Roald Dahl, edited by Ann Alston and Catherine Butler, is the first collection of critical essays entirely dedicated to Dahl’s work. It is specifically designed for the student audience and, as such, it is a thorough introduction to Dahl’s novels (for children and adults), the controversies around his writing, and his personal attitudes towards childhood and writing for children. Butler does a fine job in contextualising Dahl’s dominance within the world of children’s literature and encourages future scholars to explore the theoretical entry points into Dahl’s work.

The range of topics in this collection, and the scholars writing about them, is indeed impressive. The essays engage with Dahl’s use of fairy tales, language, humour, and violence and also delve into his collaboration with Quentin Blake and the film adaptations of Dahl’s novels. Notable among the essays is Beverly Pennell’s piece on the reconfiguration of the feminine across the decades between The Magic Finger, The BFG, and Matilda. The closing essay by Peter Hunt entitled Roald Dahl and the Commodification of Fantasy makes evident the ?larger patterns of fantasy? inherent in Dahl’s work in addition to illustrating the ways in which the ?Dahl effect? has influenced those writers who followed.

In short, the collection of essays in Roald Dahl will be invaluable for any student looking for a firm grasp on Dahl’s work and a glimpse into the critical work done thus far. Given the popularity of Roald Dahl as an author it is surprising how little has been published critically examining the writer and his work. This collection seeks to redress that void and hopefully be inspiration for more work to come.

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