels and devils of the ancient times. Evolving through time to become today’s modern fantasy, the imaginations of the known authors are transmitted through the written medium. Both the traditional and modern fantasies own their fantastical elements. However, while the traditional stories are set in the familiar world following the conventional storylines and motifs with stock characters, modern fantasies take place in a new world bestowing their own unusual possibilities of characters, settings, plots which tend to be more complex than those traditional folktales. As Karen D’Angelo describes in *Webbing with Literature*, fantasy “twists or manipulates reality, often using fast action, humor, magic and imaginary events or characters (27).

According to David L. Russell’s *Literature for Children: A Short Introduction*, the imaginary world of fantasy fiction always captures us; we are tremendously moved by “its underlying reality” (217). Hence, fantasy has been deeply rooted on universal truths and firmly founded on the basis of human nature despite the fact that it is created mainly from the author’s imagination. Owing to these foundations, the impossible but complicated situations that seem unlikely to happen in real life have been artfully simplified and created to allow the readers to understand the other side of human actions and today’s confusing society. In these stories the animated objects or animals act and talk like humans. Vice versa, real people can be of any sizes and qualities. Their authors may characterize humans to have weird looks and habits. These characters will be as big and/or tall as the building. Or, they might be downsized to be only an inch in length. Besides they can behave crazily,

frighteningly or freakishly. All in all, anything can happen in fantasy fiction. Perceiving such limitless power of fantasy stories, Dahl decides to employ the fantasy elements to make his dream world for the children become real in his stories.

In fact, Dahl's fantasies contain all qualities of the good stories for the children. Based on *Taking the Second Step in Reading* (1989), the books children read should "reinforce the traits they are developing which will help them cope with adult problems and become healthy, successful adults (Stephens 585 -586). Abiding by Bonnie Stephens's opinions on good books, Dahl's stories demonstrate how the children can handle with all living difficulties caused by the oppressive adult villains. In addition, when contemplating Dahl's children's fantasies according to Megan A. Fitzgerald's viewpoints, we can also find out that helpful allies, magic or even paranormal power are always attainable for his child protagonists as soon as any crisis or fatal situations occur. With reference to her *Young Adult Fantasy Fiction in Recent Years: A Selective Annotated Bibliography*, Fitzgerald posits in this book that fantasy is the literary genre concerning "the struggle to overcome fear and evil. [This fiction] is about hope and empowerment of those to whom bad things happen" (9-10). From the researcher's thorough examination of Dahl's children's stories, it is discernible that either kind angels, helping mates, enchantment, or various unnatural and extraordinary abilities are usually available to assist the lead child characters to learn to solve their living crisis and problems. Thus, reading Dahl's fantasy works for the children, it can be said that the child readers can be empowered tremendously by identifying themselves with the child protagonists.

Like what happens in fairy tales, hope can be expected from reading Dahl's fantasies. Whenever oppressive conditions or dangers loom, many guardian angels will emerge to help or take the oppressed child characters away from the adverse environments. In his *Angelic Spirituality: Medieval Perspective on the Ways of Angels* (2002), Steven Chase has explained that angels may become agents of transformation guiding the soul along the path of the spiritual quest and they can express certain patterns of ultimate reality that can be expressed in no other ways (16). Although the child characters have been oppressed at the beginning of the selected Dahl children's works, all of them will be advised and saved later on not only spiritually but also physically by somebody who stands for their guardian angels. We can notice that the

mysterious old man appears in *James and the Giant Peach* to give the green crocodile tongues to James Henry Trotter and hint him the means to get away from his self-centered Aunts Sponge and Spiker. While the eccentric but benevolent Mr. Willy Wonka of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* endows Charlie Bucket with his chocolate factory, the children in *The Enormous Crocodile* are protected and salvaged by the Hippopotamus, the Muggle-Wump Monkey, the Roly-Poly Bird and Trunky the Elephant. Similarly, in *The Twits*, the Muggle-Wump monkeys are rescued by the Roly-Poly Bird. No wonder, similar events happen in the succeeding stories. The BFG of *The BFG*, grandmother of *The Witches*, Miss Honey of *Matilda* and Don Mini of *The Minpins* have served the same roles of the angelic figures whose missions will shield and safeguard the child characters from harms. These mythical creatures, animals and real people can be comparable to the celestial beings or angels. They are given their major roles of helping and saving the child heroes in Dahl's modern fantasies.

To make his dream children's fictional world become true, Roald Dahl cannot discard the common fantasy elements of magic and supernatural power. In *The Magic Finger*, the unnamed girl protagonist's power is specially strengthened by an innate finger's bewitchment so that she can punish those adults (her teacher and the Greggs) who offend her and kill the metaphors for the vulnerable children (the birds) using the spell from her forefinger. Unfortunately, this Dahlian child heroine does not know how to control her power. Being provoked to get angry, the girl's enchanted finger will spontaneously be activated to function. Then, she will just point at that oppressive adults and they will simultaneously be transformed to be like the animals who have been unreasonably oppressed by them. As the girl described how she operates her power:

The Magic Finger is something I have been able to do all my life. I can't tell you just how I do it, because I don't know myself. But it always happens when I get cross, when I see red [. . .] Then I get very, very hot all over . . . Then the tip of the forefinger of my right hand begins to tingle most terribly . . . And suddenly a sort of flash comes out of me, a quick flash, like something electric. It jumps out and touches the person who has made me cross [. . .] (Dahl 6).

In contrast to the unnamed girl of *The Magic Finger*, Matilda of *Matilda* learns and practices to control her supernatural power of telekinesis. However, the situation which leads Matilda to discover her paranormal force takes place similarly to what happens to the unnamed girl of *The Magic Finger*. Being unfairly accused of putting the newt in Miss Trunchbull's water jug, Matilda's anger is intensified. Then, an enormous energy is built up inside her eyeballs enabling her to shoot out flashes of lightning to tip over the jug. Subsequently, the happening alarms Miss Trunchbull. Thus, the event allows Matilda to realize that she owns her extraordinary mental ability to move and push objects if she focuses hard enough to command her mentality. Soon afterwards, Matilda initiates her great plan to chase away the dictatorial and tyrannical school principal, Miss Trunchbull. She has spent six evenings on training herself to strengthen her power to lift the objects. When she is ready, Matilda pretends to be Miss Honey's late father who was suspiciously murdered by Miss Trunchbull. She uses her invisible power to lift the piece of chalk to write several instructions to threaten and order Miss Trunchbull to "Give my Jenny back her house. Give my Jenny her wages. Then get out of here" (Dahl 217). Scared by Matilda's trick, Miss Trunchbull has to run away from the school and Miss Honey can go back to live happily in her parents' house thereafter.

Apart from employing supernatural power and magic to help his child protagonists, Roald Dahl also endows the adult antagonists and their metaphors for the adults with similar fantasy elements. Many imaginary creatures in the selected stories are created to have their own extraordinary capabilities. Like the mythical giants in the ancient stories, the other giants in *The BFG* are physically huge and very strong, thus able to run very fast. Not different from the giants in the ancient stories, these giants' favorite feed is the children. In the meantime, the witches in *The Witches* have their magical powers to curse the children to become animals or stones. With their hatred of the children, their sole intention is to mercilessly destroy all the children from this world with their witchcraft and poisonous potion. As discussed in chapter two, these mythical characters are the allegories of the adult characters who, like other adult villains in Dahl's children's stories, have their roles as the child oppressors or the violators of the rights of the children (Hansson 3; Klugova 16; Hammill 52; Minneboo 32). Consequently, they have been portrayed by all

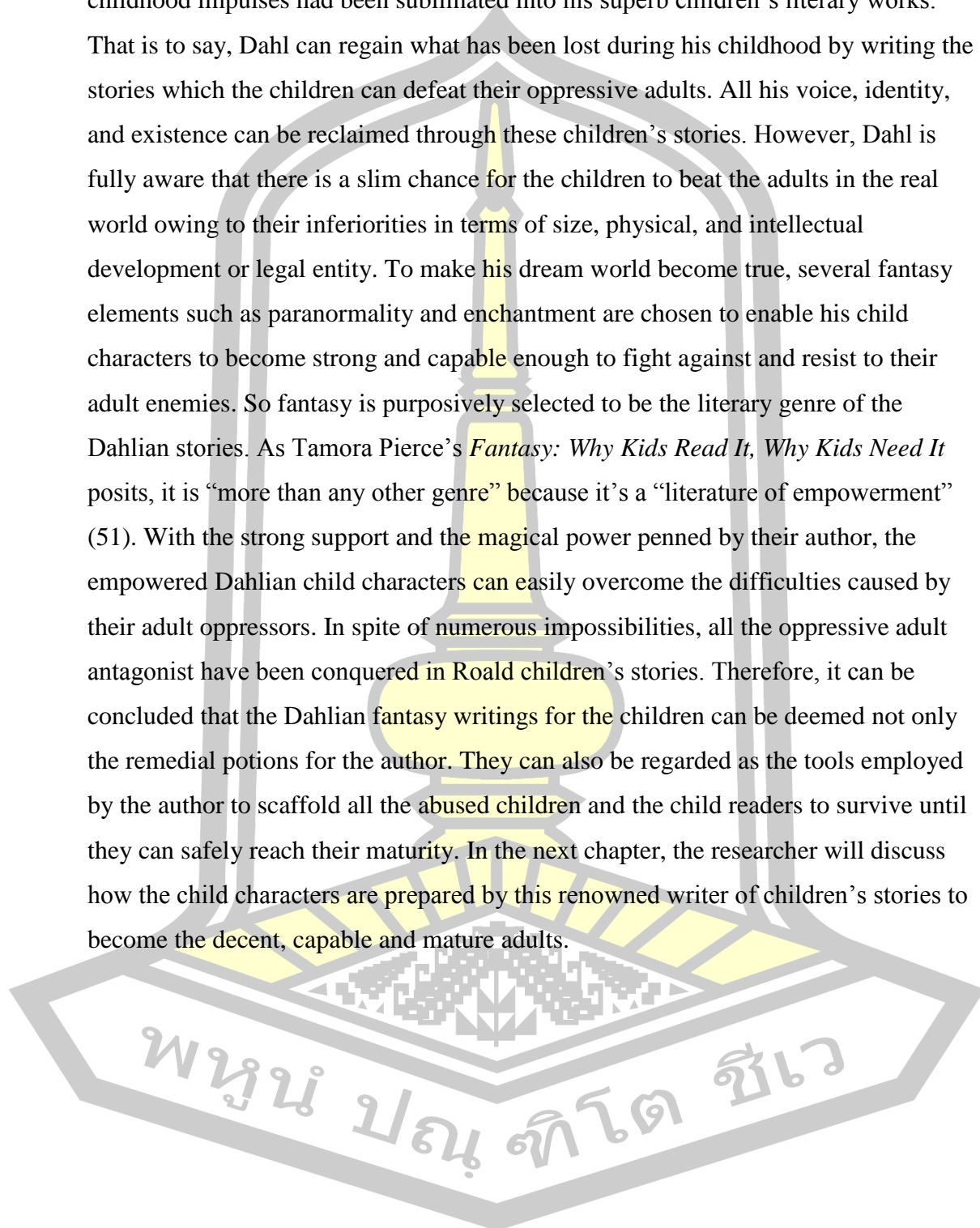
negativities to stand for the evil. They are characterized as colossal, strong, powerful, but ugly, offensive, negligent, wicked, ignorant, pretentious, etc. In other words, we can say that in Dahl's children's books, the adults and the imaginary creatures who are the metaphors for the adults are depicted to be very dangerous, frightening and unlikable for the children. With such powerful, harmful and hideous enemies, it is necessary for Dahl to create the child heroes and heroines who are strong, brave, intelligent, and capable enough to fight against their opponents. Based on these reasons, readers will find that the child figures and their metaphors in Dahl's stories for the children are always created to be completely opposite to their adult antagonists. They are usually illustrated as being very tiny, but lovely, good, nice, and modest making them to become likable for their audience. Nevertheless, in spite of their diminutive size, the child protagonists who have been blessed with magic and talents by the pen of their author can always defeat all the adult oppressors. As asserted in Jane Yolen's *Touch Magic: Fantasy, Faerie and Folklore in the Literature of Childhood* (1981), "[. . .] without evil and the knowledge of its continuance, there can be no hope for redemption. [. . .] the working through evil in order to come at last to the light" (72). To put it another way, the grownups and their metaphors' hatred of the children and adverse qualities have always been clearly accentuated in Dahl's stories with the purpose to highlight the good or heroism of the child characters. Hence, no matter how strong and powerful the adults and their metaphors for the adults are, the Dahlian children will be better empowered either with supernatural power, magic or intellectual capability. So whenever the battle between the adults and the children takes place, the latter party will always be allowed to "win in the end" (Nicholson 324).

As already discussed, it is very difficult for the oppressed children to survive or continue living to function their daily activities. To lessen their living difficulties caused by oppression, the oppressed children need to transform and adjust themselves. The oppressed children's adjusted reactions may be carried out either consciously or unconsciously. Or, both conscious and unconscious reactions can be deployed one at a time or at the same time by the oppressed children. In case of Roald Dahl's children's stories, the ways the Dahlian child protagonists respond to their adult antagonists' oppression can be classified into two main categories. In the books

created at an early stage of his writing profession, most child protagonists such as James Henry Trotter of *James and the Giant Peach*, Charlie Bucket of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and the children in *The Enormous Crocodile* either admit oppression or their defense devices of withdrawal, conversion or somatization are unconsciously activated to reduce tension and protect themselves from fears of threats and dangers imposed on them by their adult antagonists. On the contrary, the child protagonists in the stories especially those who were written in the latter stage of Roald Dahl's writing life do not passively accept oppression from their adult enemies. Instead, the unnamed girl in *The Magic Finger*, Sophie of *The BFG*, and Little Billy of *The Minpins* simultaneously fight back, adopt delinquency and try to take revenge on their bigger and stronger opponents without showing any symptoms of fears. The most evident case can be witnessed from Matilda and the school children in *Matilda* who aggressively revolt and retaliate against their own neglected parents and tyrannical school principal, Miss Trunchbull.

Regarding these books, it can be assumed that Dahl's unconscious defense device of sublimation has been activated by his childhood oppression prompting him to write consistently about the lives of the oppressed children. As stated in Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, sublimation is regarded as the mature defense device which is defined as the process of diverting sexual instincts or harmful impulses into the socially and culturally higher acceptable behaviors. The mechanism had been elaborated further by this renowned Austrian neurologist and theorist of psychoanalysis that this kind of defense activation was "an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher physical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life" (79-80). Moreover, sublimation has been viewed by Carole Wade and Carol Tavris in their *Psychology* (2000) as the necessary defense device which is needed by any artists and creators because its activation will assist them to produce exceptional works of "arts and inventions" (478). Hypothetically, undergoing oppression imposed by the older school boys and school masters made Dahl feel very sad and painful when he was young. Besides, his voice, existence and identity were refused and eliminated due to the mistreatments at an early age. Hence, when getting older and become mature, Dahl was unconsciously stimulated by these childhood abuse and ill-

treatments. When he grew up fully and earned his living as a writer, all the adverse childhood impulses had been sublimated into his superb children's literary works. That is to say, Dahl can regain what has been lost during his childhood by writing the stories which the children can defeat their oppressive adults. All his voice, identity, and existence can be reclaimed through these children's stories. However, Dahl is fully aware that there is a slim chance for the children to beat the adults in the real world owing to their inferiorities in terms of size, physical, and intellectual development or legal entity. To make his dream world become true, several fantasy elements such as paranormality and enchantment are chosen to enable his child characters to become strong and capable enough to fight against and resist to their adult enemies. So fantasy is purposively selected to be the literary genre of the Dahlian stories. As Tamora Pierce's *Fantasy: Why Kids Read It, Why Kids Need It* posits, it is "more than any other genre" because it's a "literature of empowerment" (51). With the strong support and the magical power penned by their author, the empowered Dahlian child characters can easily overcome the difficulties caused by their adult oppressors. In spite of numerous impossibilities, all the oppressive adult antagonist have been conquered in Roald children's stories. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Dahlian fantasy writings for the children can be deemed not only the remedial potions for the author. They can also be regarded as the tools employed by the author to scaffold all the abused children and the child readers to survive until they can safely reach their maturity. In the next chapter, the researcher will discuss how the child characters are prepared by this renowned writer of children's stories to become the decent, capable and mature adults.



CHAPTER FOUR

ROALD DAHL'S WORKS AS THE SURVEILLANCE OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Chapter four, a continuation of chapter three, the researcher will clarify why the children who are the rights bearers must exercise the privileges of their rights cautiously. At the beginning part of the unit, the theory of surveillance of the rights of the children is presented. Afterwards, all the Dahlian selected works are delineated to verify the main argument of the chapter. That is to say, the section will reason why Roald Dahl does not want the children to overuse their rights even though he agrees that they should be entitled to their rights.

Adults' perception of the children indicates how the children will be acted upon by the society surrounding them. If the adults think that they are the owners of the children, the children will be raised, instructed and treated whatever way the adults want to. What the children really want and how they feel will not be taken into the adults' consideration. Hence, the beings of the children will depend mainly on how they are perceived by the adults. To put it another way, the children's living conditions rely on what kind of concept of childhood the adults have. Based on the discussion in the previous chapters, the concept of childhood had never been clearly defined in the ancient times. The lack of childhood concept caused the adults in the past to take the children for granted. In addition, the children were not regarded as the persons and they were treated as the objects owned by their parents and teachers. Due to this insensitive adults' perception of the children, children's oppression could happen easily within its smallest unit, the family, in the early eras of human communities. Oppression takes away the children's voice and identity. Being oppressed, the children's happiness and freedom will also be stolen. Indeed, the children's well-being and rights will be robbed if any forms of oppression are imposed on them by stronger adults.

Fortunately for the children, the adults' views on the children have been changed and developed through time. In the seventeenth century, the epistemology in numerous fields such as child psychology and child development were extensively investigated whereas in the succeeding eras many tragic social events occurred to the children in Europe and America, for instance, the holocaust of the Jewish children, prevalent child abuses and exploitation (United States Memorial Museum. 17; Shaw 17 -19; Mentanko 118). Catalyzed by these historical occurrences, some philosophers were motivated to change their unkind perception of the children. Although this kind idea about the children seemed to be radical at its original stage, it can be said that the status of the children in the society had been gradually upgraded to the better level ever since the uncultivated concept of childhood was transformed to be more philanthropic. The thoughts of giving the children their rights had become more concretely formed in the society.

Children's books, like their child readers, were never produced or taken seriously by the adult readers or critics in the history of literary mainstream (Adámková 11). In other words, both the children and children's literature had always been marginalized owing to the lack of the concept of childhood (Todres & Higinbotham 5; Paul 181). Consequently, if any children wanted to read in the past, they had to read books written for the adults. As a matter of fact, books were created to educate the children in the latter days. However, these books were purposively produced to make the children obey the adults' instructions or conform to some established social rules. Until the concept of childhood had been transformed, children's books were specifically written to serve the children's needs and interests. Thereafter, the children can be entertained from reading books and the avid child readers can seek knowledge from reading. When printing technology was developed and paper became abundant and cheaper in the succeeding eras, people on a larger scale -- both the adults and children--could access and have their pleasure from reading more easily.

Regarding the Dahlian children's stories, it has been previously discussed that many critics have criticized Dahl's works for containing morbidity, violence, macabre elements as well as social criticisms (Renen 1-7; Klugova 48; Tumer 17). The author's bitter school experiences and tragedies in his family are often referred to

as the major sources of all unpleasant features in the books. In spite of such criticism, the researcher contends that these adversities have been integrated into Dahl's stories without hostile or malicious purposes in damaging or hurting the lives of his child readers. On the contrary, the researcher strongly believes that what Dahl intends to convey to his little audience is the universal truth of living. Discussion in this unit will focus on explaining why Dahl has included many unpleasant and offensive components in his stories for the children. An argument in this section will clarify that even though Dahl opposes the oppressive adults who take away the rights from children, the author does not agree that absolute rights should be bestowed to these small people without restrictions. While the rights should be bestowed to children, those rights must be under surveillance. That is to say, apart from gaining pleasure and prerogative from their rights, children must learn to take responsibilities in the way they exercise their rights as well. Apart from that, the researcher argues that unpleasant and offensive components in Dahl's stories are employed to prepare child readers for the unpleasant real world and possible harms and difficulties in life.

Theory on Surveillance of Children's Rights

Children's literature and children's rights are interconnected. Indeed, when people's literary reading soared in the eighteenth century, the issues of human rights began to gain more and more interest from the public. From then on, the new concept of childhood combined with an increase in reading literature had become the key boosts for an awareness of human rights protection. In her *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Lynn Hunt states that reading fiction can help promote the readers' empathy to other human beings (55). Hunt has elucidated further that the child who reads will be transformed to be less aggressive but more empathetic. While the social activists consistently attempted to urge the international governments to enact laws to decrease and to prevent any forms of human rights violation, this scholar strongly believes that children's books can work better to lessen children's oppression, a form of children's rights violation (Hunt 56). As a matter of fact, many scholars concur that reading children's stories can stimulate and strengthen readers' sensibility of others. Therefore, it is assumable that the notions and a comprehension of the rights of the

children can be mingled in and implied through stories written for the children (Todres & Higinbotham 38; Stephenson 229-231).

As it has been already mentioned, the lack of childhood concept in the ancient times made some parents and teachers thought that they were the owners of the children. So the children in the past were treated improperly causing their lives to become very much oppressed while their rights were taken away. Later on around the beginning of the twentieth century, children have been treated better and more kindly when the adults' perception of the children has been transformed (Thomas 4). Indeed, the kind concept of childhood seems to be widely accepted and rapidly evolved. Based on Markella B. Rutherford's *Adult Supervision Required: Private Freedom and Public Constraints for Parents and Children* (2013), the idea indicating the children as their parents' belongings is rejected by many contemporary child theorists. As asserted by Rutherford, this school of philosophers strongly disapproves "the notions that parents have rights to their children and over their children" (677).

According to the modern child rights advocates, even the unborn babies should be entitled to have their rights. Based on Keith L. Moore, T. V. N. Persaud and Mark G. Torchia's *Before We Are Born, Essentials of Embryology*, it is confirmed that human life begins from the time of fertilization due to human chromosomal constitution (327). With such belief, therefore, abortion is illegal in many countries under many circumstances. Except for the case of rape or when the mother's life is unsafe, abortion can be legalized. Abortion is also legitimately permitted if drug use, drink or substance abuse are detected to become maternal serious issues bringing her pregnancy into certain risks. It can be said that if the well-being of the fetus whose rights to life is detectable, measurement and certain actions must be taken. To put it another way, the rights of the fetus will be protected on the basis of several ethics and righteousness due to the thought that living starts since the fertilization time (Coward 60).

Like many ideologies, conflicting opinions regarding the rights of the children do emerge from time to time: what rights the children should have; how these principles of children's rights should be applied; what is the best way to tackle with certain issues for each individual child, etc. Rights tend to be extremely claimed to be given to the children sometimes for some advocates. Not only trying to meet the

children's needs and demands, these supporters propose that the children's liberty and autonomy should be given to the children, too. For example, it is stated in Farson's *Birthrights* that the child's self-determination should be basically approved (27). Correspondingly, even the suggestion of endowing all the same adult' rights to the children can be witnessed in Holt's *Escape from Childhood* (15). Applying Farson and Holt's notions of rights, some modern parents seem to gratify their offspring's needs and wants. Sometimes the kids are even overindulged and too much freedom and privilege are given to the immature children.

Unfortunately, parenting the children as well as disciplining them seems to stand on the opposite side of the principles of such children's rights theory. Since it has been very well-aware by most parents that raising a child to become an independent, capable, and socially responsible person requires quality and rather strict parenting as well as effective schooling. That is to say, to shape and mold the children to become the decent and efficient grownups, children must be imparted and trained with adequate knowledge and useful skills. Of course, undergoing these processes, proper teaching and disciplining must be implemented. However, disciplining entails control and punishment. Thus, the practice of disciplining and parenting can easily result in children's oppression. If the principles of children's rights proposed by Farson and Holt are adopted, it will be very difficult for even the biological parents to raise and instruct the children because the children's rights can be easily violated. This means that no children can be controlled, taught or disciplined against their will even these practices will be performed for the children's own interests.

The future of all the children may be ruined if their biological parents continuously give them things and experiences which are not appropriate for their age and interests. The widely known of the false idea and loose practice of parenting can be discerned from this notorious proverb, "spare the rod, spoil the child."

Implications from this aphorism include children who are entitled with a great deal of independence, and appeasement will certainly become egocentric and unruly; parents who refuse to handle with kids' misbehaviors and illogical disobediences have to endure their child's weakness, inefficiency, aggression or rudeness. Without control and punishment from their parents, problematic deeds will be seen to be acted by these spoiled children. Definitely, these overindulged children will develop immature

as well as undesirable personality. As described in *Practitioner's Guide to Behavioral Problems in Children*, the children who are rarely regulated, disciplined and penalized will lack consideration for others. In some severe cases, children who have been excessively pampered will often show uncontrolled outburst of anger and frustration. Together with their temper tantrums, some destructive behaviors such as physical violence, defiance and incomppliance to general social rules and common practices will frequently be performed by these restive and untrained children (Aylward 35). At certain stage, this group of children will get to the point that they will not and cannot be satisfied with anything. The above notions lead to an important concept that while the rights should be given to children, those rights must be controlled not to over-enjoy their rights without consideration of possible consequences, as can be seen in the following brief examples from Dahl's works.

In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* the instances of the spoiled children's unacceptable actions are vividly presented through the characterization of the four other golden winners: Violet Beauregarde, Augustus Gloop, Veruca Salt, and Mike Tevee. Being totally spoiled, these children neither possess their self-control nor discretion. After touring Mr. Willy Wonka's chocolate factory only for a short while, these spoiled children have been ejected from the factory because they refuse to obey the factory rules and are punished accordingly.

In other words, it can be said that the lack of discipline and responsibility caused primarily by lax parenting make these eliminated four children develop their disgusting habits. Overeating causes Augustus Gloop to become enormously fat. Instead of perceiving any harm that may happen from her boy's avarice, Mrs. Gloop tells the newsmen proudly about her son that eating is "all he's interested in" (Dahl 40). According to her explanation given to the press, Mrs. Gloop personally believes that being a hooligan is much worse than being an obese person. Not different from Augustus Gloop, Veruca Salt, the second golden ticket winner, is demanding and manipulative. Indeed, her ugly qualities have been generated mainly by the excessive and constant parental gratification to her needs. As described in Vidya Bhushan Gupta's *Spoiled Child Syndrome*, the spoiled children usually have their own ways to do things. To get whatever and whenever they want, other people will be manipulated by these indulgent young people (198-199). Roald Dahl has allowed Charlie's

grandparents to speak for him to condemn parents and adults who overindulge and consent to all the children's demands. When Mrs. Gloop finishes talking pleasantly about her gluttonous son, Grandma Georgina says, "What a repulsive boy," (Dahl 38). Likewise, after Mr. Salt has elaborated how loud Veruca screams, yells, kicks and lies for hours on the floors when no golden ticket is found even though their employees have unwrapped many thousands chocolate bars, Grandma Josephine cannot withhold her criticism: "That's even worse than the fat boy. . . She needs a really good spanking. He spoils her . . . and no good can ever come from spoiling a child like that," (Dahl 41).

It is evident that all undesirable characteristics have been ingrained in the over-pampered children. As pointed out in Marian Elyce Malone's study, the four ejected children in Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* have been fully embodied with gluttony, sloth, wrath, and envy (34). Like the first two golden ticket winners, Violet Beauregarde, the third golden ticket winner, is not better than the greedy Gloop and the bratty Salt. Apart from taking an absurd pride in herself of "chewing gum for the world record," Violet continuously shows disrespect to her elders (Dahl 48). Despite her frequent misconducts and ill-manners, she neither apologizes to other people nor shows her remorse. On the contrary, the girl often brags about herself. In the meantime, Mike Teavee, the fourth golden ticket winner, spends his whole day watching television. Due to his addiction to this chatty box, this lazy boy will terribly be upset if anybody interrupts him from watching his favorite programs, "Can't you fools see I'm watching television?" (Dahl 49). Besides being rude, the boy is absolutely idle and worthless. In no time, he will become feebleminded and physically weak since little exercise and knowledge are obtainable from spending most of the day consuming television programs.

Roald Dahl must have been very much aware of the advantages of reading children's stories. This is why he uses his writings to manifest several issues of living as the oppressed children whose rights have been robbed by the cruel adults. In other words, the Dahlian children's stories are deployed to serve as an arena where a number of problems and difficulties of children's oppression are exposed to the public. Through the chosen Dahlian stories for the children, these fictional children who used to be voiceless and selfless are assisted and enabled by their author to

articulate their painful and bitter experiences from being abused, neglected and exploited. Without a doubt, the author's campaigning dialogues to call for an elimination of this unethical social problem have been demonstrated and reflected in the prevalent scenes of different forms of oppression which the adult antagonists and the metaphors for the adults have imposed on the Dahlian child protagonists. With the power of Dahl's pen, the inferior and underprivileged children are given back their voice and they can speak for their needs and autonomy.

Nevertheless, the world which all children can live happily and freely without confronting any conflicts and hardship at all can exist only in our imagination. To put it another way, the society which totally lacks oppression may appear too strange and too good to be true. Therefore, it is understandable that extreme ideas of giving the children their complete rights to have their own way of living and to indulge themselves completely are unrealistic.

Roald Dahl is similar to those cautious children's rights advocates. He was both experienced father and author when starting writing fantasy fiction for the children. Thus, he understands how the children should be efficiently raised and disciplined. Moreover, Dahl can perceive clearly what kinds of disastrous qualities will be formed as the personality of the children if rights are given to them unlimitedly. With his deep understanding of bringing up and disciplining the children, Dahl knows that it is crucial to let the children learn how to control, regulate, cope with and solve the problems in their lives by themselves. Bearing the dystopian features of living in his mind, Dahl has to allow his child protagonists as well as his small audience to encounter with some truths of living in his fantasy fiction.

In the next section of this dissertation, the researcher discusses how Dahl's works, apart from promoting children's rights, urge readers to realize the importance of vigilance of the children's overuse of their rights. That is to say, while Dahl advocates for the rights of children, he believes it is vital to prevent them from being spoiled by those rights, as they need to live with reality. This vigilance is done by having his child protagonists to confront perils and difficulties in their lives. This confrontation reminds children that they cannot just enjoy their rights, but must be prepared to face the real world and learn to solve possible problems. The contention in this part of the study will focus on how the author prepares the Dahlian lead

characters to bear responsibilities and to get ready to grow up as capable adults. In spite of a number of critics' attacks on violence and adversities found integrated in Dahl's children's stories, the researcher argues that the author includes these weird and grotesque components in his selected fantasy fiction with the aim to convey significant message to his child readers - i.e., living is not always easy and happy but rather hard and complicated.

The Surveillance of the Rights of the Children

Although Roald Dahl does advocate for the rights of the children, this author has profoundly comprehended that to shape and mold any children to become mature and capable grownups, the children's rights must be exercised vigilantly and meticulously. As Jill P. May states in *Children's Literature & Critical Theory*, only few authors simply write to wile away the time or entertain their readers. . . . [but all] writers write to tell us about life (114). Based on May's statement, it can be inferred that in spite of trying to raise an awareness of the rights of the children, Dahl cannot avoid informing the living truths to his child readers. That is to say, life is certainly not the bed of roses. Instead, it could be replete with difficulties and sorrows. Thus, dangers, violence, and some offences have been integrated in all the selected Dahl's children's stories to demonstrate the realistic side of living. Similar to May, Jeffrey J. Wood has also pointed out that the children may become too meek and weak if they are over-protected and have never undergone any hardship and problems during their childhood (73). The contention in the following section discusses how the author assists the children to maturely grow by incorporating morbidity, difficulties, and dangers in his stories. At the same time, the researcher views that those morbidity, difficulties, and dangers encountered by child characters serve as surveillance of children's rights, as they remind children that they cannot just enjoy their rights but they have to prepare themselves for the harsh world.

Escaping from his meanest Aunts Sponge and Spiker, James Henry Trotter of *James and the Giant Peach* cannot easily find peace and happiness yet. As soon as he gets into the peach's inner chamber, he is intimidated by the odd talking creatures. The Spider, Old-Green-Grasshopper, the Ladybird the Centipede all cry out loudly

that they are hungry and craving for food terribly when meeting James. For fear that he would be eaten alive by these famished insects, James “was backed up against the far wall shivering with fright and much too terrified to answer,” (Dahl 42). Before he is awarded with fame and fortune, like other child protagonists in many stories, James must learn to cope with a range of obstacles along the way until a journey to find himself and his genuine family comes to the end: fleeing from the sharks to the sky, evading the angry Cloudmen, rescuing the drowning Centipede, compromising conflicts among friends, and finding the way back down to the earth until he and his bug friends can land on New York City safely.

As Ingrid Johnson asserts in *Migrancy: Rights of Passage and Cultural Translation in Literature for Children and Young Adults*, although every travel is escorted by insecurity, anxiety, and the possibilities of misfortunes, the possibilities of gain can also be seen getting alongside with each travel (82). Referring to Johnson’s statement, it can be assured that James must have learnt a great deal from handling with the obstacles happening to him and his friends during their journey after they had left Aunts Sponge and Spiker’s house. We can notice that whenever the problems arise, impromptu plans have been devised up by this small boy to sort out all these problems. At last, every passenger in the giant peach can arrive at New York City in one piece despite the consistent internal conflicts among the bugs and the external enemies like the sharks and the Cloudmen. It can be inferred that Dahl is vigilant about protecting the children. James and his bug friends who stand for the children can arrive New York safe and sound even though many precarious situations have happened to them. This means that their survival and protection rights have been fulfilled. In terms of James Henry Trotter’s rights to development, his character traits of being a responsible and efficient person have been demonstrated through the ability in leading all the giant peach’s passengers to visit the city of his childhood dream successfully. Regarding the surveillance of children’s rights, instead of allowing James to enjoy life as a child, Dahl creates difficult situations for him to overcome, which imply that they must be prepared for situations like these.

In the same vein as *James and the Giant Peach*, the child characters in Dahl’s best known story, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, have been exposed to abundant predicaments. Before entering Mr. Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory,

Charlie Bucket who is the story's protagonist has to struggle with several living difficulties owing to his family's poverty. Because all seven family members are packed in a tiny decaying house with only one bed, Charlie definitely lacks his privacy including the wide space which is necessary for his physical development. Like most poor children, food, clothes, and other requisites for the growing children like toys, plays, friends, and health care must be refrained from his life. Since the very beginning of the book, readers might be saddened finding that the eleven-year old boy has to consistently endure hunger and coldness, "But Charlie Bucket never got what he wanted because the family couldn't afford it, and as the cold weather went on and on, he became ravenously and desperately hungry. Both bars of chocolate, the birthday one, and the one Grandpa Joe had bought, had long since been nibbled away, and all he got now were those thin, cabbage meals three times a day," (Dahl 56).

According to *The Future of Children: Children and Poverty* (1997), poor children suffer higher incidences of adverse health and developmental problems than non-poor children (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan 57). Apart from resulting detrimentally in the child's temper, behavior and social relations, the child's ability to learn can also be impeded because of their family's poverty. In compliance with Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Greg J. Duncan's study, Charlie has been depicted as growing "thinner and thinner", and he begins to "look like a skeleton" (Dahl 58). In contrast to Charlie's life, the other four children who find the Golden Tickets to tour Mr. Wonka's chocolate factory have a lavish and enjoyable life as they have always been fully appeased by their wealthy parents. As discussed earlier, they are completely spoiled for their parents usually allow them to get whatever they want and do whatever they like to. However, their world has been changed rapidly when they are taken into the chocolate factory. Based on Barbara Basbanes Richter's *Roald Dahl and Danger in Children's Literature*, these four golden ticket winners are referred to as the "insubordinate, churlish youngsters" (329). When these spoiled children step into the plant, their uncontrollable deeds and brattiness cannot be withheld to be reflected through their actions along the factory tour: Augustus Gloop tries to drink chocolate from the chocolate river; Violet Beauregarde seizes the new three-course gum from Mr. Wonka's hand and chews it to taste how it is like; Veruca Salt demands to have one of Mr. Wonka's squirrels as her pet; and Mike Teavee, stimulated by the need to

be famous for being the first person ever to be sent by television, his whole body is sucked disappearing into the television when switching Mr. Wonka's television camera on.

Despite warnings from their parents and Mr. Wonka, these children do not obey. They cannot hold back their unreasonable wants and must satisfy their desires because they are always overindulged by their own rich parents. Theoretically, what these four golden ticket holders need may affect their well-being. Dahl, the experienced father and writer, can foresee that there is a high possibility for the children to be harmed if their needs and freedom are endowed to them without restriction. Therefore, in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, he has Mr. Willy Wonka who represents the author and other adults, bargain with these child characters first. When Violet insists stubbornly to consume his experimental gum, he tries to explain to her that "I would rather you didn't take it. . . . I haven't got it quite right yet" (Dahl 122). Likewise, Mr. Wonka informs Mike Teavee that nasty results might happen if any human is sent by his television. Unfortunately, neither of these children heeds Mr. Wonka's advice. So Mike Teavee is shrunk by television and Violet's face is turned blue as a blueberry. In the meantime, Augustus is pulled into the chocolate pipe, Veruca is thrown into a garbage chute because the squirrels mistake her as a bad nut. Based on the principles of children's rights, these children should not be prohibited from doing what they originally wanted to. Of course, some terrible things will happen to them. Chewing the same old wad of gum for a period of three months or watching television twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week will sicken Violet and Mike. Without a doubt, Dahl can easily perceive the worse horrific outcomes that would happen to these children if they continue being self-willed. To help protect the children, Dahl has these spoiled children be penalized as the example. The comeuppances which befall Augustus, Veruca, Violet and Mike can be the warning lessons to all the children that overlooking the adults' advice and overusing their rights will lead their lives into ruination. It is clear that these four child characters serve as examples of children whose rights have to be under surveillance.

The hardship and dangers presented in both *James and the Giant Peach* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* have been encountered by the child characters who are all human beings. Unlike Dahl's first two selected children's stories, in this

third selected book, human's living truths and their responsibilities have been demonstrated through the Greggs when they have maximized their adults' rights by killing too many ducks and consequently they are metamorphosed into the ducks by the power of the girl protagonist's finger. Realizing that she and other members of the family are turned to be tiny persons with wings, Mrs. Gregg looks at herself and her children sobbing. As their house has been taken by the ducks who become big like human with arms, the Greggs now have to get out of their own house and build their nest on the tree to sleep. Living outside the house, their fears for different kinds of dangers are instigated. According to the fiction, the Greggs in the duck forms feel so worried that they will be eaten by cats and foxes in the night. Afterwards, the great wind begins to blow and "rock the tree from side to side, even Mr. Gregg was afraid that the nest would fall down. [. . .] Then came the rain" (Dahl 37). None can rest or even take a nap since it must be very unlikely for them to stay comfortably in such a messy refuge. Even when the dawn is breaking, their ordeal is not over yet. Three of all four huge ducks in human forms are aiming guns at their nest intending to shoot them. These ducks in human forms with arms claim that the Greggs had shot their six children the other day. Until the Greggs promise that they will never shoot ducks, deer, or other animals again, the Greggs are allowed to come down from the tree. Soon afterwards, miracle takes place; everything becomes black before the Greggs are transformed back to be normal human beings. Of course, the enormous ducks in human forms with their hands holding guns in are turned into the small ducks.

It is discernible that when the Greggs are metamorphosed into ducks, the metaphors for the children, they can learn to understand that living as the ducks is not easy or comfortable at all. As a matter of fact, when the Greggs are being ducks they must learn to tackle with the issues of food, shelter, and weather. Neither building their place to live nor finding something to eat can be achieved easily, and getting these things done within a short period of time is impossible. The construction of their nest from sticks takes the whole day long in spite of getting helps from everyone in the family. Furthermore, when Philip and William do not want to have slugburgers and wormburgers, it takes them hours to have only a few small bites of apples as they cannot hold the fruit with their wings. Thus, the comeuppances which the Greggs in the duck forms have been forced to undergo by the magic finger could be used as the

reminder to all the adults as right bearers that adult rights should not be exercised inappropriately as well as limitlessly. Else some unfortunate occurrences would happen to these inconsiderate rights users if those who suffer by the abuse of their rights do not want to tolerate their wrongdoing any longer.

While the hardship and dangers in *The Magic Finger* are caused mainly from the nature such as wind and rains, the children of *The Enormous Crocodile* have been taken to confront with the major danger caused by the scary large reptile. This antagonist who represents the adult intends to catch the children in the nearby town to eat. He tries to trap the children by pretending to be the coconut tree, the seesaw, the seat at merry-go-round, and the picnic bench. Based on *Roald Dahl and Danger in Children's Literature*, Richter has posited that children will learn how to cope with other challenges in their lives by reading about scary stories, fearful events or frightening incidents (329). Reading this book, children will be alerted and inculcated not to be gullible or easily deceived by dishonest adults who appear to be nice and harmless to the children like the Enormous Crocodile under its covers. With their naiveté and trusting trait, they can fall victims to different kinds of scams. Dahl must have been well-aware of these qualities of the children. Therefore, *The Enormous Crocodile* was written to prompt the children to stay away from the deceptive adults and their dangerous tricks.

Another lesson which the child audience can learn from reading *The Enormous Crocodile* is that if they have goals or plans, they should keep those with them until the schemes can practically be accomplished. The obvious incidence can be learnt from the Enormous Crocodile's failure to catch the children as his meal. The crocodile would have caught the children successfully if he had not informed his "secret plans and clever tricks" to Humpy—Rumpy the Hippopotamus, Muggle-Wump the monkey, the Roly-Poly Bird, and Trunky the Elephant (Dahl 2). Since these animals disagree with the Enormous Crocodile's cruel plans, they sabotage his plans by prompting the target children to run away from the Enormous Crocodile's traps in time. Finally, the Enormous Crocodile has been caught by the Elephant's trunk and thrown up into the sky dead. Like many childhood fable, another moral lesson which the child readers can learn from the misfortune of Roald Dahl's *The Enormous Crocodile* is that those who seek to harm others can end up harming

themselves. In light of the rights of the children, child readers have been informed at the same time that if most children focus only on enjoying their rights as the children too much, their lives might be led to negative consequences as shown through the harmful incidences that nearly happen to the child characters of *The Enormous Crocodile*. Along with appropriately enjoying their rights, children should learn to cope with problems and free themselves from possible harms.

Nobody would have an intention to harm and torture the children as strongly as Mr. and Mrs. Twits of *The Twits*. Most dangers and living difficulties for the children in this book are fundamentally derived from the oppressive actions of these wicked spouses. Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, the children including their metaphors, the monkeys, must adjust by withdrawing themselves from the Twits' residing compound or performing retaliating conducts as the responses to their cruelty and oppression. Threatened to be boiled and baked for making Boy Pie, for example, the four boys who have climbed the glued Big Dead Tree to take a look at the monkeys have to shockingly take off their pants and run away from the scene before they are caught by Mr. Twit. In the meantime, the allegories for the children, the monkeys who are caged and forced to do things upside down for six hours a day have to endure the beatings and hunger if they refuse to stand on their heads because Mr. Twit wants to train them to be the first up-side down monkey circus. Being punished by beating and abstaining from meals, small children will undergo excruciating torment in their stomach and body. According to the report in *Early Parental Physical Punishment and Emotional and Behavioral Outcomes in Preschool Children*, it has been found that children who are smacked by caregivers will certainly be confronted with emotional and behavioral problems (Scott S. et al. 337). Moreover, antisocial behaviors as well as poor moral internalization can be expected to be acted by the punished children, especially the older children who experienced corporal punishment (Grogan-Kaylor 283).

The monkeys who stand for the children are maltreated even worse than those unlucky boys mentioned earlier. They are not only beaten by these merciless spouses, but have to suffer from The Twits' torture by being caged, unfed, and forced to stand unnaturally on their heads. Living under The Twits' inhumane control, they must encounter different kinds of unpleasant feelings: unhappiness, physical and

mental pains. Apart from doing things they are not willing to do, their freedom has been robbed, too. Kyung Hee Kim has explained that freedomless children will become less assertive, less energetic, less talkative, less humorous, and less perceptive. They will also become less passionate, less adaptive, less synthesizing, and less likely to view things from different angle (285-289). In other words, if the children's freedom is taken away from them, many positive qualities which will result in the children's future success like their creativity, assertiveness, and enthusiasm will co-relatively be diminished.

In fact, Mr. and Mrs. Twits do not just oppress the children or limit the children's liberty under their supervision. Like most Dahl's adult antagonists, numerous negative descriptions, both physical and behavioral actions of adult characters, such as being stupid, ugly and ignorant, have been purposively portrayed (Hansson 3). Dahl is genuinely a shrewd writer. To make the child readers dislike these bad adults and give all their sympathy to the abused children and their metaphors wholeheartedly, he has emphasized Mr. Twit and Mrs. Twit's unacceptable and weird habits. For instance, while Mrs. Twit has one glass eye which she habitually uses to intimidate her own husband in different ways, Mr. Twit is distinctively hirsute. Additionally, many people know that the child's immune system may be still weak. They can get sick easily if they do not comply with hygienic rules: wash your hands before eating; always have fresh and hot food, etc. Thus, small children are always instructed to keep themselves clean or to eat good food for the sake of their health and development. In contrast to the children's sanitary rules, Dahl subverts the common instruction of the children's health. That is why Mr. Twit has been depicted to be disgustingly filthy and smelly, "If you look closer still (hold your noses, ladies and gentlemen), if you peered deep into the moustachy bristles sticking out over his upper lip, you would probably see much larger objects that had escaped the wipe of his hand, things that been there for months and months, like a piece of maggoty green cheese or a mouldy old cornflake or even the slimy tailed of a tinned sardine," (Dahl 5). So most of them will obey their parents' health instruction to always keep themselves clean and safe from germs. Reading the above characterization of Mr. Twit, the child audience will feel very happy and proud of themselves. This is because they realize that they are clever than this big person who

allows his hair to be that mucky and dirty. In the meantime, the odd, unkempt, and repellent portrayal of the Twits implies to the children that they should not exercise their rights by spending most of their time completely on playing or pleasing themselves. On the contrary, they need to be parented and disciplined in order to, unlike Mr. and Mrs. Twits, being neat, adorable, and healthy.

Unpleasant components in *George's Marvelous Medicine* are slightly different from *The Twits*. Apart from the negative descriptions of the adult antagonist, the adverse features which are distinctively presented in this story embody in its child protagonist's healing recipes for his adult opponent i.e. the "marvelous medicine". Never ever will any grandmas be as awful as George's grandma. Besides being selfish and bullish, she is consistently "grizzled, grouching, grumbling, and griping about something or other" (Dahl 2). George thinks that his grandma may be the most unlikely grandma for she enjoys scaring her own grandson and is fond of eating worms and insects. Another thought which comes across George's mind is that his grandma may be sickened by a witch. In order to cure his grandma from her sickness, George has decided to brew a magic medicine to make her become normal grandma. As described in the story, "George had absolutely no doubts whatsoever about how he was going to make his famous medicine. . . . Quite simply, he was going to put EVERYTHING he could find" (Dahl 17). Here is how his original formula obtained—he goes around his house and gathers golden gloss hair shampoo, toothpaste, super foam shaving soap, vitamin enlighten face cream, nail vanish, hair remover, false teeth cleaning powder, deodorant, paraffin, hair spray, perfume, pink plaster powder, lipsticks, washing powder, floor polish, curry powder, chilli sauce, brown paint etc., and empty them all in the saucepan to cook this special concoction in the kitchen.

In light of the untypical character traits of George's grandma, it can be explained that her repellent and annoying characteristics have reflected the author's childhood trauma as well as his protest against the European and American societies in the twentieth century. As asserted by Zuzana Lacová, the morbid components proliferate in Roald Dahl's children's stories because the author is not content with the ongoing events in his contemporary society (43). Therefore, critics and readers will not be surprised when reading *George's Marvelous Medicine* and they find that

George's grandma is different from general grandmas. That is to say, her defects such as being bullish, conceited, bossy, and fussy, similarly to those of other Dahlian adult antagonists, have been formed to intensify the readers' hate on the grandma herself. At the same time, these adverse qualities of George's grandma will stimulate readers' sympathy and compassion for the child protagonist, George. Furthermore, the way George struggles with his Grandma's mistreatments can be the reminiscence of our childhood.

As it has been elaborated in *The Theory of Differential Oppression: A Developmental - Ecological Explanation of Adolescent Problem Behavior* that even though the children conform to the adults' commands and instructions, they cannot help feeling oppressed, resulting in an adoption of multiple adaptive reactions by these oppressed children (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt 249). In George's case, several kinds of responses have been employed already. George has shifted his adjusting reactions from the deployments of suppression to withdrawal, conversion, or somatization. Unfortunately, all these responsive strategies seem not to work out well to deal with his grandma's oppression; George's grandma is still able to fetch him back to fall under her victimization whenever she wants. Referring to the *Differential Oppression Theory* once again, the theory explains that some children who have been abused and mistreated for a long period of time may decide not to put up with the sufferings from oppression any longer. To end their uncomfortable feelings, physical and mental pains, this group of children may revolt against or strike back their adult oppressors (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt. 251-252). Hence, it can be said that George's medical idea to heal his grandma has been inadvertently provoked by the rebellious motivation which he cannot disclose straightforwardly to his senior relative. Being forced to conceal his rebellion, the boy is driven to deviate his attention from grandma's oppression by focusing on something else instead i.e. cooking the remedial recipes. By concentrating his mind on cooking the medicine, George's tension and anxiety will be lessened. In other words, cooking the remedies to change his grandma to be a nicer person can be regarded as an outcome of George's adaptive reaction from his grandma's oppression. Nevertheless, although the boy's remedial recipes appear to be very strange, preparing and cooking his medicine can help George learn to work and become responsible. In addition, George's medical concoction may be

perceived as science experiments. Many of the ingredients used may be toxic. In spite of their toxicity and eccentricity, George's inadvertently throwing the poisonous substances into his grandma's medicines could be employed to alert the children in general that whenever the prerogative of their entitled rights have been overdone, uncontrollably hazardous incidence could take place.

By and large, when cooking his magical medicines for his grandma, George does not intend to overuse his rights to solve his living problem by getting rid of the adult oppressor, his own biological grandma. As stated in the story, the boy "didn't really want a dead body on his hands," (Dahl 190). What really happens is that this unfortunate senior relative mistakes George's third recipe of medicine as tea. Thus, she snatches the cup from George's hand and downs the whole marvelous cup of medicine number three in one swallow causing her to shrink and vanish from this world.

In contrast to George, Sophie of *The BFG* has set her mind on exercising her rights smartly and carefully. She also intends to learn to take charge of her own life trying to tackle any living problems by herself. With such resolutions, this parentless child has made every effort to get rid of the human bean eating giants for the sake of the children's safety despite several impossibilities. As soon as Sophie is informed that the BFG's giant friends will catch the school children in England to eat, she keeps urging the BFG to help her save these children. The BFG himself strongly disagrees with Sophie. At first he reasons to the girl that there is no way that Sophie and the BFG can defeat those giants who are much bigger, stronger, and crueller than them. Regarding the second reason, the BFG claims that if other human beans see him, they will lock him up in the zoo for being a giant. As the BFG rejects Sophie's requests five or six times citing the people's brutality, "And they will be sending you straight back to a norphanage [...] Grown-up human beans is not famous for their kindnesses" (Dahl 108). When the BFG alludes to Sophie how much Fleshlumpeater craves for consuming the Queen, Sophie has come up with an idea to protect the children, "Listen carefully. I want you to mix a dream which you will blow into the Queen of England's bedroom when she is asleep. And this is how it will go" (Dahl 112). After that the scheme to capture all the BFG's giant friends is elaborated to the BFG. According to Sophie's plan, the BFG must mix up a nightmare and blow this horrible

dream of giants heading to England and gulp down all British boys and girls into Queen Elizabeth II's bedroom window. In this dream, the Queen must perceive both Sophie and the BFG as well. As soon as she is awake, she will meet Sophie waiting on the windowsill to convince her that the happenings in the dream are all true. Then, Sophie will talk the Queen into using her army to catch all the giants. The BFG feels uncertain about Sophie's idea. But when he is flattered for being a hero and having not to eat snozzcumbers any longer, he agrees with Sophie's plan. Luckily, the Queen is convinced successfully. Therefore, all human bean eating giants are captured and detained in a huge pit by her army. Since Sophie exercises her rights appropriately by learning to take responsibility while enjoying her childhood moderately and cautiously, the girl can achieve all goals in her life. Thus, when all the child-eating giants have been caged in an enormous well preventing them to harm the British children, Queen Elizabeth II has rewarded Sophie and the BFG with fame and fortune.

In terms of living truths, the character traits of Sophie can be deemed compliant with the qualities of other postmodern children. As asserted by Hana Adámková, scholars in postmodernism have assumed that children cannot be protected from the reality and should be exposed to it (15). Written in 1982, *The BFG* can be classified as postmodern children's story. Apparently characterizing his girl protagonist to conform to genuine children in the same contemporary postmodern period, Dahl has allowed Sophie to confront with life's truths i.e. oppressive, and deadly situations. She has been abducted from an orphanage to reside at the Giant Country by the BFG. Except for the snozzcumber eating BFG, she can be killed by other human bean eating giants easily. In spite of inhabiting in this scary and fatal Giant Land, Sophie, who is just eight years old, seems to deal with her dangerous circumstance very bravely. Of course, she is afraid of being gobbled up alive by those other giants who are child eaters. However, when realizing that these brutal creatures are going to catch the English schoolchildren as their meal, she firmly speaks to the BFG: "Put me back in your pocket quick and we'll chase after them and warn everyone in England they are coming" (Dahl 107). Likewise, when she is told that Fleshlumeater wishes he can possibly feed himself the Queen of England, Sophie angrily articulates, "How dare he!" (Dahl 109). It can be said that Sophie, like George

of *George's Marvelous Medicine*, is not only dutiful, she is also very patriotic because she wants to save both her fellow British children and the monarch.

Like those foregoing Dahl's books, both unpleasant features and other living truths have been incorporated in *The Witches*. As asserted by Sarah van Dongen, children of the second half of the twentieth century, the period when Dahl shifted from writing adults' short stories to write children's literature, did not always experience childhood as joyful and carefree in the same way as the Romantic children did (7). Instead, childhood has been perceived as the critical period which the "incomplete organisms" or the children must be prepared for their adult life (Heywood 3). As stated by Kelly, Roald Dahl became a stay-at-home dad taking care of his children at the beginning of his marriage life while his wife Patricia Neal traveled to do her acting jobs. He once admitted that had he not had children of his own, he would not have written books for children (66-67). Thus, it can be assumed that being an experienced father causes Dahl to realize that to raise the children to become strong, brave and independent adults, they must be allowed to confront reality and should be ingrained with learning how to take responsibility. Consequently, the unnamed boy protagonist of *The Witches* who represents the twentieth century's children is destined to encounter the incredibly hideous and dangerous female creatures in the universe: the witches. Luckily for him, he has been prepared to avoid confronting them by his own grandma who is the former witchophile.

According to the narration of the boy's grandmother, the witches do not look different from other ordinary women. They speak, dress, walk, or act similarly to those females whom we have met in our daily life. They may even work either as your teachers or school librarians. Still, women who always wear gloves, wigs, socks, and shoes all the time can be suspicious as being the witches. This is because witches neither have finger-nails, nor toes or hair. So they have to hide their ugly body parts under these items. Furthermore, the witches' nostrils are especially large for they will effectively use their big nose-holes to locate their target victims, the children, by sniffing the smell of the kids. Since these witches serve as the book's main oppressors, Dahl has assigned their function by having them spend the whole time "plotting to get rid of the children in her particular territory" (Dahl 1). Without a doubt, in this children's story, the portrayal of these adult antagonists, particularly the

main one, the Grand High Witch, is presented not less horrendously than those in other Dahlian children's books. For instance, the Grand High Witch appears tiny, young, attractive, and aristocratic when she socializes with normal people. However, if she takes off her mask, her frightful and wicked looks of baldness, worm-eaten face, elongated nose, eyes of serpents, blue spits, and warty skin will be revealed. Owing to the fact that the witches truly hate the children, the children always smell like dog's droppings to them. Being prevalent with a number grotesque features, *The Witches* has been described as "gratuitously frightening" (Rees 147). With the murderous role and ugly description of the witches, the fiction has been strongly attacked by many feminist critics as instigating "first-class" nightmares and confusion of women's conducts to the child readers (Rees 147).

One more time, Dahl exposes his lead child character to face some realistic aspects of living. The author has profoundly realized that in order to help the children to grow fully and to become liberated, efficient, dutiful person, they must be ingrained with some problem-solving lessons since their early age. That is to say, learning to cope with the obstacles and to adjust oneself to all changes will be crucial for all incomplete organisms if they want to survive. Regarding the nameless boy of *The Witches*, after he has been transformed to be a mouse by the Grand High Witch's Formula 86 Delayed Action Mouse-Maker, he can gradually accept his new being and learn to adapt himself into the circumstances very well. Running away from the witches' convention room to meet his grandma for the first time as a mouse boy, his grandma can't withhold her sorrow. When she cries, it is him who has to console his grandma, "I know what they've done, Grandmamma, and I know what I am, but the funny thing is that I don't honestly feel especially bad about it. I don't even feel angry. In fact, I feel rather good. I know I'm not a boy any longer and I never will be again, but I'll be quite all right as long as there's always you to look after me," (Dahl 127).

Apparently, being the mouse does not seem to bother the boy at all. From the boy's above reaction to his new mouse form, the child audience can learn from *The Witches* that whatever happens to you, do not fall in despair. You should continue living your life strongly and bravely despite all hardship and changes. Thus, the boy protagonist, Bruno (both in the form of mice), and his grandma have hatched the

plan to destroy the witches in the hotel by stealing the Grand High Witch's Formula 86 Delayed Action Mouse-Maker to pour in the witches' dinner soup. Their plan is successful when all the witches have consumed the soup in the evening party. All the witches are turned to be mice leading them to be dismembered and killed by the hotel staff. As it has been mentioned, the boy cannot be turned back to be human again; he has to live on being the mouse forever. Nevertheless, his grandma tries every way to strengthen his wellness in spite of the fact that many housewares or furniture do not suit his small size. Accepting her grandson's new being, the boy's grandma hopes she can make him stay healthy and live as long as he can until both of them "die together" (Dahl 196). For instance, she makes the boy's toothbrush out of a matchstick with bristles from a hairbrush whereas his bathtub is made from a sugar bowl. Her repeated instruction to the boy of brushing his teeth after the meals lets us know how much she is concerned for her grandson's well-being. With grandma's unconditional love and unwavering assistance, the mouse boy can spend the rest of his life very comfortably, healthily and happily till his last mouse' day arrives. It can be inferred that the boy's survival rights can be maintained because while gaining advantages from the protection rights given to him by his grandma, he does not forget to work on his self-development. Based on the indivisible and non-discriminatory and inalienable principles of children rights, he as the mouse boy is treated as equally important as the human boy by his grandma. After being transformed to be a mouse, this dutiful boy co-works with his grandma and Bruno (also in a mouse form) until they can successfully eliminate all the witches from this world.

The feminist critics' condemnation of Dahl's sexism in *The Witches* can be corrected if they have cautiously read *The BFG* and *Matilda*. In both books, Dahl has created two girls who have become national and school heroes: the patriotic Sophie and the gifted Matilda. In the latter one, it is discernible that Dahl has started talking about his child protagonist's responsibilities or living truths right away since the very beginning of the book. Neglected by her own crude and ignorant biological parents, Matilda is forced to learn to take care of her own life even though she is only four years old. Her reading passion, in considerable extent, must be driven by her loneliness and disappointment caused by parental heedlessness and mistreatment. Although she is neither homeschooled nor sent to any kindergarten, she has been

introduced to the audience as an avid reader. As her reading capability is described, “By the time she was three, Matilda had taught herself to read by studying newspapers and magazines that lay around the house,” (Dahl 5). When no book is available within the Wormwoods’ house, Matilda has to risk her life walking alone through the busy and dangerous road in order to fetch some good books from the community library. At the library, Mrs. Phelps, the kind librarian, has recommended Matilda to read many classics written by Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, Hemingway, etc. Unquestionably, this precocious child can finish “a formidable list” only within the period of six months: *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Oliver Twist*, *Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, *Gone to Earth*, *Kim*, *The Invisible Man*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Good Companions*, *Brighton Rock*, and *Animal Farm* (Dahl 12).

In *Girls Who Save the World: The Female Hero in Young Adult Fantasy*, Erin Danehy puts it that young girls and women need to admire new female archetypes in recent fiction while they are growing up to face the new roles in the society (5). Therefore, Dahl, in compliance with the characterization of other female heroes of his time, has created Matilda to be different from the construction of most child protagonists in the past. As confirmed by Minneboo, the beautiful, naïve, sweet, but weak, and passive female protagonists in most fairy-tales have been transformed in Dahl’s children’s stories to be the strong females who have “a mind of their own and can achieve anything they want” (37).

In contrast to those fairy-tales’ child protagonists, Matilda has turned to be the most intelligent and active girl hero. At home, she has been left to depend on herself. Growing up amidst her parents’ rejection and negligence, the child prodigy has to find her own way to deal with the difficulties of living in the unloved home. She has to make her own drinks because Mrs. Wormwood does not care for her daughter’s stomach. When she quickly solves the complicated mathematics problem for her brother, Michael, without calculating it on paper, she was also yelled at and accused of being a liar and cheater by Mr. Wormwood, her own unjust father who specially favors his son over his daughter. Like all brilliant children, Matilda learns that she cannot count on her parents’ accountability. That’s why she tries her best to work through the domestic issues by herself. A lot of pranks have been plotted to take

revenge on her father whenever he mistreats her. Since Mr. Wormwood does not want to support his daughter's intellectual growth or cognitive development, he refuses to buy books into the house when he is asked by Matilda. Perceiving that her father will never allow her to get more books to read, Matilda decides to venture out to the library to read there instead. It is obvious that the small girl knows very well how she can tackle out her own living problems at home. When attending school, she also confronts a number of predicaments. So, more pranks must be schemed up in order to tackle these predicaments both for herself and for saving the lives of her schoolmates and teachers.

Unlike the Dahlian child protagonists, the female antagonists have still been created to look very much like those of the fairy tales (Minneboo 37). This means that in Dahl's children's literature, readers will meet the ugly, jealous, vicious and old women who do hate and want to ruin or even kill the children, particularly the lead child characters. Miss Agatha Trunchbull, the major female villain in *Matilda*, who is the school headmistress, has been constructed to embody all typical character traits of the antagonists depicted in the fairy tales. She is an unattractive woman of colossal size with several negativities. Indeed, she is extraordinarily strong (a former Olympic hammer thrower), violent, and tyrannical. She always berates and punishes her students cruelly: locking them up in the nailed chokey, throwing them out of the windows, and hitting them on their heads with platter, for example. With no exception, her strict management is also adopted to other teachers of Crunchem Hall Primary School. Due to the Trunchbull's abhorrence of the small persons, the lives of Matilda and all school students have been put in sheer dangers.

One more time, this tiny Matilda has been provoked and challenged to demonstrate her heroic deeds. The girl gets very angry, when Miss Trunchbull accuses her of putting the newt in the headmistress's drinking water. Stimulated by her anger, Matilda strongly wishes to tip over Miss Trunchbull's glass. She stares right at the glass firmly. Miraculously, the glares of light shoot out from her eyes toward the glass; the glass wobbles and topples. Then, the water with the squirming newt splashes all over Miss Trunchbull's bosom shocking her to bellow out and jump out of her chair in fright. As posits by Richter, children can work out all the challenges in their own lives if they have been familiarized with similar harmful

situations like reading about the dangers in children's literature (329). In Matilda's case, the small female hero has already been accustomed to hardship and dangers and has learnt to cope with these unfavorable conditions at home. Thus, when confronting with the headmistress' hostile and harmful actions at school, she seems not to be shaken at all.

Like what she used to do at the Wormwoods' family, Matilda, in contrast to most fearful children, has stood up on her own feet to confront this monstrous adult with boldness. Actually, Miss Trunchbull is Miss Honey's aunt who is suspected of killing Miss Honey's father in order to illegally inherit her brother-in-law's house. When learning that Miss Trunchbull can commit fatal crime even with someone closely related to her, Matilda decides to eliminate this evil headmistress from school for good. She practices to focus her mind in order to strengthen her telekinetic power before she goes to bed. When her power is strong enough, she uses it to scare and successfully get rid of Miss Trunchbull. It can be said that even the adult like Miss Honey who is Matilda's beloved and supportive teacher has been saved by the little girl hero, Matilda. Frequently, Dahl's children's books have been criticized for the extreme siding with the children, undermining authority, pandering children's rebelliousness, and lacking the instruction of "the complexities of life" for the child readers (Petzold 190-191). Despite these charges, the qualities of self-empowerment and self-dependence can easily be discerned to be the outstanding character traits of Matilda. To look at this Dahlian child protagonist in terms of the rights of the children, the researcher perceives that although the girl's rights has been repetitively violated or taken away from her by her parents and teachers, Matilda has never given in to these adults' maltreatments. Instead, Matilda has exerted herself in every way to overcome all the obstacles which hinder her way to grow and become a happy, decent and efficient grownup. Finally, she can pull herself and other people out from the abused and exploited conditions. In other words, it can be said that Matilda's rights of being a child or being a person can be retrieved because the girl does not give up fighting for her own rights. Therefore, Roald Dahl's *Matilda* is a good testimony for all the child readers that if any children work wholeheartedly to protect their own rights, no one will take their rights away from them, not even their own biological parents and teachers. As Dahl allows Matilda and Hortensia to speak for all the

children in this story, “It’s like a war. . . . We maybe small but we’re quite tough” (Dahl 103). In so speaking, it can be inferred as well that *Matilda* is employed by its author to speak for all the small persons. Their voice is expected to be heard by the abusive adults to approve of the children’s existence including their strength and capability.

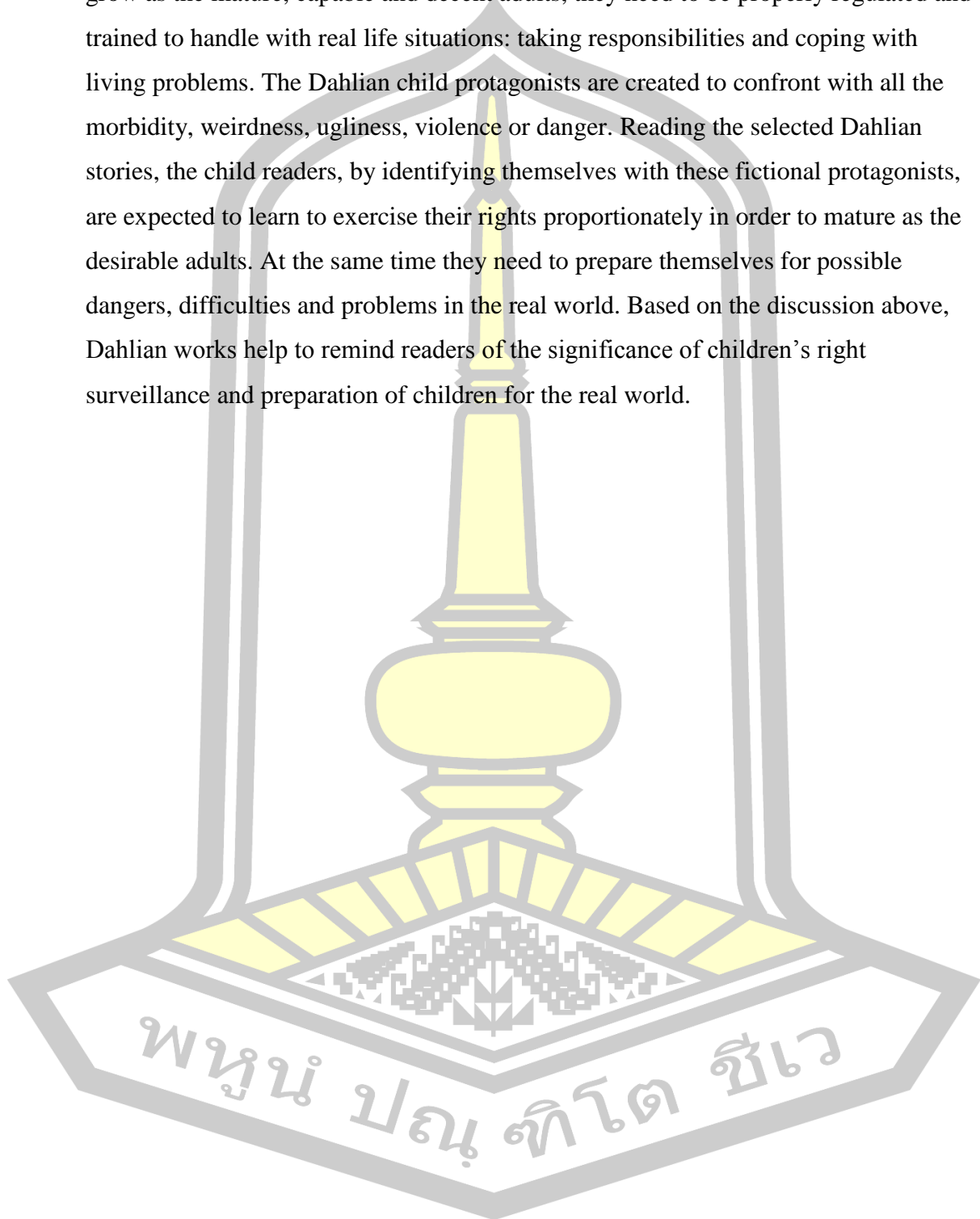
Rights have been taken away from the children at the beginning of *Matilda*. In contrast to Dahl’s previous story, rights of the children have been overendowed to Little Billy, the child protagonist of *The Minpins* when the next Dahlian children’s story starts. Anyway, like Matilda, the boy Billy demonstrates his capability, courage and strength to lead all the tiny people called the minpins to combat against the Smoke-Belching Gruncher. Soon after he has disobeyed his mother’s command venturing into the Forest of Sin, Little Billy has to run “faster than he had ever run in his life before” to escape from “a fearsome swooshing whooshing whiffing snorting noise that sounded as though some gigantic creature was breathing heavily through its nose as it galloped towards him” (Dahl 11). Living home with his overprotective mother, as discussed in the previous chapter, Little Billy has never confronted directly with any danger. We can be assured as well that if any problems occur, they will be eradicated as soon as possible, not by him, but by the maternal defenses of his careful and meticulous mom.

Theoretically, most overprotected or over-controlled children cannot deal with hardship and dangers bravely and effectively. Based on Jeffrey J. Wood’s *Parental Intrusiveness and Children’s Separation Anxiety in a Clinical Sample*, the parents’ over-controlling actions will restrict a child’s access to his/her environment or different challenging situations. Furthermore, the child who is always safeguarded from excessive threats by parents will not be able to cope with harms on his/her own. Consequently, the overprotected child will lack opportunities to develop competence and a sense of mastery especially when facing threatening conditions (73-87). In opposition to Wood’s study, Dahl has constructed Little Billy to be different from generally over-controlled and overprotected children. Definitely, Little Billy has never confronted with or fought against any frightening enemy before when staying home under his maternal supervision. However, when he is aware that he cannot go back home without eliminating this deadly Red-Hot Smoke-Belching Gruncher, the

boy can see through the whole perilous circumstances. He decides to take control of these life and death situations. Without getting help from his parent and any adults, Little Billy who stands for the children can take everyone back into safety again. Because Little Billy is not afraid to move out from the comfort zone which his mother creates for him, the boy can empower himself and develop his skills fully. That is to say, the small inexperienced boy is turned to be independent and become responsible person after he has left his mother. In other words, it can be said that Dahl can foresee the calamities that may come with overprotecting or excessively entitling the children to their rights. If rights have been bestowed to the children too much, the possibility to learn and empower themselves will be removed as well. By getting rid of the superfluous rights earned from his mother, the boy can eventually learn to build up his own internal strength for self-development. Overprotection by Little Billy's mother can be viewed as a spoil of children which also has to be under surveillance; otherwise, they will be weak and unprepared for possible dangers or difficulties. Fortunately for Little Billy, he has learned to cope with the problem and overcome dangerous situations by himself.

In brief, the abundant scenes of children's oppression depicted in the children's stories reflect Dahl's opposition to the cruelty and violation of the rights of the children. At the same time, this prevalent portrayal of the adult antagonists who oppress and abuse the children also implies that this author advocates for the children's rights. Nonetheless, in spite of the fact that Dahl has supported for entitling the children to their rights, this author still realizes that harms rather than good can happen to the children if rights have been endowed to them without limits and restrictions. The evidence which proves Dahl's disagreement about giving absolute rights to the children can be witnessed from the penalization of all the four spoiled golden ticket winners in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. As asserted by Dongen, children of the twentieth century, in contrast to those children of the Romantic Era, do not need to undergo only the happy and comfortable circumstances during their childhood (7). Instead, they should be prepared to get ready for their adult life (Heywood 3). Furthermore, the principles of rights have been established with the aim to promote every dimensional development of each individual child so that the child can grow fully and become the autonomous, capable and decent adult (Freeman 310).

On account of these reasons, Roald Dahl foresees that in order to help the children to grow as the mature, capable and decent adults, they need to be properly regulated and trained to handle with real life situations: taking responsibilities and coping with living problems. The Dahlian child protagonists are created to confront with all the morbidity, weirdness, ugliness, violence or danger. Reading the selected Dahlian stories, the child readers, by identifying themselves with these fictional protagonists, are expected to learn to exercise their rights proportionately in order to mature as the desirable adults. At the same time they need to prepare themselves for possible dangers, difficulties and problems in the real world. Based on the discussion above, Dahlian works help to remind readers of the significance of children's right surveillance and preparation of children for the real world.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In chapter five, “Conclusion,” the outstanding characteristics of Dahl’s children’s stories are discussed. The contention in the next part of this final chapter posits that Dahl’s children stories represent the children in postmodern age. Finally, Dahl’s advocacy for the rights of the children in parallel to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is conclusively critiqued.

Since Roald Dahl was a prolific and critical writer, his works, both fiction and non-fiction, have been read, studied, and critiqued vastly. In spite of starting his literary career with war articles, play scripts, film screenplays and adult short stories, it is actually those unique children’s stories produced in the second half of his writing life which make Dahl become the world renowned writer. Not different from other literary genres, Roald Dahl’s children’s stories are evidently impacted by the writer’s personal life besides reflecting the ongoing social issues. Vice versa, the Dahlian children’s stories, to certain degree, influence their child audience, and in a similar fashion, their effects on the society are considerably important and unobjectionable.

The significance and power of children’s literature to the society are confirmed by George Murray Knowles, the scholar of children’s literature. In his *Language and Ideology in Children’s Literature* (1998), he asserts that children’s literature has its capacity to establish “one of the largest and most important social domains” in the community and the nation (2). It is added by Peter Hunt in *An Introduction to Children’s Literature* (1994) that children’s fiction can function as “an ideological minefield” (186). With such an enormous and powerful force of the children’s books, the authors can incorporate influential concepts and ideas to transform child readers as well as their milieu. Consequently, it is believed by the researcher that Roald Dahl can use his books as the source and vehicle to transport his knowledge and meaningful notions concerning the rights of the children to his small fans and their residential ambience alike. Therefore, in this final chapter, the researcher contends that Dahl’s selected children’s stories are deployed by their writer

to speak for the oppressed children. The initial section is presented briefly with the analytical information, literary explorations, and arguments carried out in the preceding chapters. The untypical but outstanding fictional features found depicted in the selected Dahlian stories are included in the first part of the chapter. In the succeeding part, discussion will focus on the examination of the Dahlian child protagonists who represent the British and American children of the twentieth century, particularly through the lens of postmodernism. Being the conclusion of the dissertation, discussion in the last section summarizes how Dahl's children's literary texts, in compliance with the core principles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, work as a voice to advocate children's rights.

The Literary Characteristics of Roald Dahl's Children's Stories

Dahl's children's stories and his first autobiography *Boy: Tales of Childhood* are similar to fairy tales; they project the child protagonists whose lives are oppressed by the adults around. Albeit with many commonalities among Dahl's children's works, fairy tales and the author's personal life have often been pointed out by many literary critics, this study argues that the maltreatments of the children depicted in Dahl's children's stories can be regarded as the effects of the ongoing socio-political events which the author views as serious social issues. To defend for the fragile children, many of Dahl's children's stories expose how the children's physical and mental conditions have been ruined by different forms of oppression. Hence, abundant scenes of children's oppression in Dahl's children's stories can be considered as the author's attempt to reflect the problems confronted by those deprived children to the public. The brutalities and calamities of children's maltreatments imply the author's advocacy for protecting the children from all harms and promoting their well-being.

In other words, Dahl's writing identity has been formed by the abuse and mistreatments he received when attending schools. Thus, children's oppression becomes the main catalyst for the creation of Dahl's writings. Theoretically, oppression brings about tension, anxiety, and unhappiness into the children's lives. Moreover, being oppressed, apart from encountering these adverse emotions, the

children's body will be hurt while their mind and brain will be impeded causing them to become incapable of functioning their daily activities efficiently. In order to survive and live on satisfyingly, the children who have been oppressed need to consciously and unconsciously employ their adaptive reactions to reduce or get rid of their unpleasant and painful feelings caused by oppression (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt 249). If responding consciously, four types of reactions are performed by the children: passively accepting oppression, exercising of illegitimate coercive power or being delinquent, displacing their negative emotions to their friends, and getting revenge on their adult oppressors (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt. 249). In contrast to their conscious adjustments, the children's numerous defense mechanisms will be stimulated to operate as the means to protect themselves if their unconscious reaction is adopted (Cramer 11).

As a matter of fact, the stories for the children investigated in this dissertation can be regarded as Dahl's specimens of his adaptive reactions. Based on some psychological studies, it is believed that Dahl's mature defense device of sublimation must be activated to function by his childhood miseries (Freud 79-80; Wade and Tavis 478). This means that the bad impulses he encountered during his childhood were craftily transformed to be the untypical fantasy fiction for the children. Certainly, oppression denounces a person's rights. Besides losing his autonomy and other privileges, the oppressed person's voice, selfhood and existence will automatically be eliminated. It is discernible that Dahl sympathizes and feels closely related to the abused children because he used to be marginalized and oppressed. Based on his childhood experience, Dahl understands completely well how difficult and awful someone's life would be if oppression has been imposed on him: his existence seems to be unseen and his tongue is tied. Thus, inarticulacy, invisibility and non-existence inspire Dahl to tell the stories about the oppressed children.

It has been found that anyone who undergoes "physical abuse and early punishment in childhood" is high-fantasy prone (Levin & Young 203). This is because dreaming and fantasizing enable the abused and oppressed person to escape from pain and sorrow. Thus, fantasies are supposed to serve as Dahl's psychic retreats. Indeed, fantasy, a genre of art that "contains an element of unreality" is the perfect choice that

can help Dahl be endowed fruitfully with his dream children's world (Bromley 27). Hypothetically, the children are eventually free from the cruel adults' mistreatments in Dahlian fantasy world; whenever the small children have to battle against the bigger adults, the first party always wins, for example. Nonetheless, Roald Dahl realizes very well that in the real world there is a slim chance for the children to win their fights against the adults. That is why he makes the impossible dreams possible by using fantasy elements in his writings for the children: kind angels, helping mates, enchantment, or various unnatural and extraordinary abilities are usually there to help his child protagonists to solve their living crises and problems.

As previously discussed, the Dahlian children's stories have been disapproved of by many critics for embodying morbidity, violence, macabre elements and antisocial viewpoints (Renen 1-7; Klugova 48; Tumer 17). Despite such disapprovals, the researcher believes that these unpleasant traits are included in Dahl's stories without the intention to jeopardize the lives of his child readers. Instead, the researcher still insists that these books for the children have been employed to convey Dahl's opposition against children's mistreatments declaring this writer's advocacy for the children's safety, autonomy, and wellness. To put these words differently, although Dahl endorses the children to be entitled to their rights, he does not want the children to overuse their rights. His unwillingness to bestow absolute rights to the children can be witnessed from the expulsion of the four over-pampered golden ticket winners in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Indeed, these child characters' misbehaviors are so intolerable and have been referred to as not only bratty, offensive but also, according to Richter, "insubordinate, churlish" (329). In terms of the peril, bizarre and violence incorporated in this Dahlian fiction, this critic regards these elements as "life's truths" which can be "employed correctly" to evoke the readers to perceive "social structures and human relationships" (325). Based on Richter's standpoints and Dahl's penalization of his over-appeased child characters in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, it is inferable that the weird, unlikely, ugly, violent and morbid features have been imbedded in Dahl's children's stories with the purpose to inculcate his child readers to face the real world, the world which could be difficult, harmful, and unpleasant to live.

In a nutshell, Dahl's children's stories have been created from the original voice of the writer who profoundly loves and fully understands and wholeheartedly sympathizes his primary audiences, the children. Hence, reading these children's stories, the child readers can emotionally connect with all the child characters, and engage themselves in children's basic issues which are vividly depicted in these stories. The feelings of connection and engagement involuntarily allow the child audiences to be easily captured and fascinated by Dahl's stories causing him to become timelessly popular among child readers, school teachers, and librarians (Klugová 48; Maynard and McKnight 153-154).

Based on Catriona Nicholson's "*Fiction for Children and Young People: The State of the Art*", the essential literary elements which are attributed to Dahl's writing achievement stem mainly from great combination of humor, subversion and violence (55). As clarified by Nienke Minneboo, adventure, fantasy, reality, and morality have been perfectly fused together in his children's books using the unique storytelling style and unusual language technique which can be easily conceived and enjoyed by the child readers. In terms of diction in particular, Minneboo has pointed out that "every possible word in the English vocabulary" has been made use of by this writer ... and when there is not a suitable word for something he wants to express, he invents a word (7).

However, despite such popularity among the child audiences and outstanding linguistic writing style, Dahl's children's stories have been shunned away by some adults for fear that the violence, eccentricity, and morbidity incorporated in this fiction will catalyze harmful influence on the young readers. As recently discussed, when these adverse features are viewed from different angle, the unlikely literary traits, apart from offering valuable living truths to the child readers, reciprocally constitute the rare and exceptional qualities to the Dahlian writings for the children. It would not be exaggerating to say that the embodiment of ambiguous and unconventional components partly contribute to popularizing his books for children.

Roald Dahl's Works as Representation of Children in the Postmodern Age

Dahl's world, as recently mentioned, is plagued by children's oppression. Like some great artists, the defense device of sublimation has enabled Dahl's to turn his bitter childhood experiences into great artistic inventions (Freud 79-80; Wade and Tavis 478). That is to say, all his bad impulses stimulated by oppression have been transformed into Dahl's superb writings for the children. Obviously, the impacts of oppression he underwent when he was a school boy are reflected in these stories. His child protagonists, like their author and the fairytale child characters, also confront oppression from their adult oppressors who are the fictional antagonists. Nevertheless, the ways the child characters in Dahl's early books respond to the adults' oppression do not resemble the ways the child characters in Dahl's latter books do. Moreover, the girl protagonists, in contrast to the conventional heroines of the past, are created to be evidently active, brave, determined and strong despite the fact that the Dahlian boy protagonists outnumber the Dahlian girl protagonists. In the following section, the researcher examines and discusses the child protagonists in the selected Roald Dahl's children's stories and claims that these lead child characters represent the postmodern children.

The Dahlian children's stories are not impacted only by the author's painful childhood experiences. Like other literary genres, the social movements taking place in the twentieth century play the important roles in Dahl's writings for the children. As it has been widely accepted among literary critics, literature created at a certain time is somehow and somewhat related to its current political, cultural, economic, and social events. Fiction, according to Monika Vosková, appears to be a mirror of the society because it is connected to its social contexts to some extent (90). Therefore, when examining any literary piece carefully, the social constructs or different social representations of the society can be delineated.

The chosen Dahlian stories have been created in the second half of the twentieth century from 1964 to 1991: *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *The Magic Finger* (1966), *The Enormous Crocodile* (1978), *The Twits* (1980), *George's Marvelous Medicine* (1981), *The BFG* (1982), *The Witches* (1983), *Matilda* (1988), and *The Minpins* (1991). The period

was dubbed postmodernism. Using the sociologists' lenses to view any literary writings, the author's stories can be regarded as the products of the society or the other way round. Postmodernism, therefore, is believed to influence these Dahlian books. Indeed, the philosophical ideas, cultural concepts, and literary notions of postmodernism have been created as the reactions against modernism. Based on these logics, Dahl's works for the children are expected to shift away from the traditional children's literature. Subsequently, the Dahlian child protagonists must be characterized to be different from those child protagonists of the preceding eras: the pre-modern and the modern child protagonists.

Postmodern family together with child rearing has been vividly painted in these chosen Dahlian stories. Based on Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb's *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism*, it is rather difficult for the children in the second half of the twentieth century or postmodern period to enjoy themselves because they cannot be protected from reality but should be exposed to it (140). In the meantime, even though the families of these children can become the source which provides them with support, it is very sad to say that their families can take their own children down into the pitfall as well. This is because the children of postmodernism have to carry the burden of the adult world on their shoulders. Hence, they can no longer be viewed as the innocent creatures who need to be protected. As elaborated in *Literary Childhoods: Growing Up in British and American Literature*, there has been a great change in parent-child relationship in this postmodern period. Oftentimes, children born in the second half of the twentieth century are depicted as being the only child in the family who spends most of their free time alone in front of television and computer at home. This is why these postmodern children turn away from their families and give more time and attention to their school friends. This can be seen through *Matilda*. Feeling disappointed and hurt by the constant negligence from her own biological parents and a brother, Matilda decides to stay with her kind and attentive school teacher, Miss Honey, at the end of the book. Besides, the scenes of Matilda and other school students' socializations and co-operations to fight against the tyranny headmistress, Miss Trunchbull, can be used as proof of how friendship has become a significant part of the lives of these postmodern children.

Indeed, the forlorn and solitude feelings are unavoidably characterized by the small size and structure of postmodern families. Exploring these selected stories, we can notice that except for the Twits who are childless, most of the Dahlia child protagonists are the only child in their houses: James Henry Trotter in *James and the Giant Peach*, Charlie Bucket in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, George Kranker in *George's Marvelous Medicine*, the unnamed boy in *The Witches* and Little Billy in *The Minpins*. The only child list may include the unnamed girl in *The Magic Finger* and Sophie in *The BFG* as well since their siblings have never been alluded in both books. No wonder, they oftentimes encounter with loneliness since there are not many people to mingle with in their houses. Being an only child, these Dahlia child characters may be socially awkward, too, because they do not have other children to play with or to help them learn how to befriend with someone. For this reason, Charlie Bucket of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* appears to be quiet clinging tightly to his grandpa and dissociating himself from other children the whole time during the tour in Mr. Wonka's chocolate factory. From the same book, Mike Teavee can be nominated as the most obvious example of the postmodern child character; he does nothing but watching violent television programs almost twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Unlike the idealistic family in the past, postmodern family, according to the recent discussion, may become the origin of domestic trouble and crisis. The Twits in *The Twits*, as their name conveys, in contrast to typical couples, consistently play weird pranks on each other. In the meantime, the couple's relationships with the pet monkeys who are figuratively comparable to their adopted children appear to be ridiculous, loveless and inhumane for the kept animals have always been caged and beaten by the couple. In *George's Marvelous Medicine*, George Kranky's biological grandma hates her own grandson while Mr. and Mrs. Wormwoods in *Matilda* hate their own biological daughter. Hypothetically, these unlikely and unethical family incidences may be derived from the rapid changes of postmodernity which, initially, are stimulated by the advancement in science and technology. Coming with this social progress, the way people live their lives and their views of the world also change at a great rate. People can move and travel more comfortably and faster. They can communicate and connect with each other wherever and whenever they want. Things

become dynamic and unpredictable. These dynamic and unpredictability happen to the epistemology of every field. As a reverse effect, human behaviors have been affected by the postmodern phenomena. Children are attached more to televisions, computers and friends rather than to their parents or siblings. That is to say, all the weirdness and unconventionality in marital status and family situations like the exemplified domestic hostility and annihilation in Dahl's children's stories can be regarded as the common postmodern features. As asserted by Agata Kozak, when considering the changes in marriage and family, one cannot ignore the peculiarities of post-modernity (73). To put it differently, the families in the chosen Dahlian stories do not resemble those stereotypical families we usually see in most literary texts for the children, particularly those written in the past centuries. There are no loving and caring husband and wife; the father does not work outside home while the mother stays home cooking and taking care of the household and the children. The ideas from the earlier periods of how much the parents love their children, how naïve, grateful, and obedient one's children are, will be considered as dull and insignificant in postmodern children's literature.

Likewise, plural societies and many narratives (also the aspects of postmodernity) have been abundantly portrayed in Dahl's books through the metaphors for the children. Whether they are humans, animals or mythical creatures, these child characters and their metaphors are subversively characterized to be different from the traditional characters in the archaic stories for the children as well. While the talking animals in the educational books, religious pamphlets, and Aesop fables in those children's stories of the past had been employed for didactic purposes, i.e. to teach language and moral lessons for the child readers, both the talking animals and mythical characters in the chosen Dahlian stories are absolutely not employed for these reasons. On the contrary, the deployment of these non-human characters in the Dahlian children's writings serves a variety of purposes. As children's oppression is the point focused by Dahl's children's books, the birds in *The Magic Finger* and the monkeys in *The Twits* are employed to represent the oppressed children who do not give in to their adult oppressors. In *James and the Giant Peach* the talking insects assemble different types of people like a human community. The Earthworm is kind of warm and serious but the Centipede is loud, boastful and rascally. The Ladybug

and Miss Spider are always friendly and nice, for instance. They sometimes get along with one another; other times they quarrel. Yet, if dangers and obstacles approach their community, they can forget their conflicts immediately and co-work for the sake of their community. It is evident that postmodern concepts of plurality and diversity could be decoded from the mixture of all insects in *James and the Giant Peach*. We can perceive that people of different genders, ages, and character traits are represented by the society of these bugs. In contrast to metanarrative of the past, the others who used to be neglected are included into these Dahl stories for the children. In addition, many points of views and numerous voices can be heard from these anthropomorphic figures.

Sometimes Dahl creates the same animal characters with the same names to appear in many children's stories and they may be given either the same old roles or different roles depending on the plot of the stories. For example, The Muggle-Wumps, are the monkeys who can be met by their child readers in both *The Enormous Crocodile* and *The Twits*. The Muggle-Wump emerges for the first time in *The Enormous Crocodile* as the children's protector. It warns the children to run away from the Enormous Crocodile before he can catch them to eat. The Muggle-Wumps become the monkey family in *The Twits*, the latter book, and as recently mentioned, they are turned to be the victims under the cruel hands of Mr. and Mrs. Twits. As Elizabeth A. Dunn states in *Talking Animals: A Literature Review of Anthropomorphism in Children's Books*, different features of the animal characters can be found in the modern children's stories because their authors and illustrators have started to explore "the other facets of these animals' personalities (37). It is discernible that while Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877) presents the ethical treatment of the horse, Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willow* (1908) emphasizes the importance of table manners and honesty, and Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) imparts the consequences of disobedience to one's mother's instructions to the child readers, Dahl's children's stories, with their tone, plot and writing style, have altered the way the child readers can perceive these non-human characters.

Apparently, the construction of Dahl's works for the children are in alignment with postmodern philosophies in many respects. They embody the postmodern literary traits, i.e. a means of subversion is used by the author; the traditional qualities of the books for the children are dramatically changed; the stories explore into the marginalized and ethnic minorities (children's oppression); fonts, space, titles, illustrations, typography, and symbols were prolifically seen together with diverse representations of things and peoples (Lewis, 127; Porter, 57; Adámková, 10-15). However, apart from centering his writings for the children on the matter of children's oppression, readers of Dahl's children's books can definitely find these postmodern aspects demonstrated in most of his works for the children. In one of Dahl's most loved book, *The BFG*, for example, the central Dahlian giant in this children's literary work is created to be totally different from other mythical giants who used to be known by the readers. Instead of being colossal, scary, and monstrous, this BFG is rather small (in comparison to other giants), very friendly, kind and helpful to the girl protagonist, Sophie. Besides he feeds only on, not children or humans, but one kind of vegetable called snozzcumber. Like other children's stories, drawing and images of the main characters, locations, objects, are projected to prevent boredom and stimulate the readers' imaginative interactions. Realizing his readers' literacy and development restrictions, all the fonts, typography, space and symbols have also been properly adopted to facilitate their pleasure, language development, imagination, and understanding of growing up and living from reading his children's stories.

In light of representation of masculinity and femininity, postmodern concepts do impact on the construction of the Dahlian male and female protagonists.

Surveying these works, readers will find that the characters' roles both in terms of their genders and ages, will differ considerably from those of the archaic characters. Naturally, when the newly born babies enter into this world, they are called either the boy or the girl on the ground of their genital organs. After being named as either boys or girls, their names will carry gendered conditions and expectations which will subsequently provide some effects on their lives for good. Consequently, certain dresses, hairstyles, behaviors or even responsibilities and occupations are required from being a boy or a girl. Viewing the gender roles through the lens of the

sociological theorist, it has been widely known among scholars that patriarchal system has been constructed with the origination of human history. In those primitive times, men were sent out from the huts and risked their lives to hunt animals to feed the families. They communicated with other tribes to trade and do different kinds of businesses. If any quarrels occurred, it was also the men's task to fight and protect the clan. In contrast to masculine tasks, girls and women were assumed to be in charge of domestic businesses, i.e. taking care of the homemaking jobs like doing the dishes, cleaning, cooking and parenting. Owing to the women and girls' dependency on the strength of men, patriarchal belief or the society which is led and governed by men or masculinity originated and has flourished ever since. Patriarchy has been socially, legally, economically, and religiously immersed itself in a variety of cultures. According to Craig Lockard's *Society, Networks, and Transitions* (2007), most contemporary societies can be described as patriarchal (111-114). Like what happened in the past, boy and men generally hold their political, economic, and religious power in most societies.

Since boys and men dominate in patriarchal societies, girls and women who belong to the opposite party will definitely be oppressed. Oppression, as discussed many times earlier, brings about some adaptive reactions to the oppressed. Hence, in the ensuing eras, girls and women stage up their fights calling on gender equality. Despite these females' efforts, patriarchy seems not to really disappear from human community. Instead, it evolves through times. As reported in *The Representation of Masculinity and Femininity in Children's Books: A Deconstruction of Gender Contemporary Best-selling Children's Literature*, gender inequality has been maintained in numerous social practices (Grange 4). In the sphere of stories for the children, boys and men prevail while girls and women are underrepresented. Moreover, studies have shown that stories about boys can be sold very much better than stories about girls. At the same time, the ubiquitous boy characters in the writings for the children imply that masculinity or boyhood is more important and more interesting than femininity or girlhood (Tyysen 8). To put it another way, it can be said that patriarchal still reigns in the kingdom of children's literature.

Stories allow their audiences to learn how to act or behave through their characters. Thus, children's stories are used by their writers to depict suitable gender roles for their child readers. Implanted by patriarchal beliefs, some desirable masculinities are portrayed to guide the male readers the ways to become the acceptable boys in the traditional writings for the children. With the gender implications, the fictional boys are characterized to be brave, strong and dominant in order to grow into the acceptable and admirable men. In most children's stories, the boy figures are urged by their fathers or male siblings to be aggressive, competitive, and tough. To create manly and heroic character traits for the central boy characters, some adventurous, rescuing and outdoors activities for animals, beautiful and unfortunate girls must be invented in many children's books for the boy protagonists to undergo (Hamilton et al. 757-765). That is to say, being independent, courageous, active, skillful, strong, and helpful have been established as the ideal qualities for the boy heroes.

Like general postmodern children's literature, the typical gender roles presented in the traditional stories for the children have been transformed in the selected Dahlian stories. It is apparent that although Roald Dahl lets his boy protagonists take certain degree of their male roles, most of them are not created to embody significant characteristics acted by the archetypal boy heroes. As a matter of fact, some unlikely and strange male qualities are performed by these Dahlian boys. James of *James and the Giant Peach* often cries while staying with Aunts Sponge and Spiker. In similar fashion, no fighting ability, courage and self-confidence have been genuinely demonstrated by Charlie of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Moreover, some of these Dahlian boys even tend to enjoy themselves doing domestic chores which are supposed to be the girl's jobs. For example, George of *George's Marvelous Medicine*, albeit being a male, heads towards the kitchen right away to cook four recipes of medicine when he feels disturbed and scared by his grandma's frightening narratives. Following Dahl's depiction of how naturally, quickly, and easily George can concoct the four remedial formulas for his grandma, readers can compare the boy's culinary arts with those of some great chefs. In addition, whenever the unnamed boy in *The Witches* confronts the witches who are his enemies, he is unable to conceal his fear of these witches. As posited in *The Representation of Masculinity in*

Children's Literature, although both boys and girls need affection and can show warmth and care to others, the boys should learn to obtain their manhood by trying to get rid of all their femininities, particularly those which can expose their weakness and cowardice. This is recognized as the male gender norms (Thyssen 21). In other words, displaying how sad, sorry, painful and fearful you are is not masculine behavior. Thus, it is more appropriate for boys and men to possess the ability to control their feelings or emotions. Otherwise, they may look like girls or women who, most of the time, are fragile and wimpy.

It is discernible that postmodern writers tend to create ordinary and realistic main characters. Since archetypal heroes in traditional stories may look to be too good and too competent to be true, certain bad attributes of the villains are sometimes given to the protagonists in the stories written in the second half of the twentieth century. Based on Jessica Page Morell's *Bullies, Bastards and Bitches*, some unconventional heroes who can disturb or confuse their readers with their weaknesses, human's frailties or bad habits can also instigate readers' sympathy (44). For these human imperfections, a number of Dahl's child readers can relate themselves with these boy protagonists who are non-extraordinary but meek, nice and loveable.

Based on the above analysis, we can say that the characterization of most Dahlian boy protagonists is impacted by postmodernity because "peculiarities" is nothing uncommon in the era after modernism (Kozak 73). Unlike many traditional child heroes who usually manifest the extraordinary heroic deeds to help the cursed beautiful girl, James, Charlie, George and the unnamed boy of *The Witches* are created, not as the charming prince with courage, strength, and martial skill, but as one of the ordinary boy we can easily meet in our everyday lives.

Turning to take a look at femininity, when counting the number of the central child characters in the selected stories, readers will find out immediately that femininity is still underrepresented in these Dahlian books for the children. This result concurs with several studies concerning gender representation in children's literature (Narahara 5). Apart from underrepresentation found in Dahl's children's literature, the examination of several book reviews and literary research also reveals that some aspects of Dahl's children's stories are considered inappropriate and should not be recommended for the child readers on the ground that they contain feminine

annihilation. Far worse, complaints about vulgarism, violence, racism, dark humor and certainly misogyny found in these books have been pledged by critics, parents, librarians and teachers despite the writer's popularity among the child readers (Minneboo 3). Historically, the feminist campaigns occurred frequently in the 1960's, the period which Roald Dahl turned to focus on creating fiction for the children after he stopped writing short stories for the adults (Minneboo 20). Influenced by these women's campaigns, the societies, both in Europe and America, were stimulated to pay more attention to examine whether their businesses and field of works and studies had intentionally or unintentionally managed under gender egalitarianism or not. It can be said that the perceptions of girls and women have been dramatically transformed since the rights of the women were advocated by different humanism organizations.

As a matter of fact, the movements of gender equality tends to have a strong effect on every genre of arts including these selected Dahl's literary creations which are categorized as fiction for the children or young people. In *Happily Ever After: Free to Be . . . You and Me, Second-Wave Feminism, and 1970's American Children's Culture*, (2012) Leslie Paris has reported that books for the child audience turn to be the subject of new political scrutiny from the mid -1960's onwards. The underlying sexism issues in many children's books are raised and the presentation of girls and boys in traditional and repressive ways in many children's books has become the matter of concerns by many feminist activists (5). Nevertheless, regardless of having more boy protagonists than the girl protagonists or being attacked on misogyny attitude, the characterization of the Dahlian girl protagonists in *The Magic Finger*, *The BFG*, and *Matilda* proves otherwise.

Reading Dahl's children's stories which the girl protagonists are dominantly featured over the boy characters, some readers who are familiar with the heroines in *Snow White*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* will be shocked and surprised. Unlike those fairy tales' princesses, the unnamed girl of *The Magic Finger*, Sophie of *The BFG* and Matilda of *Matilda* do not get stuck in the traditional role models for females or women. They are neither inactive nor submissive. None of their domestic abilities is described and praised, either. When being belittled by their parents, land ladies, teachers or neighbors, readers will find that these Dahlian girls do not wait for

rescue from any charming princes. Instead, they will fight back and take revenge on their enemies as soon as and as fiercely as they can. As the first instance, when the unnamed girl of *The Magic Finger* is called stupid and told to mind her P's and Q's, which literally means to behave well or mind her manners or language, she does not withhold her outrage for a second. Within a blink, this Dahlian girl uses the magical power from her finger to metamorphose her teacher and the Greggs into cat-like human and the ducks. According to *Beowulf*, *Jack the Giant Killer*, and *The Magic Sword*, killing the beasts and conquering the giants and monsters used to be the mission of the male protagonists. However, Dahl allows Sophie of *The BFG*, a very tiny orphaned female, to perform this heroic deed of giant slaying instead of having the boy protagonist to do so. Similar to the previously discussed Dahlian girls, in *Matilda*, Matilda gets herself out from her house to handle her living matters by herself: making foods and drinks to feed herself, heading to the community library to find some good books to fulfill her own need for reading. Although this girl is only five years old, she schemes up several pranks and plans to take revenge on her father and the school headmistress until they finally get away from her life. Matilda's decisions to act in order to please herself of what she wants indicate this girl's autonomy and self-reliance, the attributes of the extra-exceptional children. As described in *Appropriate Practices for Screening, Identifying, and Serving Potentially Gifted Preschoolers* (2005), gifted children can read even before they enter schools (Karnes et al 4). Neither Mr. and Mrs. Wormwoods nor any part-time tutor teaches Matilda how to read. Her early reading ability is derived from or naturally blessed by her own intelligence, not from schooling. Unlike those unwise and helpless heroines in the ancient times, these girls can definitely depend on themselves and lead their lives to prosperity because of the ingrained intellectuality and gifts endowed to them by their author.

By and large, it can be claimed that Roald Dahl's children's stories represent the children of the second half of the twentieth century, the period which is widely known as postmodern age. The examination of all Dahlian child protagonists, according to the above discussion, has revealed the influence of postmodern literary ideations on the construction of Dahl's fictional characters. That is to say, to comply with postmodern concepts, the traditional qualities of the girl and boy protagonists

including other non-human characters have been removed. In light of gender representation, conventional concepts regarding femininity and masculinity in these children's works have also been overthrown. While the boy protagonists tend to be emasculated from their archetypal masculine roles, it is evident that the Dahlian girl protagonists have been empowered to be fierce, confident, valiant and mentally strong. Scrutinizing all the selected Dahlian books, it is discernable that none of the central boy characters have been endowed with any supernatural power and extraordinary brain power like the nameless girl of *The Magic Finger* and Matilda of *Matilda*. Regardless of previous misogyny, violence, or macabre accusations by many critics, the researcher conclusively indicates that Dahl has tried to widen his child readers' literary notions by offering the innovative heroes and heroines through these selected children's stories. As stated in *Ordinary Heroines: Transforming the Male Myth*, classical heroes and heroic code in the ancient stories have failed their readers badly (Aisenberg 11). Since the prevalent male-dominated stories for the children tend to disappoint the audiences, the female audience in particular, new heroines with the intellectual strength and autonomy have been proposed to fulfill the need of Roald Dahl's child readers.

In light of emasculated boy protagonists, it seems that many social changes stemmed from the technological advancement and scientific progress have lessened the importance of masculine archetypes. Men in the twentieth century do not have to risk their lives going out from home, hunting animals and fighting with the witches or dragons any more. In other words, the postmodern boys do not have to develop their manhood by surviving perils, adventures or by saving the beautiful, helpless, and fragile ladies. For these reasons, physical strength of the fairy tales' heroes is not as important as it used to be. At the same time, the feminist movements have regularly campaigned to have equal rights as men. If girls or women were helped or protected, they could feel offended. Thus, dimming the boy protagonists' toughness, aggression, and physical strength seems to make better sense in postmodern children's literature. Indeed, Dahl's children's stories have revealed numerous ways to develop and demonstrate one's manhood in different ways as discussed in the previous chapters. Reading the selected Dahlian stories, the boy audience will find the central boy characters who, in spite of being non-archetypal, do not give in to diverse dangerous

circumstances. As posted in *Storyteller: The Authorized Biography of Roald Dahl*, the Dahlian writings for the children, in many instances, are like “a kind of imaginative survival manual for the children about how to deal with adult world around them” (Sturrock 42). Whatever happens to them, they will be able to handle with or adjust themselves and survive.

Dahlian Works as a Voice to Advocate Children’s Rights

After the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified in the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989, the situations of the rights of the children have always been strongly and regularly debated by children’s rights advocates and scholars. Their talks and meetings have been held with the aims to analyze and assess the recent situations of the rights of the children. Moreover, these child rights supporters’ efforts are carried out with the intension to monitor the progress of the implementations of the Convention across different cultural contexts. Any challenges about implementing and promoting the rights of the children can be indicated from these talks and meetings as well (Chiu 54). Indeed, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, according to *Rights Based Approaching in the Work of Save the Children UK* (2013), “has become the bone structure for all child rights agencies to use and develop their policies and approaches to the children” (Tran 36).

Up to this time, the agreements in the Convention on the Rights of the Child have been launched as the international laws by the United Nations members for more than three decades. Despite the treaty’s long history, its enforcement in the world community, even in the developed countries, seems to yield ineffective and vague results. The difficulties concerning the legitimacy, legal enforcement and clear effectiveness of bringing the rights of the children set in the Convention into practice are confirmed in several studies. Confusion over the Convention’s basic tenets, for instance, arises among children’s rights campaigners, activists, practitioners and researchers. Undoubtedly, a great deal of ambiguity over fundamental issues remains until these days (Mitchelle 1-2).

Although it seems very difficult to bring the Convention into practice, Dahl's works can be interpreted as literary tools, as a contribution, to help advocate for the rights of the oppressed children. As argued by Hunt, literary promotion of the rights of the children may bring about faster and more satisfying productive results (55-56). Owing to such belief, children's oppression, also known as child rights violations, has been prevalently portrayed and condemned in all ten selected Dahlian stories to convey the author's opposition against the violations of the rights of the child. To urge the audience and the public to pay attention to and do something to make the lives of these oppressed children better, readers will encounter with the abundant scenes in which the bad adults mistreat the children. Being replete with these scenes, the researcher claims that Dahl's children's stories become rights-based and rights-oriented.

With the hope that the problems concerning the violations of the rights of the children will be seriously taken into account and eliminated eventually by the society, the theme of the violations of the rights of the children has been highlighted in the selected Dahlian writings for the children. To advocate for the rights of these oppressed children, Dahl does not present his ideas about all children's rights separately or independently. Rather he tends to harmoniously integrate and blend them all into the fictional contents so his whole ideas of opposing all forms of children's rights violations will neither damage the plots nor change the tones of the stories. Tracing Dahl's opposition against the violations of the rights of the children, it was found that children's rights to survival, development, and protection have been prioritized by this writer.

Survival rights include the provision of the most fundamental needs to life and existence such as the standards of living, medical care, nutrition and accommodation (Merrey 3274). To imply to the public that the existing status of the children in our society is the most important right for them as well as for us, the adult humans, Dahl has his child protagonists and their metaphors handle with their death and life situation as well as the deprivation of their basic needs like food, clothes and residences in greatest degree. By placing maximum emphasis on the survival rights of the children, Dahl might want to point out to his readers that keeping our children's lives is vital for the human species. In addition, if we turn to take a look at the writer's

personal life, readers will find that many deadly events might stimulate Dahl's to possess a strong desire to keep all children to be safe from all perils and survive. Based on his autobiographies and biographies, this author has encountered his family members' deaths and fatal incidences several times: his plane's crash landing during World War II causing him to suffer multiple injuries and months of blindness; the passing of his father, sister, and daughter during his childhood; his wife's strokes; and his son's serious brain damage from a car accident (Warren 12, 87; Wheeler 9). Experiencing these mortal events by himself, Dahl must gain a profound comprehension that it is not easy for human beings to live their lives smoothly and safely until they get old. It will be harder for the vulnerable children to solely depend on themselves to maintain their own lives amidst pernicious diseases and harmful surroundings. They cannot earn any other rights before being helped and allowed to live by someone stronger. To make other people perceive the priority of providing the rights to survival for all fragile children, Roald Dahl's children's stories are extensively engaged in the surviving factors.

Apart from survival rights, Dahl's stories also address important issues in relation to children's rights to development. It is obvious that children usually grow at a very quick rate during their early childhood. To enable them to gain their optimal skeletal and physical growth, they must be fed with sufficient dietary intake. In fact, good nutrition or healthy food fosters not only the child's bodily development but also other aspects. As reported in *Nutrition and Its Effects on Academic Performance: How Can Our Schools Improve?* (2010), healthy eating is also crucial for the children to accomplish their full academic potential, mental growth, and lifelong well-being (Ross 51). If the children are undernourished or malnourished, their physical growth, mental and cognitive development will be affected. In the selected stories, the most severe case of food deficiency caused by poverty is evidently depicted in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*; the Buckets cannot afford their second helping in every meal except for Sunday. Far worse, Charlie has to keep a bar of chocolate given only on his birthday as a present to "last for more than a month" because of his family's poverty (Dahl 17). Being underfed, Charlie Bucket suffers from nutrition inadequacy and has become skinnier and sicker. Article 24 of the Convention is implemented to make sure that food or adequate nutrition programs

must be accessible by all the children in order to combat disease, malnutrition, and stunted growth. In spite of an inclusion of this Article, malnutrition and undernutrition in children still exist as global concerns because children's development rights and nutrition intervention programs are ineffectively implemented (Kent 133). To help campaign for the child's rights to receive enough and healthy food, Dahl intriguingly makes his readers perceive the physical damage happening to one of his most popular child characters, Charlie Bucket. Hopefully, the vivid portrayal of poor and hungry Charlie who is very underweight, stunted and sickly will raise reader's awareness of the children's rights to sufficiently receive healthy nutrition.

In addition to nutrition needs, learning and education are emphasized in Dahl's stories as crucial factors for children to successfully develop themselves. As stated in Article 26 of the Convention, every single child is entitled with the right to education and this tenet is universally applied to all global children (Mattingly and Suubi 7). This means any individual child must not be excluded from educational system or schooling no matter what their nationalities and races are, or whoever they are: abled or disabled, rich or poor, ugly or beautiful. In *Matilda*, the benefits of reading, learning, and education have been characterized to be the outstanding qualities of the Dahlian girl protagonist, Matilda Wormwood. Her self-taught reading, learning passion, and astonishing academic performance that shine regardless Mr. and Mrs. Wormwoods' neglect and Miss Trunchbull's obstruction connote how Dahl has tried to indicate the importance and advantages of learning or education to the child readers. In compliance with the children's right and human right which mandate that everyone is endowed by law to free education, Roald Dahl has promoted Matilda's educational right by allowing his girl protagonist's intellectuality to sparkle in spite of various impediments which stem from both her own biological parents and the schoolmistress, Miss Trunchbull.

Apart from survival and development rights, the selected Dahlian stories also address children's rights to gain protection. As previously mentioned, Dahl's works for the children, despite their popularity among the child audience, have been disapproved of and banned by many parents, teachers and reviewers for containing morbid, vulgar, dangerous elements and anti-social views besides being accused of always taking the children's side (Meloney 4; Klugová 12; Lacová 14-17; Hansson

3). They fear that these adverse elements may harm or leave unfavorable results in the child readers. In contrast to these attackers, the researcher strongly believes that the major intention of this writer (an argument in this dissertation), is to endorse the protection rights of the children. When contemplating bringing up a child or educating a student, for instance, it has been widely known by parents and teachers that most overprotected or over-controlled children will be incapable of dealing with hardship and dangers bravely and effectively. Evinced by *Parental Intrusiveness and Children's Separation Anxiety in a Clinical Sample*, the parents' over-controlling actions will restrict a child's access to his/her environment or different challenging situations. Furthermore, the child who is always safeguarded from excessive threats will not be able to cope with harms on his/her own. Consequently, the overprotected child will lack opportunities to develop competence and a sense of mastery especially when facing threatening, repelling or fatal conditions (Wood 73-87). In compliance with these notions, Roald Dahl has tried to familiarize his child protagonists with all forms of negativities: violence, vulgarity, morbidity, or dangers. That is to say, by allowing them to confront some undesirable or risky situations, these Dahlian child protagonists as well as the child readers who identify themselves with these characters will gradually learn to depend on or adjust themselves properly. Their problem solving skills, self-adjustment and self-protection capabilities can be developed as well. At the same time, Dahl's stories inform adult readers that children also need their protection and guidance, to an appropriate degree, in dealing with difficult situations.

In parallel to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Dahlian selected children's stories enshrine the information and meanings which convey the promotion of an awareness of the rights of the children. The core principles of the children's rights to survival, development, and protection can be deciphered from these works. Children's problems mentioned in the stories are identical to those included in the Convention framework. Although some critics or readers may accuse these stories of having unpleasant or improper elements which are likely to provide negative effects on young readers, the researcher views that these elements are intentionally included to prepare this group of readers for adversities which might really come to their real life. Thus, reading Dahl's fantasy works for the

children, it can be said that the child protagonists and child readers can be well-protected, well-prepared, and empowered tremendously. In spite of numerous impediments imposed on them by the bigger and more powerful adult enemies and other adverse incidents, they can survive, live on and thrive finally.

According to the discussion above, it is obvious that Dahl's selected works can be interpreted as literary works to foster children's rights to survival, development, and protection. While child readers learn to claim these rights for themselves, adult readers are also suggested to be aware of the importance of bestowing these rights upon children.

Conclusion

By and large, the incorporation of Dahl's ideas about the rights of the children found in the ten selected young people's stories have been discussed from chapters one to five. At the beginning of the dissertation, I have provided informational groundwork for the comprehension of the interconnection between children's stories, the child readers and the rights of the children. As contended by some scholars, children's literature can be employed by the writer to function as the genesis of "social rituals, ideological creeds, and legal principles about justice, legal autonomy, punishment, and, of course, rights (Dickinson 1,6; Stephens 229-231). In addition, it has also been confirmed that not the laws, but literature can appeal better to gain sympathy from human beings and promote an awareness of their rights (Hunt 56). Although the chosen fiction is not written as academic or legal texts and they cannot be enforced by the authorities, I confidently posit that the chosen Dahlian stories have been intriguingly used by this writer to present his opinions on and advocacy for the rights of the children.

The writer's opposition against the violations of the children's rights has been evinced by the recurrent theme of children's oppression which permeates all ten selected stories for the children. The calamities of children's oppression in these selected works have been delineated in chapter two. With the aims to scaffold and protect the children's dignity, liberation, and capabilities, the consequences of children's oppression are demonstrated in Dahl's selected fiction. To urge the society

to agree with him that the small persons are vulnerable and they deserve protection and support from the society, the miseries and issues caused by children's oppression are prevalently portrayed in the selected works studied in this dissertation.

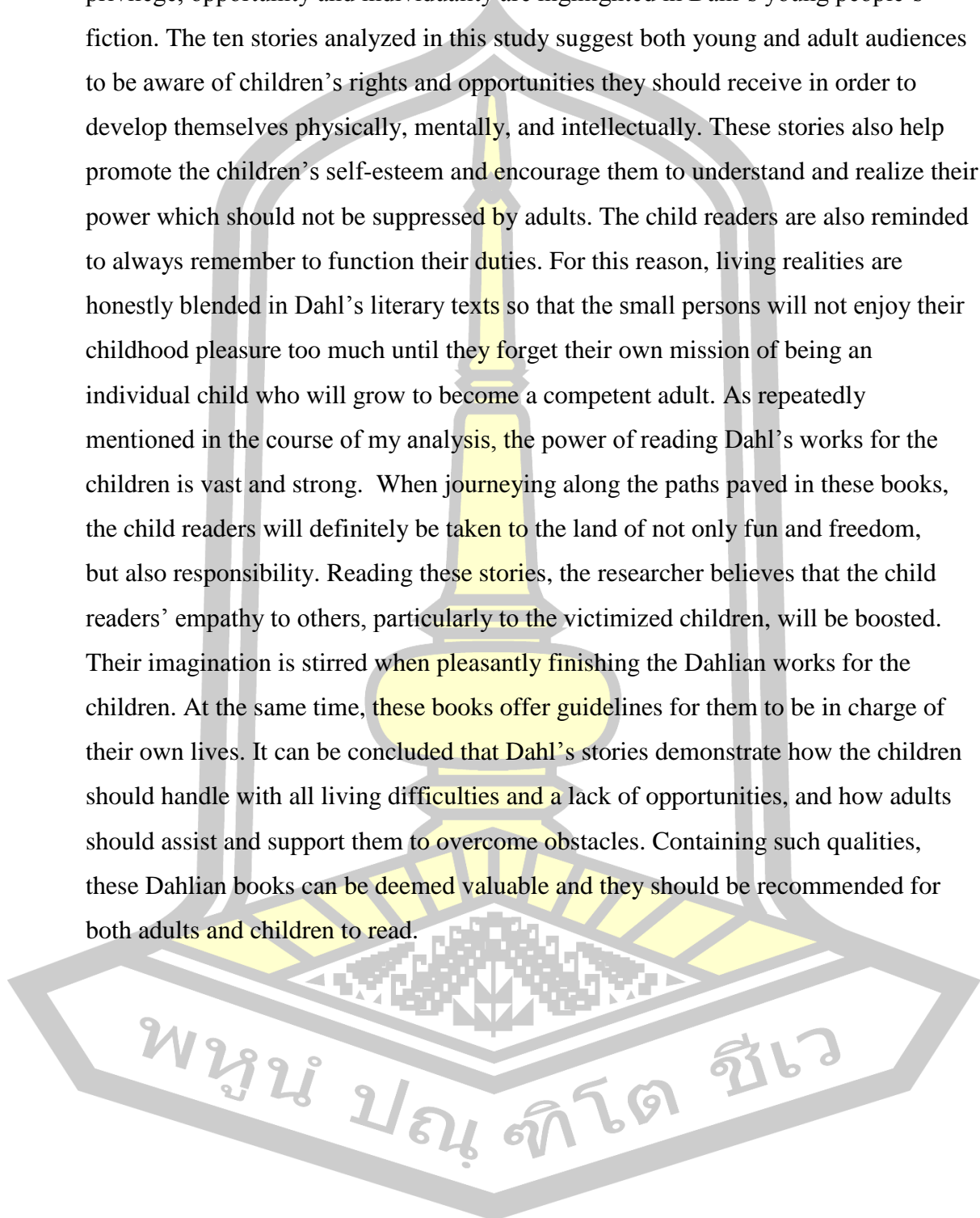
In fact, the theme of children's oppression has been inspired by the writer's personal life and the ongoing sociopolitical events of the twentieth century. Besides, many rights campaigns, both for the minority groups like gays, women, black people, and of course, the children, had been actively launched by social activists in the period Dahl turned to write fiction for the children. Hence, it can be said that Dahl's literary writings have been catalyzed by both the writer's psyche which is deeply ingrained with his bitter childhood experiences and the sociological events. For these biographical and sociological proofs, the researcher strongly believes that the writer aspires to speak for the oppressed children since he himself was sociologically and psychologically made to feel closely related to them. In other words, the researcher thinks that Dahl dreams to free the children from all forms of oppression.

Based on *The Relation of Waking Fantasy to Dreaming* (2002), the person with "physical abuse and early punishment in childhood" like Roald Dah is reported to be high-fantasy prone (Levin & Young 203). Fantasizing or dreaming, therefore, can help the abused and oppressed child to get away from the unpleasant situations. In Dahl's children's stories, readers will find that the adult villains' unkind actions have been condemned and penalized. However, in the real world, there is no way that the children will battle against or resist the adults' oppression due to their inferiorities. Dahl is fully aware of these facts. To make Dahl's dream world, the world without children's oppression become true, fantasy is purposively selected to be the literary genre of his writings for the children. Exploring all the ten selected works for the children, readers will find that whenever the child protagonists have to fight back the adult villains' oppression, magic, supernatural power, kind angels and helpful friends are always there to help these child characters win their fights with these adult oppressors-the violators or offenders of the rights of the children. By having the child protagonists defeat their adult enemies in spite of all disadvantageous conditions, it can also be interpreted that the social status of the children has been upgraded to be equal to or better than the adults in Dahl's literary texts.

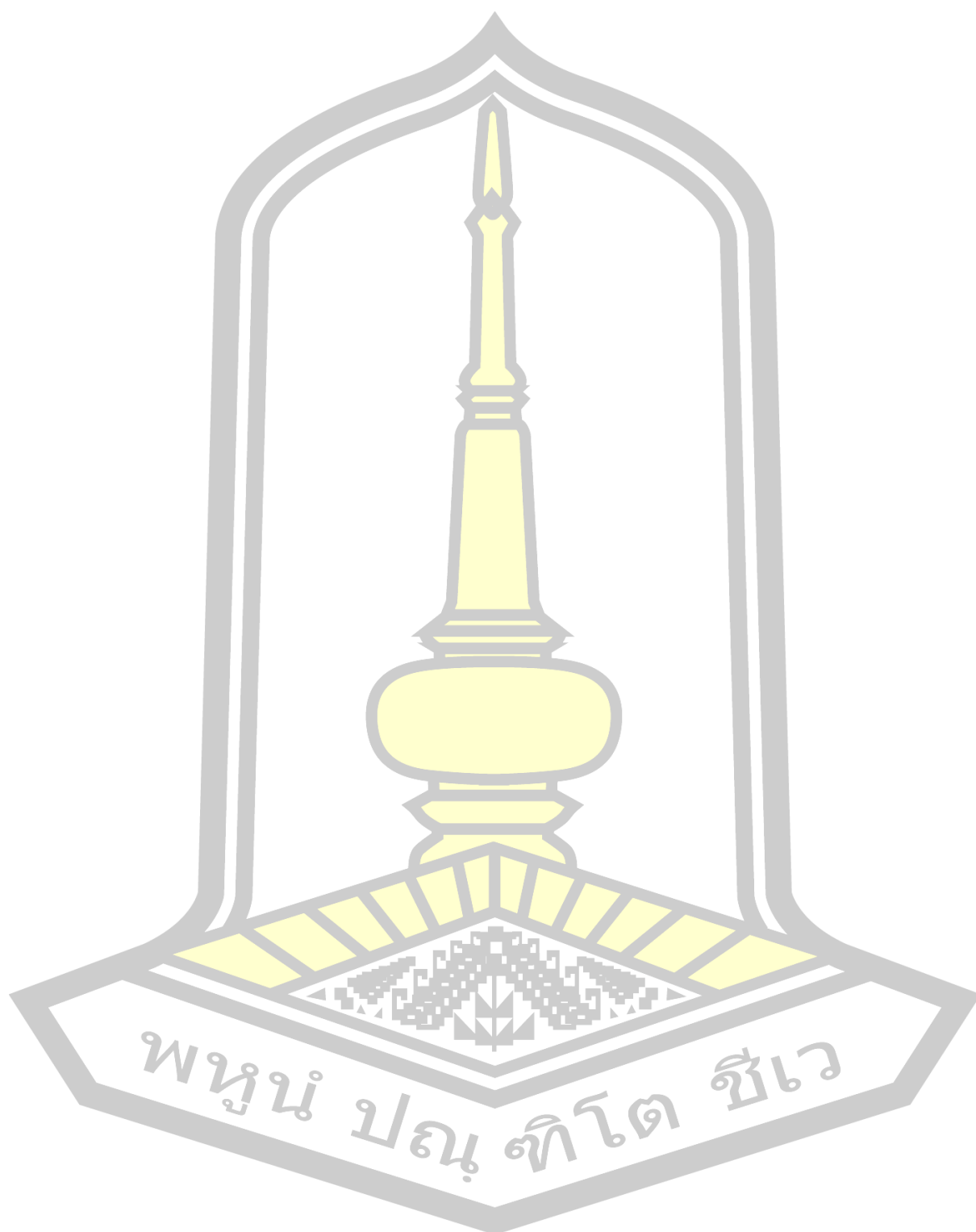
It might be argued by many people that bestowing rights to the children and allowing them to overuse these rights and privileges can backfire and damage their lives. Therefore, in the subsequent chapter, I have proposed that although Dahl advocates for the rights of the children, he would like them to exercise their rights and privileges with vigilance and caution. As asserted by Aylward, children who are rarely regulated, trained and penalized if they misbehave will lack consideration for others. Together with the inaccessibility and inability to master their knowledge and skills, these excessively pampered children will develop destructive behaviors such as physical violence, temper tantrum, defiance and incomppliance to general social rules or common practices (35). Foreseeing the undesirable outcomes of endowing the children with their limitless rights, morbidity, difficulties, and dangers have been included in Dahl's children's stories. By adding these negative elements to challenge his child protagonists, the author expects that these child characters will learn how to restrict their rights from handling with these adversities and impediments. Then, they will learn to adjust themselves properly. Eventually, these children will be instilled with decent and acceptable personality as well as necessary skills.

Indeed, Dahl's selected children's stories play a significant role in reconstructing the children while presenting the new voice, the voice of the oppressed children, to the literary canon. As stated by Aisenberg, readers have been very disappointed by the traditional heroes and the heroic code in the ancient stories (11). To fulfill the readers' need, the characters, particularly the child protagonists in the selected Dahlian stories have been characterized to be different from those child heroes and heroines in the past. Unlike the prince or other lead boy characters in the classic tales, the boy protagonists in Dahl's works for the children, as recently discussed at the beginning of this chapter, have been characterized to be nontraditional. Also, their physical strength and martial skills are removed. In a similar fashion, the beauty and domestic qualities of the girl protagonists have been omitted from constructing the Dahlian girl protagonists. Instead, most of these leading girl characters in Dahl's children's stories are formed to possess the traits that should belong to those of the boys; they have been created to be brave, fierce, independent and extraordinarily intelligent. In other words, we can say that the innovative and unconventional heroes and heroines can be found in these Dahlian stories.

According to the above discussion, it is undisputable that children's autonomy, privilege, opportunity and individuality are highlighted in Dahl's young people's fiction. The ten stories analyzed in this study suggest both young and adult audiences to be aware of children's rights and opportunities they should receive in order to develop themselves physically, mentally, and intellectually. These stories also help promote the children's self-esteem and encourage them to understand and realize their power which should not be suppressed by adults. The child readers are also reminded to always remember to function their duties. For this reason, living realities are honestly blended in Dahl's literary texts so that the small persons will not enjoy their childhood pleasure too much until they forget their own mission of being an individual child who will grow to become a competent adult. As repeatedly mentioned in the course of my analysis, the power of reading Dahl's works for the children is vast and strong. When journeying along the paths paved in these books, the child readers will definitely be taken to the land of not only fun and freedom, but also responsibility. Reading these stories, the researcher believes that the child readers' empathy to others, particularly to the victimized children, will be boosted. Their imagination is stirred when pleasantly finishing the Dahlian works for the children. At the same time, these books offer guidelines for them to be in charge of their own lives. It can be concluded that Dahl's stories demonstrate how the children should handle with all living difficulties and a lack of opportunities, and how adults should assist and support them to overcome obstacles. Containing such qualities, these Dahlian books can be deemed valuable and they should be recommended for both adults and children to read.



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