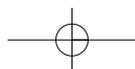humanist
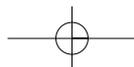
Interrogating the Humanist Subject in Carnivalesque Quest Novels

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Carnivalesque novels provide an ideal canvas for the interrogation of Western humanist traditions that are ideologically inscribed in children's quest structures. The narratives examined in this paper, Terry Pratchett's *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*, and Andy Griffiths' *The Day My Bum Went Psycho*, establish carnivalesque principles in strategies of play that invert quest imagery. But the authors also establish parodic and self-reflexive discourses that feature Bakhtinian principles of carnival. The narratives construct alternative views of heroic subjectivity that reinterpret quest codes within childhood's perspectives. Because child views direct carnivalesque interpretations of heroic norms, these quests also evaluate legendary traditions in humorous upheavals that frequently contest societal values and codes of conduct. Bakhtinian inversions disrupt the silences of socio-cultural taboos, but also subvert concepts of nobility concomitant with the heroic paradigm. Because carnival supplants more serious quest codes with laughter, the texts encode a comedic interrogation of Western humanist constructions of heroic subjectivity.

Parodic play is well entrenched in the discourse fictions and playground rhymes of childhood, where it provides a structural frame for authorial playfulness. In what Pratchett and Griffiths first introduce as an intertextual palimpsest that invites dialogue with heroic traditions, their parodic narratives continue as an examination of socio-cultural values. So whilst the textual interaction between structural mimicry and comedic signification generates this interrogation of heroic constructs, the seriousness of traditional quest heritage is inverted. Each author introduces a carnivalesque child space that is concomitant with an ideological intention to review quest norms, because, and as Bakhtin has established, carnival space invokes a play in signification that transforms quest intensity and subverts Western humanist presumptions of superiority. High culture is resignified by carnival's festive expression even as official culture is earthed in folk culture (Bakhtin 1984). Griffiths' parody focuses upon grotesque spectacle where carnival inversions encode Bakhtinian principles in images of the material lower bodily stratum. In contrast, Pratchett's carnivalesque interlocution of childhood tales assembles multiple plots in comedic interface with more concrete childhood aspirations. Consequently, as these

texts connect childhood's disposition for mimicry with a similar emphasis encoded in elements of linguistic play, their carnival spaces tend to be metafictive: carnival upheavals offer diverse perspectives; multiple views expose narrative intertexts as structural devices; and the distancing of subject positions promotes a greater awareness of authorial presence.

'Operations of play in language, aesthetics and cultural constructions' are associated with the self-reflexive aspect of metafiction, as Brian Edwards notes in his analysis of postmodern novelistic features. Identifying 'self conscious attention to the artifice of presentation and representation' as a postmodern novelistic feature, Edwards draws attention to linguistic patterns of play as strategies that expose cultural constructions (1998, p.86). In a similar manner, Pratchett and Griffiths implement this awareness in narrative play that draws attention to the artifice of quest fictions. Carnivalesque mimicry exposes the cultural origins of heroic traditions in each text. Because each author promotes carnivalesque representations of heroic subjectivity that interrogate quest heritage, the available subject positions encoded within each narrative sustain complex connections with their legendary intertexts. Pratchett personifies his own plotting in Maurice's capacity to orchestrate other characters' participation in a recycled 'Pied Piper' tale. Griffiths' carnivalesque representation of ultimate evil, the 'Great White Bum', maintains connection with other threatening and monstrous representations that have gained recognition in the Western canon's heroic tradition.

Although connections with Western humanist interpretations of heroic subjectivity are maintained within an intertexual pastiche, carnivalesque quests display some postmodern linguistic features that promote a cultural review or *refunctioning*[i] in quest structures (Hutcheon 1985, p.4). Narrative attention is centred upon systems of representation. Systems of play identify their parodied intertexts in ways that imagine alternate heroic subjectivities. Because Bakhtinian carnivalesque inverts quest imagery, repositioned allegorical binaries undermine the more serious aspects that traditionally identify heroic subjects. This interrogation of culturally constructed binaries provides a textual focus that is shared by both postmodern and carnivalesque principles. Border transgressions that reverse the rules of social conduct provide a source of humour in children's quests. Pratchett's text examines rules of conduct at multiple levels: Maurice enacts deceitful plans that will bring him unmerited monetary gain; the educated rodents theorise a set of rules that will bring order to their more chaotic rat society. The rodents' philosophical use of a children's text to derive their strategy also draws attention to the didactic intent of many children's fictions. Carnival principles transform quest space into a playful arena where ideologies are permissibly inverted, and where silences may be explored. The 'Educated Rodents' of Pratchett's tale examine the dietary taboo of cannibalism that has not previously been problematic in rat societies. Griffiths' narrative exposes the cultural silences that surround bodily functions such as defecation, even as Zack's embarrassments are identifiably connected with rules of social conduct. Subsequent border interrogations encode child views of social anomalies even as binary
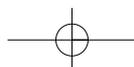
confusion between clean and unclean is debated by many characters in both texts.

Carnival introduces three aspects of ideological interrogation in the selected quests: event signification inverts official codes of behaviour; border areas that include official silences may be contested or transgressed; and taboo aspects of socio-cultural behaviour are explored. But authors Griffiths and Pratchett also promote alternative views where child focalisations are central to the interrogative intention. Because these images replicate the common feelings of powerlessness that readers associate with childhood, each text disengages from the nobility of Western humanist traditions that frame quest expectations. The texts encode laughter as a freedom that sanctions border transgression of cultural taboos. In narrative spaces which examine less-than-heroic childhood experiences, carnival's freedom permits laughter amid childhood blunders; carnival themes confront aspects of being 'child' that are frequently considered embarrassing; and, as codes of laughter defuse intensity, authors examine childhood's fear of social ineptitude in parodied events that encode failures and successes in comedic confusion.

Parodied intertexts feature significantly in Bakhtinian theory, but they also form a major component of humorous oral traditions noted in children's discourse (Opie 1996). Cited by Hutcheon as a major form of narratological self-reflexivity, parodic function is involved in a process of 'structural modelling … revisiting, replaying, inverting and trans-contextualising previous works' (1985, p.11).[ii] In what Stephens (1992), McCallum (1999), and Wilkie (1999) note as an intertextual capacity to form diverse and intersubjective reader positions in children's discourse, metafictive texts require that readers build a referential function that assists in the construction of comedic links. As McCallum (1999) further notes, the emergence of parodic play in relationships between focused texts and intertexts is of particular significance to children's texts. This correlation is important in humorous texts because the recognition of a modelled structure is essential to the recognition of comedic intent, and consequentially it is important that authors devise strategies to assist reader connection. Intertextuality is therefore strongly implicated in carnivalesque quest structures, and may combine both interrogative and deconstructive approaches to traditional mythic representations.

Because Western humanist ideologies of value are embedded in heroic codes, child quests commonly promote a strong belief in the worth and superior attributes of humankind. Whilst quest narratives commonly establish event structures that celebrate individual agency, nobility of cause, and valiant achievement, heroic subjectivities affirm a similar code of cultural values: honour, justice, truth, freedom, and courage. These quest traditions signify the child within an aristocratic heritage that invokes a knightly code. Conceptually identified by Stephens and McCallum (1998), the Western *metaethic* frames this collective influence, and is observed primarily in its structural power to work as 'an interlocked set' of metanarratives. But, because carnival's interrogative mode intentionally dismantles more exalted heroic
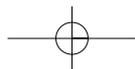
codes, and also because Griffiths and Pratchett promote quest codes that image child subjects, three conceptual aspects of the *metaethic* identified by Stephens and McCallum (1998, pp.6-8) are important to this examination of carnivalesque quests:

1. The Western metaethic establishes an ongoing capacity to draw upon legendary codes of honour (Stephens & McCallum 1998, p.7). Even as traditional quests reinforce socio-cultural ideals such as heroic nobility, courage, selflessness, and personal sacrifice, their legendary codes most strongly support an awareness of superiority that is established by the success of quest subjects in negotiating feats of individual human endeavour. Carnival subverts these ideals in comedic events that anchor the heroic subject to ordinary life. Human embodiment forms the comedic focus in Griffiths' text, whilst in Pratchett's narrative a troupe of players establish civic upheaval in a carnival masquerade of plots wherein each plotter pursues financial gain.

2. The Western metaethic builds an association between heroic subjectivity and historic traditions (Stephens & McCallum 1998, p.7). Children's fictions commonly negotiate the emerging awareness of self as moving from solipsism into an interactive social consciousness (McCallum 1999). Because the traditional paradigm is adapted to reflect this awakening in children's fictions, child subjects frequently negotiate growth transitions in quest narratives. Intertextual connections with historic culture maintain quest intensity even as the journey is marked by arduous trials, extreme settings, and heroic responses, but child quests additionally negotiate an emerging awareness of social being. Because the authors parody quest traditions, carnival modes not only undermine narrative intensity with comic reversals, but also include social interactions that image ordinary childhood fears, embarrassing moments, and the more common reticence to engage in personal sacrifice. Griffiths and Pratchett examine growth transitions that similarly negotiate social consciousness, but these exchanges are humorously signified and images of failure are as prevalent as those of success.

3. Western humanist values support a strong connection to the *metaethic* by structuring 'emotionally satisfying outcomes' (Stephens & McCallum 1998, p.6). Even as a playful interlocution is established between themes of folk humour and the associated Bakhtinian inversions of carnival space, carnivalesque quests reinterpret childhood's lack of agency in codes of laughter. Concluding images maintain the deconstruction of serious codes even as they signify humorous inversions: Griffiths' hero, Zack, establishes a truce with his own fractured embodiment even as he enlists as a 'bumfighter'; Pratchett's feline character, Maurice, leaves town to find another 'stupid looking kid' to involve in his devious plans; the educated rodents seek to establish a civil presence beneath city streets; and the 'stupid looking kid' considers options that will launch a musical career.

Though each author establishes intertextual connection with the Western *metaethic*, carnival spaces humorously integrate a propensity for play with the *refunctioning* of
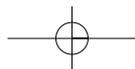
traditional quest structure. The Bakhtinian principles that define carnival strongly replicate metafictive and intertextual aspects that have influenced postmodern culture. Because their texts integrate childhood playfulness with reflexive authorial plotting, carnivalesque codes that feature in Griffiths' and Pratchett's narratives expose quest structure to postmodern revision. Whilst retaining distinct textual styles, both authors incorporate Bakhtinian concepts of carnival that refunction quest traditions in comic representations of the heroic paradigm.

Carnival's celebratory nature, associated codes of laughter, and festive parodic modes combine to disturb cultural boundaries. In what Bakhtin defines as a freedom of expression which is established by centuries of 'folk' celebratory patterns (1984), both carnivalesque quests inscribe a narrative childhood space involving a 'time-out' schema, cited in Stephens' investigation of interrogative children's fictions (1992, p.121). What Bakhtin defines as laughter's freedom, an essential component of folk culture, carnivalesque principles establish as an alternative tradition that is connected to medieval festival rites (1984, p.15). Carnivalesque quests consequently construct a narrative space where carnival codes subvert traditional interpretations in several ways: carnivalesque quests establish inversions of power; their discourses review the heroic paradigm because they interpret cultural practices in subversive codes of 'folk' humour; and quest codes establish new associations that link social and behavioural codes with festival celebrations that support the 'time-out' schema. In the carnivalesque quests of Pratchett and Griffiths, carnival space is also quest space, and the 'time-out' schema is sustained throughout each text.

As a central concept of quest signification in Griffith's text, Bakhtin's material lower bodily principle directs comic and grotesque event structures whilst similarly challenging established aesthetic norms of children's discourse. Integrating intertextual allusions to popular cultural icons of mythic quest structures, Griffiths inscribes parodic inversions in lower bodily stratum: carnivalesque fantasy settings consistently encode scatological signifiers; weaponry maintains a close association with grotesque faecal elements; and icons of power are inverted by corporeal metaphors. A prominent example of textual mimicry may be noted in the replacement of Tolkienesque quest imagery. Here the omniscient eye hovering above a dark volcanic tower of evil in *The Lord of the Rings* has been inverted by Bakhtinian carnivalesque allusion. The inversion humorously resignifies evil as the 'Great White Bum'; intertextual connections include carnival images of this 'Great White' as it emerges from a 'bumcano' holding sufficient explosive power to cause world annihilation. In this grotesque manner, Griffiths' carnivalesque inversions expose quest artifice in oppositional images that provoke further comparisons with Western humanist mythic traditions even as his text exposes unrealistic narrative expectations. Carnival laughter subverts these images of immense danger, notably the 'Great White Bum', in a manner that not only defuses fear, but also subverts intensity with comedic allegory. Because these reversals encode taboo elements in quest imagery that denigrates their parodied intertexts, Griffiths extends this

interrogation even as his text contests socially accepted discourse codes. Scatological images encode borderline or taboo areas of textual expression that expose the silences of socially accepted dialogue. Zack's non-heroic deliberations mark the beginnings of this intention as the author focalises childhood embarrassment in a fractured embodiment. The fear of being out of control is imaged in carnivalesque spectacle as Zack's 'bum' absconds and joins feral companions in the opening scene:

> As he ran, Zack cursed his luck. All he wanted was a bum that would settle down and just be a bum. A bum that wouldn't embarrass him in public at every possible opportunity. A bum that wouldn't make rude comments whenever he tried to talk to girls. At the very least he'd settle for a bum that didn't jump off his body and gas cats in the middle of the night. (Griffiths 2001, p.5)

Bodily inversions continue the grotesque themes that are initially imaged in the threat of a head/bum exchange. This type of comedic play is identified by Rupert Glasgow as a strategy that invokes audience recognition and associates with codes of humour. It provokes identification with the comic subject as 'a sort of affection built up … during the course of the narrative' and frames empathy in implied reader positions rather than a more negative derision or superiority (1997, p.65). Zack is subsequently engaged in a quest to restore his embodied self and his pursuit instigates a carnivalesque quest journey that is driven by this need for bodily reconciliation.

By comparison, Pratchett's interrogative strategy is more subtly narrated in parodic representations of childhood tales, and uses intertextuality to frame an emphasis on carnivalesque and metafictive elements. His text celebrates a childhood space of storytelling that draws reader attention to his narrative's playful artifice, and to its construction of heroic subjectivity. In what Pratchett introduces as a feline master-plotter named Maurice, who succeeds by a clever deviance that invokes the wisdom of deceit, carnival codes name as '*the trickster*', an inversion of the heroic prototype which carries comedic associations with the carnival motif. Bakhtin names clowns, fools, and characterisations of grotesque spectacle as cultural elements of a street code accompanying festival celebrations (1984, p.8). Consequently, even as he introduces Maurice, Pratchett's narrative invokes carnival, and signals the trickster as plotter as the journey into town begins. In this anthropomorphic quest, the feline protagonist, Maurice, is a mastermind and schemer. The character's plotting mimics authorial intention as Maurice narrates a devious intention to reduce the abundance of town council coffers. He enacts an inverted interpretation of the Pied Piper schema, which offers the town inhabitants an unnecessary service of trickery and extortion by first providing the municipality of Bad Blintz with rats (educated rodents), and then offering a piper (the 'stupid looking kid' with a tin whistle) to dance them out of town and into the river from which they swim to safety and are paid for their performance.

Interpretive play between signifier and signified forms another key strategy in parodic and carnivalesque discourse. Griffiths' text images bodily transitions in a
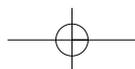
fractured subjectivity as Zack's emergent twelve-year-old masculinity is reformulated when his rebellious 'bum' absconds. Because a parodic interpretation of more traditional quest structures is Griffith's intention, carnival principles are prominent in the continual play of signifiers that encode inverted meanings which fluctuate between sense and nonsense. Zack's quest centres on the escape of his 'bum' and his sense of personal responsibility for its choices mirrors common societal expressions of parental helplessness concerning the wayward conduct of adolescent children. Though the superiority of replacement body parts is evident among other members of the team, the protagonist determines to reconcile his own fragmentation in a quest for bodily reconciliation that is textually over-signified by Bakhtin's material lower bodily principle. So, whilst quest reconciliations traditionally negotiate the trials of an emergent self, carnivalesque codes here invert transcendent aspirations, displace high ideals and re-engage the more concrete enigma of embodied existence. Zack endures a quest focused upon corporeal reconciliation that encodes experiences of growth and change familiar to twelve-year-old boys. Griffiths subliminally encodes issues of pubescent embodiment in scenes that carnivalise the traditional quest awakening with grotesque reversals. Even as carnivalesque principles of agency are assimilated bodily in an inverse bum/head representation of vocal power, the offending bum usurps Zack's freedom of expression and begins a quest for self-realisation. This dual quest journey also exploits grotesque reversals that further simulate Bakhtinian concepts: Zack presents in the guise of a clown, non-heroic, naïve, and often foolish; events are structured within carnival space where scatological scenic elements introduce a nightmarish surrealism; and parental influence is restricted to the occasional advice from Zack's grandmother regulating the washing of hands. In these festive reversals, Griffiths promotes Bakhtinian carnival space as a 'time-out' schema where taboo signification retains prominence.

In contrast, Pratchett's text incorporates childhood play within a festival of tales. Whilst traditional mythic structures have been utilised by both authors to frame their carnivalesque interpretations, Pratchett has constructed a carnival space inscribing metafictive strategies which focus on humorous inversions, mirror images, and intertextual reflexivity embedded in his celebration of plots. His opening page alerts readers to this artifice of plotting by invoking five plot connections: one is encoded in the chapter peritext, *Mr Bunnsy has an Adventure*;[iii] the second quotes Browning's text, *The Pied Piper of Hamlyn*; two characters then debate their view of the narrative's direction; whilst a fifth voice, the narrator, begins the official tale. The author humorously and consistently encodes intertextual referencing and metafictive mirroring devices to establish carnival space in this narrative.

Because this text features linguistic playfulness, Pratchett also builds complex contrapuntal plots wherein each emergent narrative strand is embedded in its predecessor: First, the peritext, framed to indicate the narrative's structural direction, establishes a *mise en abyme* device that heads each chapter of the larger narrative and parodies the event expectations of traditional quest structures. Beatrix Potter's text
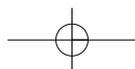
The Adventures of Peter Rabbit is a prominent intertext in Pratchett's *Mr Bunnsy has an Adventure*. Pratchett's use of this peritext structure also encodes both parodic and ironic perspectives and suggests a superior view of childhood naivety in its use of mimetic and intertextual signification even as quest codes are subverted.

> Ratty Rupert was the bravest rat that ever was. Everyone in Furry Bottom said so.
> (2002, p.79)

> Mr Bunnsy realised that he was a fat rabbit in a dark wood and wished he wasn't a rabbit, or at least not a fat one …   (2002, p.132)

The same intertext also re-emerges as a didactic masterplot which models utopian society: its gradual philosophical integration is treasured as a training manual by which the educated rodents may consider equal participation in human society. This anthropomorphic approach mirrors childhood struggles with rules of conduct, though at a deeper interrogative level the author examines the Western humanist ideologies that sustain civilised spaces whilst simultaneously offering an intersubjective view of quest representation. Pratchett humorously signifies an emerging rodent consciousness that examines and revises past behavioural patterns to derive a new estimate of societal responsibilities. In this narrative strand, the quest transition from rodent to Changeling interrogates cultural codes of social behaviour, but Pratchett also intends this construct as a comedic subplot which mirrors theories of emergent consciousness within human subjects. The author images child subjectivity even as he promotes this anthropomorphic self-reflection, with all its incumbent failures, as a social condition of growth.

In opening scenes that disclose his feline protagonist's narrative intention, Pratchett intertextually mirrors the structure of Browning's popular children's poem, *The Pied Piper of Hamlyn*. Browning's narration begins with a rat plague, and event focus is placed upon the piper's response to a failed contractual agreement that deprives the town of its children and mirrors the piper's deprivation of just payment. Pratchett's Maurice enacts a carnival pastiche: even as the text openly images and enacts authorial plotting, the author's intertextual allusion adapts another fairytale, *Puss-in-Boots*. At one level, Maurice's plan provides selected towns with a problematic rat population, offers the piper solution at a negotiated price, and retrieves the rat troupe downstream, ready for a new venture. At another level, the plotting inscribes a game enacted by players: child piper, anthropomorphised rodents, and entrepreneurial conductor, which directs narrative awareness to the performative actions of writers and the game of plotting fiction. In Pratchett's narrative playground, Maurice and his team soon encounter a Bad Blintz that already has its own deceitful schemes. Here the author's counterpoint weaves plotters and plots that introduce a carnival space of narrative patterns.

Pratchett's third intertextual strategy centres upon the metafictive referencing applied by the young female protagonist, Malicia Grim. The character's consistent application of Proppian principles to *Grimm's Fairy Tales* provides an analytical
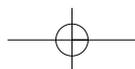
critique of emergent narrative possibilities that includes the actions and decisions of other protagonists. Malicia asks Maurice:

'… so you really are a magical cat, then?' […]

'Oh, yes, that's right, magical,' he said. […] For two fish heads he'd be anything for anybody.

'Probably belonged to a witch, I expect, with a name like Griselda or one of those names,' said the girl, putting the fish-heads on another saucer.

'Yeah, right, Griselda, right,' said Maurice, not raising his head.

'Who lived in a gingerbread cottage in the forest, probably.'   (Pratchett 2002, p.64)

Using a similar strategy to the rodent philosophers, Malicia Grim frames all decisions upon her (maternal) forebears' research in the analysis of fairytale patterns. These principles are applied, and their solutions are assumed to be viable as Malicia continues a personal quest to solve town crime.

Both Pratchett and Griffiths use comedic signification to invert heroic struggles and consequently undermine humanist ideals of nobility. Because their carnivalesque quests reconstruct childhood experiences of powerlessness, both texts represent heroic subjectivities within carnivalesque codes where magical transformations into positions of strength are absent. Griffiths' principal focaliser, Zack, is constantly humiliated by a very personal disembodied bum rebellion; his inept efforts are exposed as foolish by the superior efficiency of his female rescuer, Eleanor; and his bodily fragmentation inverts heroic representation, clowning the quest. Similarly, the continuing negotiations and interactions with his feral escapee invert quest challenges by grounding the traditional journey of self-discovery in Bakhtinian principles of lower bodily stratum. Griffiths' concrete imagery merges carnival with quest even as parodied events undermine narrative expectations, as Zack's unwilling acquiescence to corporeal needs directs his quest journey of self recovery through landscapes inscribed by scatological signifiers.

'But what about my bum?' said Zack.

'What about it?' she said.

'It's my bum,' said Zack. 'I want it back. I know it's a bit out of control right now, but I'm kind of attached to it.'

'Not any more you're not,' said Eleanor. 'What you need is a prosthetic bum.' […]
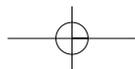
She rummaged around in the compartment underneath the seat and pulled out a bum. A clear wobbly silicon bum. She threw it to Zack.

'Here!' she said. 'Try this.' […]

'But I don't want a false bum,' said Zack, throwing it down on the floor of the bum-mobile. 'I want my real bum.' (Griffiths 2001, p.47)

Normal childhood abilities are similarly encoded into quest expectations through
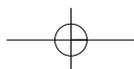
Pratchett's construction of human characters, Keith and Malicia. Continually and unsuccessfully, Keith is offered alternative schemata for emergent heroic and miraculous power, as Malicia cites the Grimm's heritage of narrative plots and Maurice promotes heroic tradition.

> Keith looked up. His eyes narrowed. He got to his feet. Here it comes, thought Maurice. He's going to leap forward with superhuman strength because he's so angry and they're going to wish they had never been born …

> Keith leapt forward with ordinary human strength, landed one punch on Rat-catcher 1 and was smacked to the floor again by a big, brutal, sledgehammer blow.

> (Pratchett 2002, p.125)

Similarly, Malicia is confronted with her own lack of agency when her collection of narrative potential proves ineffectual, illusory, and thus, unable to effect a rescue of the pair from the Rat-catchers' power. She questions Keith:

> 'And you don't have any secret powers?'

> 'No.'

> 'Are you sure? The moment I saw you, I thought: he's got some amazing power that will probably manifest itself when he's in dire trouble. I thought: no-one could be as useless as that unless it was a disguise.' […]

> There was a silence for a while and then Malicia said, 'You know, in many ways I don't think this adventure has been properly organized.' […]

> 'Malicia, do you understand? This isn't a story,' said Keith, as patiently as he could. '[…] Real life isn't a story. There isn't some kind of … of magic that keeps you safe and makes crooks look the other way and not hit you too hard and tie you up next to a handy knife and not kill you. Do you understand?'

> There was some more dark silence. (Pratchett 2002, pp.146-47)

Pratchett's plotting is itself a performance, parading carnivalesque and metafictive strategies, and further promoting reflexivity to successfully distance readers from focalised positions. By exposing fictional artifice in this manner, his narrative celebration structures playfulness even as it plays with structures.

Both authors review cultural metanarratives of the Western *metaethic* in their concluding images: 'time-out' interrogative strands find settlement; individual agency is reframed in peer acceptance; and confidence is restored with the realisation of community strength. Inversions of power are also evident: reversals in binaries of size establish co-operation and equality between anthropomorphic rodents (small stature), and humans (larger stature); civic limitations are further deconstructed as respect for a growing Changeling intelligence is confirmed. Carnival space maintains a narrative presence, though quest closures offer some structured return to normalcy: evil forces are defeated and disbanded; and negotiations for peaceful co-existence are framed as paramount to continued existence. Significantly, both writers prioritise
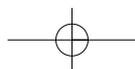
civil responsibility for group identity above individual achievement, and, by encoding the quest journey in a dominant need for peer group acceptance, each text re-establishes community codes that define social and moral conduct. The refunctioning of quest codes centres upon laughter's freedom, that Bakhtinian anchor which defuses intensity, destabilises official codes, and interrogates Western humanist ideologies of value. Although traditional metanarratives of trust, justice, and freedom have been re-examined from a carnivalesque perspective, each narrative retains the struggle for integrity within the quest.

Carnival's taboo signification provokes most debate in the exploration of boundaries. Because the quest's structural intent is levelled and heroic functions are encoded in clowning and mimicry, Griffiths' text deliberately reverses higher quest codes. Bakhtin cites this reversal as bringing all to the material sphere (1984, p.20). In contravening social codes of silence, the prominent and strategic use of lower bodily stratum invokes a variety of responses – shock, horror, anxiety, laughter, and distaste – that centres upon incessant scatological and grotesque signification, which is further cited by Glasgow as being, for some people, 'contaminative' to literary form (1997, p.161). Childhood codes of play similarly share this ambivalence, and some further indications of concern are evident in the artistic licence afforded to Griffiths' Australian text cover. His comedic intention is similarly twofold: first, because Bakhtinian carnival images bodily fragmentation, Griffiths combines playful signification with a parodied structure that defuses the intensity of quest incentives; and also, at a deeper level, Bakhtinian carnivalesque images the silences of taboo within its code of laughter where childhood's corporeal experiences similarly find expression. His text particularly intends to promote a child view of heroic subjectivity. Even as elements of unofficial, scatological humour enjoyed and employed by children retain discourse veracity chiefly in an oral code advantaged by the immediacy of playground culture, carnivalesque modes maintain laughter's presence in the margins of childhood cultural experience. Any translation of carnival expression into children's literary discourse, though intrinsically humorous to children and identified by Michael Cart (1995, p.10) as a delight in the exploration of the forbidden, consequently engages the signification of taboo subjects, issues, and expressions socially encoded as unspeakable. Carnivalesque texts raise problematic issues of age appropriateness, aesthetic discourse construction, and moral value.

Nonetheless, interpreting and refunctioning quest imagery through a combined lens of Bakhtinian and postmodern metafictive strategies advantages laughter's code by creating and encoding playfulness into narrative childhood space. Quest transformations in the two texts offer comedic review and inscribe their re-alignment into cultural contexts where aspects of courage, endurance, trust, and co-operation have taken priority over the singular achievements of more traditional heroic representations. Within this childhood space, carnivalesque modes of laughter defuse feelings of inferiority and displace heroic ideals in order to emphasise the intersubjective priorities and emergent social responsibilities of childhood experience.
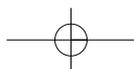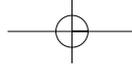
Notes

i Linda Hutcheon uses the term *refunctioning* to indicate the evolution or transformation of literary form whereby narratological functions are modulated allowing newer structures to develop without destroying connection to previous forms.

ii Hutcheon (1985, p.11) further suggests that transcontextualisation is more than quotation, and activates a process of structural adaptation as a discourse function of parodic forms.

iii Pratchett (2002, p.9) peritext: 'One day when he was naughty, Mr Bunnsy looked over the hedge into Farmer Fred's garden and it was full of fresh green lettuces. Mr Bunnsy, however, was not full of lettuces. This did not seem fair.' (From: *Mr Bunnsy has an Adventure*.)

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