Terry Pratchett and the Johnny Maxwell Trilogy: Death, War and Laughter

by

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~*Abstract*~

The aim of this dissertation was to critically analyse Terry Pratchett's *Johnny Maxwell* trilogy in terms of three areas, namely Pratchett's use of various fantasy techniques; how comedy and satire function as distancing mechanisms; and how fantasy and comedy function in accordance with Erikson's and Bettelheim's theories concerning identity formation in adolescent and child readers. The primary aim of this dissertation was therefore to provide a literary reading of Pratchett's trilogy, *Only You Can Save Mankind* (1992), *Johnny and the Dead* (1993) and *Johnny and the Bomb* (1996). However, it also acknowledges the possible didactic and developmental benefits of the books.

The trilogy is entertaining, exciting, witty and child-friendly (Baldry cited in Butler, James and Mendlesohn, 2004:41), but it is also clear that Pratchett endeavours to challenge his child readers by presenting everyday situations from foreign and unusual perspectives. This dissertation argues that, as Baldry states, Pratchett 'expands the thinking of his young readers with new ideas or unconventional ways of looking at familiar ideas' which will ultimately help them consider their own lives in alternative and perhaps even more meaningful ways (quoted in Butler, James and Mendlesohn, 2004:41).

The idea of 'distancing techniques' is vital for this study, because it proposes that readers can be transported from their Primary Realities (in which they live and function on a daily basis) into Secondary Realities or worlds which are unlike the Primary Reality in form and composition, but not unlike them in the way they function. Once this removal has taken place, bibliotherapists argue that readers are able to look back upon their primary world with

new insight into their sense of industry and identity and also into the way their primary reality functions and the way they function within it. J.R.R. Tolkien (1985:35) explains that '…fact becomes that which is manipulated by the fantasy writer to produce a keener perception of the primary world and a greater ability to survive in it'.

Owing to Pratchett's specific comic brand of fantasy, a discussion of his comic and satiric techniques is also presented. Part of this discussion again concentrates on the ability of comedy to act as a distancing mechanism, while another discusses how Pratchett uses comedy to satirise certain aspects of society. As Bergson (1911:17) states in his book, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic,* laughter is a way of 'correcting men's manners'. Pratchett thus makes use of various comic techniques to mock and ridicule certain features of society, such as its obsession with television, its materialism, or its obsession with computer games.

This research is important as the fantasy genre is often considered to be mere popular fiction, to which parents and school teachers are frequently averse. However, with the increase in sales of fantasy works over the past decade, especially in adolescent and children's fantasy, study of the genre and its possible influence on readers is becoming increasingly necessary. This dissertation undertakes to show that fantasy works can be both complex and satisfying literary works while they also have a positive influence on child readers.

~*Key Terms*~

Children's Literature

Fantasy

Terry Pratchett

'Johnny Maxwell'

Identity Formation

Primary/Secondary World

Comedy

Satire

War

Distancing

~Contents~

~*Introduction*~

> *Fairy tales do not give a child his first idea of bogey. What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of the bogey. The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon.*
>
> (G.K. Chesterton, 1910:130)

In his book, *On Other Worlds* (1966:34), C.S. Lewis states: '[W]hen I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty, I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up'. Lewis addresses an important point here which all researchers of children's literature must take into consideration. This is that children's literature is sometimes seen primarily as the occupation of children and not as something in which adults and especially academics should take an interest. In fact, when adults and academics do take an interest, it is seen as 'childish', as Lewis explains, and the topic is considered unworthy of academic study. However, as is shown throughout this dissertation, children's literature can have a profound influence on children's development of self and can assist children in being more aware of their position in society. Children's literature has a vitally important didactic function which can influence a child's psychological growth and development as well the development of his/her identity – all of which make it worthy of study.

The question is, however, does children's literature have aesthetic value? Maria Nikolajeva (2005:xi) thinks so. She argues that children's literature, in addition to being didactic, is a form of art as well as a tool which can be used for educational purposes. All literature, she maintains, both adult and children's literature, is an art form and a 'didactic, or rather ideological, vehicle'. It is simply that the 'ideological, or pedagogical intention is often more explicit in children's literature'. However, this concerns 'grade', not 'nature' (Nikolajeva, 2005:xii). The aim of this dissertation then, is to engage in a literary reading of the Johnny Maxwell books. Although I do acknowledge didactic intention and possible developmental benefits, my focus is on the books as works of literature.

Nikolajeva (2005:xvii) argues that although children's literature may be seen by many as an inferior form of literature, it still has much in common with mainstream adult literature: 'It reflects, albeit indirectly, our own reality; it conveys ideological values; it has strong potential to affect the mind; and it also appeals to our emotions.' Some critics may view children's literature as subordinate to adult literature due to its historical and social context, its strong educational associations and its implied audience, but Nikolajeva (2005:xvii) strongly maintains that it is not in any way inferior to adult literature, it is merely different. If this idea is accepted, then critics must accept that children's literature has an aesthetic of its own, which needs to be studied in order to gain a sense of how it functions and how it affects its readers. We should thus see children's literature as one of many kinds of literature, but also attempt to point out features specific to it (Nikolajeva, 2005:xvii).

One such feature is the overt didacticism of much of children's literature. Sheila Egoff (1981) explains that children's literature began as a didactic form of literature which attempted to educate children about moral issues and social values. Thus, she says, writing

for children, in any genre, has tended towards being a mirror of the reigning social concepts and conditions of the day. The didactic function of children's literature has been described as 'stronger than any that has occurred in the history of adult literature' (Kaye, 1980:142), and Nikolajeva (1996:3) argues that 'the principal difference between children's literature and adult literature [is] the pedagogic thrust of the former'.

Child Identity Development

Theorists such as Erik Erikson and Bruno Bettelheim believe that children's literature can have a profound effect on the development of a child's identity. Spink (quoted in Stuart Marriott, 1998:9) states that we are 'at least in part, what we have read', and Watkins (1992:183) explains that 'the stories we tell our children, the narratives we give them to make sense of cultural experience, constitute a kind of mapping, maps of meaning that enable our children to make sense of the world. They contribute to children's sense of identity, an identity that is simultaneously personal and social'. But what is identity? According to psychoanalytical theory, identity is a construction, and if this is true, the didactic use of children's novels can be further explained. In an essay on identity, Erikson (1980:20) states that the superego is influenced by the environment in which it develops. He says that '…what is operating [in the superego] is not only the personal qualities of these parents but also everything that produced a determining effect upon themselves, the tastes and standards of the social class in which they live and the characteristics and traditions of the race from which they spring'. If the environment in which children grow up affects their superego, and if the superego has a disciplinary effect over the ego, then one can deduce that the environment in which a child grows up has a lasting impact on the ego and thus also on identity. In respect of the concept of 'environment', however, one should note that the books

children read may be considered part of their surrounding environment and so also have an impact on identity development.

The Johnny Maxwell Series

This dissertation studies three of Terry Pratchett's children's books, collectively known as the Johnny Maxwell trilogy, and focuses specifically on how Pratchett uses fantasy, comedy and satire for social commentary, as well as for didactic purposes (the books are thus not merely important for their entertainment value). Sir Terence David John Pratchett, better known as Terry Pratchett, is a fantasy writer who, as of July 2013, has sold over 85 million books worldwide in 37 languages. He was the world's bestselling author in the 1990s, was made Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1998 for services to literature, and received the Carnegie Medal for children's fiction in 2001 (Terry Pratchett, 2011:n.p.). Pratchett is perhaps best known for his adult fantasy books, *The Discworld Series.* He explains that the Discworld is a fantastical world which resembles a pizza. It is a spherical disc which rests on the backs of four elephants which, in turn, stand on top of a giant turtle, known as the Great A'Tuin (Pratchett and Briggs, 2003:47). The Discworld forms the backdrop for all of Pratchett's Discworld novels, of which there are 37. The novels include fantastical characters such as dwarfs, trolls, golems, gnomes, the undead, elves, gods, witches, wizards, gargoyles, fauns, furies, goblins, gorgons and even orang-utan librarians who all live in a world governed by magic and Pratchett's own personal brand of physics.

The Johnny Maxwell trilogy, however, does not form part of Pratchett's Discworld series and is aimed at a broad readership though it is specifically marketed for children. The

trilogy consists of *Only You Can Save Mankind* (1992), *Johnny and the Dead*[1] (1993) and *Johnny and the Bomb*[2] (1996). All three books recount the various adventures of Johnny, the books' protagonist, and his friends Wobbler, Yo-less, Bigmac and Kirsty. In *Only You Can Save Mankind*[3], Johnny must save an alien race, the ScreeWee, from human attack. The ScreeWee control an alien fleet which resides inside a computer game and the human attackers are game players. Johnny's imagination and his ability to see beyond the obvious allow him access to Game Space in which he helps provide safe passage for the ScreeWee as they leave the gaming world. In *Johnny and the Dead,* Johnny finds he has the ability to see and speak to the dead buried in the local cemetery. In this second instalment, Johnny must save the graveyard from a property development company wishing to build an office block on the cemetery's grounds. Finally, in *Johnny and the Bomb,* Johnny and his friends are transported back in time, and find themselves in 1941 – World War II. This time Johnny must prevent the people of Paradise Street (his town's main street) from a bombing. However, as he soon discovers, changing the future has serious consequences.

Significantly, Pratchett's commentary in these novels is coloured by the voice of his child protagonist, Johnny. The result is to develop a more complex apprehension on the reader's part, rather than present neatly-parcelled truths, the author allows both his protagonist and the reader to struggle towards self-realized insights. His child characters, although naïve, often act in profoundly perceptive ways, serving as tools through which Pratchett explores difficult subject matter. By voicing his criticisms through child characters, Pratchett converts his commentary into simple and easily understandable remarks and

[1] Referred to as *Dead* for in-text citations

[2] Referred to as *Bomb* for in-text citations

[3] Referred to as *Mankind* for in-text citations

explanations. This makes it possible for Pratchett to focus on a multitude of concerns in his Johnny books, ranging from divorce to death. Don Elgin argues that child readers are transported into a Secondary Reality when reading, and it is possible to argue that contained within this 'other reality' is emotional truth which transcends physical reality (Elgin 1985:33). Thus it can be shown that Pratchett is able to use this emotional reality to bring to life pain, fear, and death, which are part of the physical world. If child characters are able to face this fear, pain and death in the Secondary Reality (the world of the book), then perhaps child readers will also believe they are able to do so in their Primary Reality (the world in which they live).

Interestingly, the types of social issue that Pratchett chooses to address in his Johnny Maxwell books are often sober, even when considered through adult readers' eyes. The inclusion of certain subject matter in children's literature (such as death, war and divorce in the Johnny books), even if it is for didactic purposes, may be terrifying for child readers. However, it is still vital. As Clive Leach explains, schools in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and other countries have even begun teaching 'emotional resilience' to their young students owing to their recognition that 'in the current climate of social, political and economic upheaval young people need to be more resilient than ever' (quoted in Nancy Lesko and Susan Talburt, 2012:16). The Johnny Maxwell books, which this dissertation addresses, are prime examples of texts fostering resilience, because Pratchett includes death, war, divorce and social decay as points of focus. But can these issues, despite happy endings, negatively impact on a child? Catherine Storr (1971:146) maintains that children must be allowed to feel fear, '...meet terror and pity and evil'. She quotes Walter de la Mare who states that 'children [are] impoverished if they [are] protected from everything that might frighten them' (Storr, 1971:146). Storr (1971:146) further explains this point:

> I would add to that the worldwide folk story of *The Boy Who Didn't Know Fear.* This boy is a sort of guileless simpleton, of the kind often met with in folklore, who is brave because he doesn't foresee dangers. He can spend a night in the belfry with hobgoblins without a tremor because until he is actually attacked (when he defends himself) he recognises no threat. In fact, he is *without imagination,* that fatal human quality which makes cowards of us all. (my emphasis)

Storr clearly links the imagination to cowardice which may seem negative, especially in relation to literature in which the imagination is vital. However, the imagination is redeemed later in the article when Storr (1971:147) explains that there is a human need for understanding beyond what one can merely see. This need is the power to 'speculate' and 'fantasise' (Storr, 1971:147). Ultimately, a child must be allowed to daydream and wonder since, as Carl Jung (cited in Storr, 1971: 147) argues, the power to speculate and fantasise are important parts of identity formation. However, if this is allowed, a child will inevitably have nightmares too and without guidance the imagination may become warped, resulting in the worsening of nightmares (Storr, 1971:147).

The imagination might lead to nightmares which may seem negative, but as Storr explains, by the time children reach the reading age, there must be a story. Where there is a story, there must be conflict, and where there is conflict, there must be good and evil. Good is not difficult to characterise since it is representative of child readers themselves. The question, however, is how one presents evil without instilling fear. Storr (1971:147) offers some options. The first she calls the 'Ian Fleming' style in which the crooks are 'totally evil, totally wrong, totally unbelievable' and, hence, lose their credibility. The other option is to 'de-humanise' the enemy, and make the hero face Fate which manifests as the forces of nature or as the evils of society. In the Johnny books, Pratchett presents evil as de-humanised entities such as the gaming industry and the media, a faceless property development company

and society's inability to see the importance of history. However, although Pratchett uses de-humanisation as a way of representing evil, his main tool of criticism remains humour, which is yet another approach that Storr highlights.

Storr (1971:149) explains that if a child can laugh at his enemy or a villain, the power of the villain, with his/her/its capacity for horror, is greatly reduced. Humour, however, still allows the author to use the villain as a necessary force to drive the plot forward. Storr maintains that if we are going to tell children about fear, we must give it its proper importance, just as we would beauty, love or friendship. However, the only way to succeed in this task is to address the child's 'inner ear' so as to evoke in the child a 'shock of recognition which means the discovery of a fresh aspect of oneself' (Storr, 1971:151). This is vital because as an important aspect of identity formation, children must discover that evil is not something at a distance from themselves, but it is rather something that is both within and without. Therefore, 'by understanding [their] own feelings [they] have the power over evil...that understanding gives' (Storr, 1971:151). In such a way, Pratchett, as well as children's authors in general, not only provide children with a knowledge of good and evil, but they also equip children with the ability to deal with this knowledge and make it a tolerable part of life. 'We are showing that [evil] can be used as one of the elements of creative art to make a pattern in which both the good and the bad are essential. This is the true magic' (Storr, 1971:152). The use of fear in children's books such as the Johnny Maxwell series can thus serve to teach children something about the nature of the impersonal evils which they are very likely one day to encounter.

Terry Pratchett, who is the focus of this dissertation, is most often associated with comic fantasy. What many readers are unaware of, however, is that Pratchett uses his

personal brand of comic fantasy (both in his adult and children's novels) as a platform from which to voice his criticisms of society and the way it functions. This dissertation thus aims to correct this lack of awareness and reveal that Pratchett's humour and fantasy function to underscore more serious and pertinent concerns. In Pratchett's own words (in accepting the Carnegie Medal), 'humour has its uses. Laughter can get through the keyhole while seriousness is still hammering on the door. New ideas can ride in on the back of a joke, old ideas can be given an added edge' (Pratchett, 2001:n.p.). In fact, Pratchett's thinking about fantasy is very similar to that of G.K. Chesterton. In an article he wrote for 'Concatenation', the former annual magazine distributed at the British national and European Science Fiction conventions, Pratchett states: 'If you're told about vampires, it's a good thing to be told about stakes at the same time' and he explicitly refers to Chesterton in saying that 'the objection to fairy stories is that they tell children there are dragons. But children have always known there are dragons. Fairy stories tell children that dragons can be killed' (Pratchett, 1994:n.p.).

I have specifically chosen to study the Johnny Maxwell series as these books allow for a focused analysis of Pratchett's use of comedy, fantasy and satire to comment critically on society. He uses fantasy and comedy as mechanisms to make his criticisms more readily perceivable. In addition, I discuss Pratchett's use of satirical comedy in the Johnny books to arouse laughter, not merely for entertainment (although this aspect is important for its function) but rather to comment on moral or social values. I also examine whether child readers are able to perceive and comprehend Pratchett's off-beat and often ironic sense of humour as well as his use of intertextuality and satire. To answer this, I turn to Christine Wilkie-Stibbs's (1999) discussion of intertextuality in her article, *Intertextuality and the Child Reader.*

Wilkie-Stibbs (1999:169) refers to Kristeva's adaptation of the term, 'intertextuality' and her recognition of the fact that texts can only have meaning because of their dependence on other texts. In other words, literature is the convergence of several different discourses that are 'absorbed', 'transformed' and gain meaning because they are situated in a 'circular network' of mutuality which Kristeva calls the 'intertextual space' (Wilkie-Stibbs, 1999:168). Pratchett's texts thus gain meaning because of their dependence upon a multitude of other sources, the most obvious sources being the genres of fantasy, comedy, satire and even science. For example, Pratchett names the bag lady who can travel through time Mrs Tachyon. A 'tachyon' is a theoretical particle that has the ability to travel faster than the speed of light. Pratchett also makes various references to World War II in *Johnny and the Bomb,* and a working knowledge of the War adds depth to readers' understanding of the story. Another example can be found in Mrs Tachyon's jumbled speech. She mentions 'dollypots', 'thunderbirds' and 'sid', all slang terms taken from different periods in history. If readers can recognise her anachronistic use of these terms, then they might guess that Mrs Tachyon is a time traveller, a knowledge which immediately endows her speech and her character with a new dimension. In addition, Pratchett foregrounds certain information which encourages intertextual reading by incorporating references to computer games such as *Asteroids* (1979), *Starglider* (1988) and *Wing Commander* (1990) (in which players become fighter pilots whose primary aim is to destroy alien fleets), horror movies such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *The Evil Dead* (1981), as well as historical events such as World War I, World War II, the Gulf War and so on.

In addition, humour in the Johnny Maxwell series largely comes from the fact that Pratchett often diverges from the fantastical structure, giving well-known fantastical features a more contemporary twist. For example, the portal in *Only You Can Save Mankind* leads

Johnny into a computer game, rather than a mystical, magical world as is found in the Narnia books (1950 – 1956). In *Johnny and the Dead* the malignant presence which Johnny has to defeat is a property development company, public apathy, and the commercialisation of public spaces and public life instead of a fantastical wizard like Voldemort in the Harry Potter books (1997 – 2007). In *Johnny and the Bomb* Johnny is able to move through time using a poor woman's shopping bags which seems far more mundane than ghosts who move a character backwards and forwards in time as in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* ([1843] 1991). However, the question remains: do child readers have the ability to perceive and comprehend the use of intertextuality and the depth it gives to Pratchett's tales?

Wilkie-Stibbs (1999:168) argues that children are capable of 'meaning-making' during reading and of perceiving and comprehending the use of intertextuality. She states that teachers are increasingly becoming involved in the use of intertextuality in children's literature as a means by which to build 'interpretive communities among young readers', and to allow readers to engage in text creation and production.

Jonathan Culler (1975:139), also referred to in Wilkie-Stibbs (1999:170), describes the integration of texts as a process of *vraisemblance* (likelihood):

> ...through *vraisemblance,* readers are able to identify the set of literary norms and the salient features of a work by which to locate genre, and also to anticipate what they might expect to find in fictional worlds. Through *vraisemblance* the child reader has unconsciously learned that the fictional worlds in literature are representations and constructions which refer to other texts that have been normalised: that is, those texts that have been absorbed into the culture and are regarded as natural.

Wilkie-Stibbs (1999:171) adds to this argument by comparing the situation of fantasy to Barthes's notion of 'lost codes'. The fantastic is intelligible because it builds on already 'embedded discourses' which happened in a different time and place. The fantastic is 'part of the sedimented folk memory of discourse' and it functions simply because other tales like it have already existed. 'Children's intertextual experience is peculiarly achronological, so the question about what sense children make of a given text when the intertextual experience cannot be assumed, is important' (Wilkie-Stibbs, 1999:171).

The theoretical basis of this dissertation can perhaps best be summed up by C.S. Lewis's (1966:10) remark that one of the functions of art is to '…present what the narrow and desperately practical perspectives of real life exclude'. With this in mind, as well as Pratchett's use and comedy and fantasy in his writing, I consider how comic fantasy can be used, not only to highlight social criticism, but also to show how both comedy and fantasy as individual genres can be used to reveal 'what the narrow and desperately practical perspectives of real life exclude'. Firstly, I discuss the importance of children's literature in helping children deal with issues of identity, industry and even repressed emotion. Secondly, I consider how fantasy acts to remove child readers from their primary realities, allowing them to achieve a greater sense of awareness of the world in which they live. Thirdly, I discuss how comedy functions in ways similar to fantasy in its ability to assist children in gaining new perspectives on their lives.

The main source for my discussion of children's literature in general is Bettelheim (1976), who is a child psychologist best-known for his work on emotionally disturbed children and who also has written prolifically about the effect of children's literature on child readers. Bettelheim's argument in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) is the main focus of this

dissertation, as it is Bettelheim's primary exposition of the effects of literature on children. His ideas largely revolve around the concept that all children must, and most likely will, eventually learn to *deal* with the environment in which they grow, the problems of their society, as well as their own 'inner problems'. However, they will only learn to *cope* if their 'inner resources', such as a sense of identity and industry, permit them to do so (the concepts of identity and industry are discussed in detail later in the chapter). For this, a child needs some form of guidance or '...ideas on how to bring his [/her] inner house into order, and on that basis be able to create order in his [/her] life' (Bettelheim, 1976:5). Bettelheim believes that this 'guidance' can be found in fairy tales and fantasies, which are the archetypal constructs that can assist children with achieving a sense of order and can support children in the development of a sense of industry as well as identity[4]. Although Bettelheim primarily focuses on younger children (most often under the age of 5), I believe that his theories apply equally to older, pre-adolescent children, and more specifically, the age group at which the Johnny Maxwell books are aimed (ages 6 – 12).

Pratchett and Bibliotherapy

A more contemporary take on Bettelheim's ideas is the concept of bibliotherapy, as explained by Hugh Crago (1999) in his chapter, 'Healing Texts: Bibliotherapy and

[4] There has been some criticism of Bettelheim from critics such as Alan Dundes (1987) (who accuses Bettelheim of plagiarising from Julius Heuscher's 'A Psychiatric Study of Fairy Tales' [1963]) as well as Maria Tatar (2009) and Jack Zipes (1979). Zipes (1979:180) states that Bettelheim has disseminated 'ideas about therapy and literature that are misleading' and that he makes a disproportionate argument for the 'therapeutic power' of folk tales even though he bases it on 'false notions about the original intent of Freudian psychoanalytic theory and the literary quality of folk tales' (Zipes, 1979:181). Finally, Zipes (1979:192) comments that Bettelheim discusses the effects of fairy tales in a decontextualized way and that what is actually necessary is an investigation into the 'possibilities for comprehension by children in the light of the relationship of a specific audience to the tale at a given moment in history'. However, despite these criticisms, Bettelheim's central assertion that fairy tales provide psychological guidance/instruction rather than mere entertainment has remained largely uncontested (Brown, 2012:41).

Psychology'. In this text, Crago (1999:181) explains that bibliotherapy is one of many techniques used to help both adults and children during periods of emotional stress. The very concept of bibliotherapy finds its place in the *dulcis et utile* debate in which academics argue whether books function usefully or instructively, or whether they exist merely as a means of entertainment and pleasure (Crago, 1999:183). Within the study of children's literature, this debate has focused particularly on fairy tales which have often been attacked as being 'morally dangerous or politically incorrect, defended as pure escapism and re-conceptualised as "morally instructive" or psychologically growthful' (Crago, 1999:183). However, Crago (1999:183) argues that one would be hard pressed to find a book that does not both delight and instruct and that the *dulcis et utile* debate is centred more on 'moral uneasiness'. This is due to the force with which readers immerse themselves in stories which have, in turn, made them want to justify their involvement in something seemingly so unrelated to the 'hard business of daily life'. Whatever argument a reader may find more convincing, Crago (1999:184) argues that one cannot ignore the fact that stories do indeed affect individuals. Young children instinctively sing songs, chant and use monologues and other forms of 'phatic' expression in order to imitate adult speech, singing and story (Crago, 1999:184). Although these vocal forms of 'phatic' expression may seem to disappear as children grow, they actually only become subconscious; Becker (1972) and Klinger (1971) (quoted in Crago, 1999:184) describe these as the 'inner newsreel'. Adults may not sing or chant out loud when sitting at work or on their lunch break, but their minds do 'run an endless stream of loosely arranged images, thoughts and inner dialogues – a waking version of dreaming' (Crago, 1999:185). This is the first factor or requirement for bibliotherapy.

The second has to do with the concept of 'ludic' reading which is an 'absorbed' state of reading in which the reader willingly becomes oblivious to the world around them (Crago,

1999:185). These two concepts together form the so-called 'optimal conditions' for bibliotherapy, which occur when a reader (child or adult) '…already capable of ludic reading (many readers do not read in this deeply absorbed manner) encounters a text (fiction or non-fiction, pot-boiler or classic) which matches his or her developmental stage and recurrent inner themes' (Crago, 1999:185). However, as Crago (1999:185) explains, the 'merging' of reader and text is more likely to occur when the 'correspondence' is partly or wholly metaphorical. Books can thus be used for therapeutic reasons because of the human affinity for story as well as our 'symbol-making nature: our very language is strongly metaphorical and our dreaming uses the language of symbol and analogy' (Crago, 1999:185). Therefore, when we read texts we like, they have the potential to become shaping influences over our future 'self-concept' and 'life path' (Crago, 1999:186). As Crago (1999:186) explains, 'Key texts may then become "potentiating devices", eliciting from individuals the full development of what is already latent within them, but which might never flower otherwise'. As such, it can be said that the use of books for therapeutic reasons is valid firstly because reading narratives that are either literally or figuratively comparable to one's own problems or general condition have the potential to provide readers, adults or children, with a language in which they may begin to talk about what has previously been unclear to them. In addition, texts can be a form of comfort in helping readers feel that they are not alone in their struggles. This can be quite clearly seen in the Johnny books. Child readers are presented with a variety of characters each with their own struggles (Johnny struggles with divorce in the family, Bigmac struggles with gang life, Yo-less has to deal with racism, and Wobbler has to deal with being teased about his weight). Importantly, however, the child characters show child readers how these struggles can be dealt with even if they cannot be eradicated. Books can also provide readers with insights into their problems, and even 'a measure of integration of previously disowned feelings' (Crago, 1999:187). Lastly, books can provide

suggestions, metaphorical or literal, for ways to resolve readers' problems – 'suggestions which may bypass conscious resistance on the sufferer's part' (Crago, 1999:187). But what exactly are the so-called problems or conditions that readers, and more specifically child readers, may suffer from?

Erikson (1902 – 1994)[5] was a developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst best known for his theories on social development. A student of Sigmund Freud, Erikson largely bases his social theories on Freud's psychosexual assumptions. Freud posits that there are five psychosexual developmental stages, which account for the various periods of sexual development through which each individual passes from childhood to adulthood. Erikson (1980:128), however, expands on this, positing eight stages of social developmental through which an individual progresses during his/her life. Essentially, Erikson (1980) sees development, beginning with birth, as 'a gradual unfolding of the personality through phase-specific psychosocial crises' (Erikson, 1980:128). According to Merriam-Webster (Psychosocial, 2011:n.p.) 'psychosocial' is defined as the merging of 'both social and psychological aspects' or the relating of 'social conditions to mental health'. Essentially then, the term psychosocial conveys the fact that social development, and thus also society, has an effect on mental processes. Individual psychological development thus has an effect on a child's behaviour and social interaction. Each stage of social development, however, comprises a psychosocial crisis, in which individuals experience various forms of instability in their social development which risk affecting the continuity of their social and

[5] Recently, Erikson has been criticized for having 'unclear or imprecise formulations of identity' (Kroger, 2005:34). In addition, Erikson's 'epigenetic scheme of identity formation may reflect cultural bias' (Kroger, 2005:35). Also, as Lesko (2001) points out, his stages of social developmental are constructions. There are also many other contemporary educational psychologists who point out that Erikson's 'developmental tasks' (Brown, 2012:11) represent 'only the benchmarks of adaptation that are specific to a developmental period and are contextualized by prevailing socio-cultural and historically embedded associations' (Roisman *et al*, 2004 in Brown, 2012:11). Nevertheless, such criticisms do not undermine the underlying hypothesis that reading plays a significant role in shaping aspects of identity formation.

psychological progression. Simply put, each stage has the potential to contribute to both 'psychosocial health' and 'psychosocial ill-health' (Erikson, 1980:128).

During pre-adolescence, or what Erikson (1980:88) terms 'school-going age', he suggests children will experience a crisis of industry. In effect, children of a school-going age experience their world as 'a world in itself' with its own struggles, victories and disappointments (Erikson, 1980:88). During this period of 'industry', children realise that they are individuals who function in a community (Erikson, 1980:88). With this realisation, comes the desire in children to model themselves on someone they admire and trust. Most often, children choose their parents as role models, but the heroes of children's literature can also fulfil this function (Erikson, 1980:88).

Bettelheim (1976) agrees with this idea and posits that for children to be able to deal with the victories, struggles and disappointments that accompany the 'school-going age' (Bettelheim, 1976:7), they need to be able to visualise the solutions to their conscious problems. Bettelheim suggests that this can be done through daydreaming and the use of fantasy, both of which allow the child to envisage his/her unconscious problems. Following this, they will also be able to visualise various resolutions which may be appropriate for their struggles. Children are thus able to think about their problems or their unconscious content in a new way, free from social or personal constraints. The child is then also able to make his/her unconscious content accessible by making it conscious, even in the form of a daydream or fantasy, enabling him/her to understand it and thus also deal with it (Bettelheim, 1976:7). The reasons why theorists specifically refer to fantasy as a means for making unconscious content conscious is discussed later, but it is worth noting that Ursula Le Guin

(in Wood and Le Guin, 1979:18) also sees fantasy functioning as a work of art. The function of art, she states, 'is to find the truth, and express it as clearly and beautifully as possible'.

To achieve a sense of relief from childhood difficulties, many psychologists turn to play as a vital form of therapy. This is largely based on Erikson's (1980:89) suggestion that play can be a way of working through frustrations, of finding 'imagery relief' for grievances and for expressing emotions or voicing opinions. Erikson (1980:89) explains that the use of the imagination and play enables individuals to repeat events in their minds that were traumatic, problematic or challenging. In this way, children are able to imagine themselves as being in control of a situation and are then able to deal with it, 'restoring a sense of mastery' over the event. The mastery of these conflicts in their minds and imaginations then translates into mastery of the actual conflict. In a similar way then, children who are able to imagine themselves as the heroes of a story, or are able to relate to the hero of a story, are able to work through emotions and feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. It is not only Erikson who posits the value of play. Freud also makes a similar assumption. In *The Relation of the Poet to Daydreaming*, Freud (quoted in Bosmajian, 1999:104) sees the relationship between child and play. He says that 'Every child at play behaves like an imaginative writer, in that he creates a world of his own or, more truly, he arranges the things of this world and orders it in a new way that pleases him better….Language has preserved this relationship between children's play and poetic creation (Freud quoted in Bosmajian, 1999:104).

In a similar way to play, books can also serve as a form of therapeutic communication. By the time children reach the age of pre-adolescence, the idea of play with play items such as dolls or toy cars has passed and the role of toys is taken over by books (Bettelhiem, 1976:5). As Bettelheim (1976:5) argues, books (and more specifically, fairy

tales and fantasy) have the ability to communicate with the unconscious, preconscious and conscious mind. In other words, story books can speak to universal problems experienced by children and can help with the release of psychic pressure (Bettelheim, 1976:6). This is perhaps one of the primary roles books may assume in the lives of older children. Essentially then, pre-adolescent children may use books in order to understand and cope with their unconscious attempts to achieve a sense of industry, their psychosocial crisis. Similarly, John Young Thomson Greig (1969:69) argues that art, and for the sake of this dissertation, literature, has the ability to produce, by the action of suggestion, reactions or behaviour: 'the love painting excites love' while the 'martial painting' excites 'the instinct of the fight'. If art can produce reactions and responses, so can literature. As Mircea Eliade (quoted in Bettelheim, 1976:35) states, stories are 'models for human behaviour [that], by that very fact, give meaning and value to life'. Similarly, Freud argues that neurological problems occur because of tension between a person's sexual desires and the restrictions of society. This 'psychoneurotic' conflict (as Freud terms it) is expressed through 'substitutions and displacements' just as in literature 'a metaphor's tenor and vehicle condense two disparate ideas into one image that hides and reveals what is not articulated'. Displacement also has the ability to substitute socially accepted 'modes for desires that are forbidden' (Freud in Bosmajian, 1999:104).

Erikson (1980:91), among other theorists, agrees that the use of books by pre-adolescent and adolescent children can serve the same function as play does for younger children. He says that '…all children at times need to be left alone in solitary play (or later in the company of books...which, like the fairy tales of old, at least *sometimes* seem to convey what fits the needs of the infantile mind)…'.

In adding to this idea, Bettelheim (1976:5) cites German poet Schiller as saying, '[d]eeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life'. If we consider pre-adolescent children then, who struggle to form a sense of identity (Erikson, 1980), we can reason that books may function in much the same way as play does to help younger children with a therapeutic catharsis of emotion. Works of fiction (specifically fantasy) may thus help older children to achieve a sense of identity.

Essentially then, fantasy becomes a means through which the child structures and experiences his/her unconscious content. As Bettelheim (1976:7) explains, it is vitally important for unconscious content to have an outlet, as it can have an effect on behaviour. If this outlet does not occur, the individual may become overwhelmed as the unconscious forces its way through to expression. Alternatively, the individual may become overwhelmed by having to cope with, or rather, suppress unconscious content, so much so, that even their personality may become affected. However, if unconscious content is allowed to sift into consciousness, the unconscious content can be consciously manipulated and used for positive purposes and its potential to cause harm is lessened. Bettelheim reinforces his theory by referring to G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis who both felt that fantastical stories were 'spiritual explorations', the most 'life-like' of which show 'human life as seen, or felt, or divined from the inside' (cited in Bettelheim, 1976:24). According to Bettelheim (1976:5),

> For a story truly to hold the child's attention, it must entertain him and arouse his curiosity. But to enrich his life, it must stimulate his imagination; help him to develop his intellect and to clarify his emotions; be attuned to his anxieties and aspirations; give full recognition to his difficulties, while at the same time suggesting solutions to the problems which perturb him. In short, it must at one and the same time relate to all aspects of his personality – and this without ever belittling but, on the contrary, giving full credence to the seriousness of the child's predicaments, while simultaneously promoting confidence in himself and his future.

The next phase of development, in other words, adolescence, signals the child's quest to adopt an identity. Erikson (1980:94) deems this stage vitally important as it seems to accompany the end of childhood. This stage involves the acquisition of new skills, a relationship with 'the world of skills' and a relationship with those who teach new skills. However, this stage (adolescence) is also accompanied by physiological development, which in turn, brings about the desire to re-establish new social ties as well as the individual's role in society. This stage brings about a sense of self-consciousness, often accompanied by anxiety centred around what other people think, and how to integrate newly acquired skills and their previous roles (in the preceding developmental stages) into the so-called 'prototypical' image of the day. In other words, adolescents wonder how they can finally begin to 'fit in'. However, the desire for stability or for acceptance into a certain community or society means that individuals in this stage are often unwilling to cement images of themselves or accept role models or guardians in a finalised identity. This stage is characterised by experimentation with identities and ways of expression in the hopes of finding the one which comfortably crosses the bounds between who individuals are and who they wish to be (Erikson, 1980:94). It is important for adolescents to realise that they are not alone in their struggle for belonging as this will make their struggle easier to bear. Books can assist with this. More recent psychologists who agree with this argument include Adam and Marshall (1996), Marcia (1966, 1976, 1980), Archer and Waterman (1994) and Steinberg and Morris (2001).

It is also important to consider is how fantasy functions in making emotional catharsis possible. According to Elgin (1985:179), fantasy is an interesting genre because of its similarity to and distinction from the Romance genre. To start with, fantasy relies heavily on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ([1817] 1985:169) 'willing suspension of disbelief' as well as

John Keats's ([1817] 1970:43) 'negative capability'. These theories both rely on the readers' ability to put aside their reliance on logic and accept the possible existence of a Secondary Reality which functions outside Primary Reality. In addition, the fantasy genre makes basic use of the Platonic conception of 'enlarged reality', which ties it to the comic tradition to produce 'a complex system which accepts the validity and truth of the emotional and/or spiritual experience as well as the primacy of the physical universe' (Elgin, 1985:180).

Pratchett and Fantasy

The following discussion of fantasy refers to J.R.R. Tolkien's essay, 'On Fairy-Stories' in *Tree and Leaf* ([1964] 1992), as this text remains one of the seminal analyses of fantasy and is still referred to by critics today. Before a detailed discussion of fantasy can begin, however, it is important to first explain Tolkien's use of the word 'Faërie' which he uses prolifically with regard to his discussion of fantasy.

Tolkien ([1964] 1992:15) uses the term, 'Faërie', in order to escape using the terms 'fairy tale' or 'folk lore', which he considers to be far more restrictive in their connotation. The term 'Faërie', he explains, is thus a more inclusive term which also refers to the fantasy genre. Tolkien ([1964] 1992:14) further refers to 'the nature of Faërie', which highlights the realm of the fantastic as a unique and perilous world in itself. As Jack Zipes (1979:23) explains, 'the magic in the tales lies in people and creatures being shown what they really are, and one could add, in being shown what they are really and realistically capable of accomplishing'. Essentially, the core purpose of Faërie is 'imagined wonder' and the consciousness thereof (Tolkien, [1964] 1992:18). As Tolkien ([1964] 1992:14) explains, 'Faërie contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls,

giants, or dragons: It holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted'.

Next, Tolkien ([1964] 1992:32) speaks about the realm of fantasy as being able to open a door into another world or, 'Other Time'. When readers pass through this door, they are transported into an Other Time, and thus stand removed from their own time, or primary time. In fact, this 'Other Time' perhaps even stands 'outside time itself' and Tolkien seems to believe that the lasting nature of 'Faërie' is because of this Other Time. In essence then, fantasy is the 'making or glimpsing of Other-worlds' which '[is] the heart of the desire of Faërie' (Tolkien, [1964] 1992:41). Once the removal into the Other Time or Secondary World has taken place, readers are able to look back upon their Primary World with new insight. Readers are thus afforded increased insight into the way the Primary World functions and into the way they, as individuals, function within it. Tolkien ([1964] 1992:53) calls this 'recovery', which is the 'regaining of a clear view'. In effect, this enables readers to gain a clearer perspective on things or to see things as they truly are. By removing oneself from the Primary World, one is able to remove oneself from one's own world and live in another – if only momentarily – and thus gain some perspective on one's own reality. According to Tolkien ([1964] 1992:55), fantasy deals with elemental things, but these things are highlighted by the setting in which they feature, allowing issues and problems of the Primary World to be made clearer in fantastical settings. As such, '…fact becomes that which is manipulated by the fantasy writer to produce a keener perception of the Primary World and a greater ability to survive in it' (Tolkien, [1964] 1992:35). Eliade (cited in Bettelheim, 1976:35) uses Tolkien's idea of the Other World when he says that every person wants to experience life as another. Every person wants to experience danger, adventure and triumph.

In other words, every person wants to venture into the Other World in order to experience these things imaginatively, and this is made possible through reading and hearing fantasy.

Shakespeare uses a similar mechanism in his comedies, identified by Northrop Frye (1965) as the 'Green World'. In the Green World, a forest of some type usually forms the backdrop of the world to which characters are transported. The characters are taken there, and when there, solutions are often found to their problems in the real world. For example, in *Midsummer Night's Dream,* Hermia, Helena, Lysander and Demetrius all travel into the woodland and into the realm of 'Faërie' where the issue of their marriages to one another is resolved. As Nelson (1990:31) explains, many Shakespearean comedies begin at a court, or generally in a place that in some way represses the young people's desires, hopes and dreams. The action of the story then moves into the 'green world', otherwise known as the Other World, and it is this other reality, this world removed from the Primary World, in which the pressures of society are at a minimum that allows for 'love-intrigues' to play themselves out. 'Finally, when the redemptive magic of the natural world has taken effect, the characters return to the social world with new hope' (Nelson, 1990:31).

A similar conceptualisation of the Other World or 'green world' are the fantasy worlds Farah Mendlesohn (2008) sees as accessed via portals. As Mendlesohn explains, the Portal-Quest Fantasy concerns a character who leaves his/her home by crossing through a portal into an unknown world (Mendlesohn, 2008:1). As with Shakespeare's 'green world', the portal, as Clute (cited in Mendlesohn, 2008:1) clarifies allows for the transition between the Primary and the Secondary World, or between the past, future and present (the Portal-Quest Fantasy is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1 in connection with Pratchett's use of the portal and Secondary World). Important to mention here, however, is Mendlesohn's

criticism of the Portal Fantasy. Firstly, as Mendlesohn (2008:1) points out, the reader is most often in the position of 'companion-audience' with the protagonist, which means that the reader has to rely upon the protagonist for explanation and interpretation and is thus represented as if 'present at the telling of the tale' (Mendlesohn, 2008:1). Although Mendlesohn (2008:1) is reluctant to say that the position of the reader is 'infantilizing' she does mention that it is perhaps not coincidental that the portal is generally used in children's fantasy and not for an adult audience. In having the audience discover as the protagonist does, much of the information that the audience receives is gleaned from what the protagonist can see. Further information, such as 'history or analysis', is then provided by the 'storyteller' who often plays the role of 'sage, magician, or guide' (Mendlesohn, 2008:7). While this may seem to make meaning more accessible, Mendlesohn (2008:11) explains that it actually limits the text by restricting both the reader and the hero's interpretation of the story. This narrative structure also positions many characters as mere 'signposts' about which the readers are never given sufficient opportunity to learn. As Mendlesohn (2008:12) states, '…the insistence on the narrative and descriptive competence of the protagonist…thins the complexity of the world and makes of it a poorly painted stage set'. However, this more simplified portal world is actually well adapted to the more limited capacity for ambivalence in young readers (Mendlesohn, 2008:12).

To continue, Tolkien states that the ability of fantasy to bring about secondary belief or 'the inner consistency of reality' is an action requiring far more than mere imagination. He calls such action Art – 'the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation' (Tolkien, [1964] 1992:25). While they are in the sub-created or Secondary World, for however long that may be, readers believe in it. As soon they remove themselves, or are removed from the world, that world, as a believable, real entity disappears, and all that is left

is the veneer of a Secondary World. In order to re-enter, the reader has to suspend his/her disbelief or else the purpose of sub-creation cannot be fulfilled.

Tolkien ([1964] 1992:26) further highlights the timeless nature of 'Faërie' by arguing that despite the fact that many of the elements that constitute 'Faërie' (the enchanted mistress, the evil stepmother, magic, danger and so on) seem to be from another, more ancient, more medieval time (which has an appeal of its own), they still have an impact and effect on contemporary readers. This could perhaps explain the popularity of the fantasy genre, of which Pratchett is a key proponent, especially for pre-adolescents and adolescents, as fantasy has elements of 'Faërie' that originate directly from folk-lore and the fairy tale, which are both inherently archetypal or symbolic in nature (Tolkien, [1964] 1992:26). As such, it can be seen that these tales and stories have an influence on the fantasy in existence today, and also an effect on its readers.

Fairy tales do not represent or, rather present, a contemporary society. They do, however, represent everyday issues and the 'inner problems' that children and adults still battle with today (Bettelheim, 1976:5). In other words, these issues and inner problems are timeless and have existed throughout the ages, continuing on into contemporary society. What is interesting about this point, however, is that Pratchett does modernise, or rather, contemporise the fantasy genre, presenting the fantastical adventures of Johnny and his friends in familiar and contemporary situations. In doing this, he modernises the Romance features so typical of the fantasy genre, but maintains the archetypal and Romance functions of the features he uses, for example, the hero's quest, otherwise known as the monomyth, a term coined by Joseph Campbell in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* ([1949] 1972), which describes the basic pattern that all literary heroes follow.

When considering the hero's journey, it is perhaps a good idea to first explore why hero myths exist and why Pratchett has chosen to follow, albeit not very closely, the various stages of the hero's journey as used in traditional mythology. According to Campbell ([1949] 1972:26), the ancient world accepted the myth, the fairy tale and the 'divine comedies of redemption' as depicting the deeper truth of the world and the more difficult realisations about mankind. The myth and fairy tale (and we can include fantasy here) can thus be read as a 'transcendence of the universal tragedy of man'. This is because the myth and fairy tale present the human plight in a different light, most often with a happy ending. The world of man will always remain the same, but because of a changing point-of-view within the reader, the world is 'beheld as though transformed'. In other words, myth and fantasy take readers, with the use of the hero structure, through a series of trials and struggles and allow for success at the end. 'Where formerly life and death contended, now enduring being is made manifest – as indifferent to the accidents of time as water boiling in a pot is to the destiny of a bubble, or as the cosmos to the appearance and disappearance of a galaxy of stars' (Campbell, [1949] 1972:26). As Campbell continues to explain, the job of the myth and the fairy tale is to highlight the 'dangers' and 'techniques' of the way from tragedy to comedy.

Bettelheim (1976:26) agrees with Campbell and explains that fairy tales evolved out of myths, and that some myths were incorporated into fairy tales. As such, he suggests, fairy tales try to recall aspects of ancient wisdom, and hand it over to future generations. Bettelheim goes on to say that these tales are the carriers of 'ancient wisdoms' and of 'deep insights' that have stood the test of time. G.K. Chesterton (quoted in Bettelheim, 1976:64) seems to pre-empt Bettelheim's entire theory by saying that, '[m]y first and last philosophy, that which I believe in with unbroken certainty, I learnt in the nursery….The things I believed most in then, the things I believe most in now, are the things called fairy tales'.

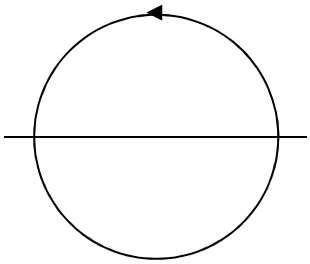
Many of the events in fantasies or fairy tales are 'unreal' as they present psychological rather than physical accomplishments. Even when these tales are based on real historical people, their actions are rendered dream-like rather than life-like as the point is not to highlight any individual greatness, but rather that great deeds can be done by a human on earth. The passage of the hero may be a physical one, but it is in actual fact an inward journey into 'depths where obscure resistances are overcome, and long lost, forgotten powers are revivified' to be made accessible to the world in order to allow for change and metamorphosis (Campbell, [1949] 1972).

If the myth and fairy tale can inspire metamorphosis and change in the reader, then it is also important to explore what kind of character becomes the hero of the fantasy and myth. Campbell ([1949] 1972:18) explains that the hero is the person who has been able to 'battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms'. In other words, such a person's feelings, thoughts, visions and inspirations come from the 'primary springs of human life and thought' and not from the present or 'disintegrating society and psyche'. Their inspiration comes from a so-called 'unquenched' source through which society is able to be reborn. This 'unquenched' source can be seen as extending from some divine or higher power that is benevolent and above human form or comprehension. When applying Campbell's theory to Johnny, it becomes clear that Johnny, although a seemingly ordinary young boy, is in actual fact quite extraordinary – not only because he has extraordinary abilities (such as being able to enter into a computer game, see the dead, and travel through time) but also because he has a greater understanding of the world and the ability to accept and comprehend what others cannot. In other words, he is able to 'battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms'

(Campbell, [1949] 1972:18). An explanation of this can be found in the opening of *Johnny and the Dead:*

> Johnny never knew for certain why he started seeing the dead…Most people's minds don't let them see things that might upset them…The Alderman said he should know if anyone did, because he'd spent his whole life (1822 – 1906) not seeing things.…Normal people just ignored almost everything that was going on around them, so that they could concentrate on important things like, well, getting up, going to the lavatory and getting on with their lives. Whereas Johnny just opened his eyes in the morning and the whole universe hit him in the face.
>
> (*Dead,* 9 – 10)

Clearly then, Johnny is different as he can open up his mind to those things which he does not necessarily understand. It is because of this extraordinary ability that he is chosen for three quests by the benevolent power of the universe and given special gifts. But what pattern does the traditional hero follow, and does Johnny's journey take the same route? According to Campbell (1972:28), the passage of the standard hero can be represented by the following formula: separation – initiation – return.



> *A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.*
>
> (Campbell, [1949] 1972:34)

The most frequent way in which the hero's journey starts is through a blunder of some kind or through a chance event (Campbell, [1949] 1972:46). This blunder or chance encounter reveals another world and the hero is drawn into contact and a relationship with forces from this world. In *Only You Can Save Mankind,* there is no blunder, but a chance

encounter when the aliens from Johnny's computer game happen to make contact with him after spending many days trying to contact absolutely anyone. The chance lies in the fact that Johnny happens to be playing the game at the exact moment the aliens try to send another message. In *Johnny and the Dead*, Johnny's initial encounter with the dead is not one of mere chance or blunder. His knocking on the Alderman's mausoleum door is the result of a decision which Johnny makes on his own, despite Wobbler's daring him. In *Johnny and the Bomb,* a chance event does occur as Johnny opens one of Mrs Tachyon's shopping bags in order to discover what is inside. Instead of finding anything gruesome (which he expected), he is thrown back into the past.

These events are set off by chance, but as Freud argues, 'blunders' do not occur by chance (Campbell, [1949] 1972:46), but are instead the result of various suppressed desires and conflicts. 'They are ripples on the surface of life, produced by unsuspected springs. And these may be very deep – as deep as the soul itself' (Campbell, [1949] 1972:46). As Pratchett explains, Johnny never really understands why these fantastical things always seem to happen to him. They may indeed be representative of repressed desires – perhaps the desire to escape his own morbid reality. What is important, however, is that Johnny always accepts the challenges with which he is faced.

Whatever these blunders are or represent they provide for an opening of destiny or a call to action. Campbell ([1949] 1972:47) refers to the blunder or chance event as the 'call to adventure' and the force, or 'preliminary manifestation of the powers that are breaking into play', the 'herald'. In *Only You Can Save Mankind* Johnny's call to adventure occurs a while after his chance encounter with the alien fleet, when the alien captain (the herald) asks him to provide them with safe passage home. In *Johnny and the Dead,* Johnny's 'call to adventure'

occurs after his initial encounter with the Alderman (one of the dead acting as the herald) and his official call to adventure only takes place when he has had time to come to terms with the existence of the world of the dead as well as with his ability to communicate with it. In *Johnny and the Bomb,* Johnny's call to adventure is made some time after he realises that he can travel back in time, and more specifically, that he can travel back to 1941 and save Paradise street from being bombed. The time delay that takes place before the call to adventure in each book ultimately allows Johnny to gain control over his fears so that he may enter into the adventures wholeheartedly.

The call to adventure is not only the initial manifestation of powers, but it also marks what has been termed the 'awakening of the self' or a realisation of some deeper truth (Campbell, [1949] 1972:47). This point in the hero's journey always leads to a 'mystery of transfiguration', a 'spiritual passage' which when completed always ends in a birth or a death. 'The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand' (Campbell, [1949] 1972:47).

In *Only You Can Save Mankind* this 'awakening of the self' occurs when Johnny stands up to the often overpowering Kirsty and realises that he is the only one who was perceptive enough to see the computer game as more than a game. In *Johnny and the Dead* the 'awakening of the self' occurs when Johnny realises the importance of the dead in shaping history and more specifically when he realises the poignancy of the deaths of the Blackbury Pals, a group of young men from Blackbury who went to fight in the Great War together. In *Johnny and the Bomb,* Johnny's realisation of truth occurs when he acknowledges that he cannot change the past. In all three books it is interesting to note that

this 'spiritual passage' ends not in death, but in a type of rebirth in which Johnny realises his inner strength and his remarkable ability to see beyond what is in front of him. Therefore, the call to adventure signals that 'destiny' has beckoned the hero and 'transferred his spiritual centre of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown' (Campbell, [1949] 1972:53). The place may be represented as a variety of things – a forest, a kingdom under the sea and so on. However, no matter what shape or form it takes, it is always a place of 'polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight' (Campbell, [1949] 1972:58).

According to Campbell ([1949] 1972:63), the hero who responds to the call often encounters a protective figure of some kind, often an old man, who provides the hero with supernatural aid. Campbell ([1949] 1972:66) states that such a figure represents the protective and benevolent power of destiny. To the reader, this protective figure represents the fact that there is always a helpful or caring power that can be found behind the unfamiliar. All one has to do is look for it: 'One only has to know and trust, and the ageless guardians will appear' (Campbell, [1949] 1972:66). The hero must continue on his journey courageously and then he will find all the 'powers of the unconscious' on his side. In the Johnny books, there is no definite protective figure. One can perhaps say that many of the characters in each of the books take on this role, or at least part of it. For example, in *Only You Can Save Mankind*, the SkreeWee captain plays a motherly role at times. In *Johnny and the Dead*, Ronald Atterbury provides guidance and the dead often play a parental role. In *Johnny and the Bomb*, Johnny's grandfather lends guidance. However, what is most important to note is that in each book, it is Johnny's friends who assist him the most in his adventures and provide protection and advice.

Campbell ([1949] 1972:89) explains that once the hero has crossed the threshold into another world, he travels through a 'dream landscape' of 'fluid' and 'ambiguous' forms where he must face a sequence of trials. Applying this to the Johnny books, Johnny's trials include overcoming an evil alien, a faceless corporation and preventing a bomb from wreaking havoc on his home town. Once the hero has successfully completed his quest, he must then begin the laborious task of bringing the cause of his quest, be it wisdom, knowledge, a sleeping princess or a golden fleece, back to humanity (Campbell, [1949] 1972:179). At the end of his journeys, Johnny brings back wisdom, knowledge and a deeper sense of self, as will be shown in the following three chapters.

Lastly, Campbell ([1949] 1972:201) explains that the 'return threshold' over which the hero must return divides the worlds of the human and of the divine since these two worlds can only be seen as vastly distinct from each other. The hero journeys out of the land we know into the unknown, into darkness where he encounters various trials on his quest. His return is thus described as a return from this 'yonder zone' (Campbell, [1949] 1972:201). However, the two worlds are actually one. The world of the gods and goddesses is actually a 'forgotten dimension' of the world we have come to know. The exploration of this zone, either 'willingly or unwillingly' is the actual sense of the hero's task. 'The values and distinctions that in normal life seem important disappear with the terrifying assimilation of the self into what formerly was only otherness' (Campbell, [1949] 1972:202). However, there must always be an inconsistency between the two worlds, between the wisdom brought from the darkness and the caution found to be effective in our world. 'Hence the common divorce of opportunism from virtue and the resultant degeneration of human existence' (Campbell, [1949] 1972:202).

Johnny is willing to immerse himself in his ability, although he does not always understand it or why he has it. This acceptance reflects the willingness of the readers to immerse themselves in the fantasy. In this way, Johnny represents us. We share something with each other, and this makes our ability and willingness to relate to Johnny so much easier. The main lesson that readers can take from the hero and his journey is that although they may come across things that they may not necessarily understand, these may lead to a greater understanding of themselves and of the world. The positive effects of myth and fantasy are thus clear.

In the introductory note to *The Language of the Night* (Wood and Le Guin, 1979:11 – 12), Susan Wood quotes Le Guin as saying the following:

> We dream in nonverbal images, which can be translated into word-symbols and "understood" by the conscious mind. In much the same way, though with the universality proper to art, written fantasy translates into verbal images and coherent narrative forms the intuitions and perceptions of the unconscious mind – bodylanguage, dreamstuff, primary process thinking. This idiom, for all its intense privacy, is one we all seem to share, whether we speak English or Urdu, whether we're five or eighty-five. The witch, the dragon, the hero; the night journey, the helpful animal, the hidden treasure...we all know them, we recognise them (because, if Jung is right, they represent profound and essential modes of thought). Modern fantasy attempts to translate them into modern words.

Wood (in Wood and Le Guin, 1979:13) further explains that Science Fiction and Fantasy, like all art, deals with 'human concerns' and therefore must be taken seriously. In addition, Le Guin argues that Science Fiction and Fantasy can help develop the imagination. One of her central ideas is that there 'is a necessity for internal exploration, provided by fantasy, to produce a whole, integrated human being' (Le Guin in Wood and Le Guin, 1979:17). Part of this journey is for readers to accept the subconscious and the collective

unconscious as well as the imagination. If the imagination is suppressed, readers may mature physically but will remain 'at worst "eggplants" and at best stunted and unhappy people afraid of anything "childish" or "untrue"' (Le Guin in Wood and Le Guin, 1979:17). Nurturing the imagination, however, will allow each person to become a mature adult: 'not a dead child, but a child who survived' (Le Guin in Wood and Le Guin, 1979:17).

The importance of Fantasy is not only to provide readers with 'pleasure and delight' but also to encourage the use of the imagination which will intensify readers' understanding of the world, their fellow men and their destiny (Le Guin in Wood and Le Guin, 1979:43). 'Fantasy isn't factual, but it is true. Children know that. Adults know it too, and that is precisely why many of them are afraid of fantasy. They know that its truth challenges, even threatens, all that is false, all that is phony, unnecessary, and trivial in the life they have let themselves be forced into living. They are afraid of dragons, because they are afraid of freedom' (Le Guin in Wood and Le Guin, 1979:44)

The Adult/Child Dichotomy in Children's Literature

One of the problems with the didactic use of children's literature is the uneven balance of power between author and reader. As Wilkie-Stibbs (1999:169) states: 'The dynamic and spatial model of intertextuality has peculiar implications for an intertextuality of children's literature because the writer/reader axis is uniquely positioned in an imbalanced power relationship. Adults write for each other, but it is not usual for children to write literature for each other. This phenomenon would effectively make children the powerless recipients of what adults choose to write for them and children's literature an intertextual sub-genre of adult literature'.

Similarly, Jacqueline Rose (1994:1), for example, believes that children's fiction is impossible, not in the fact that it cannot be written, but because it 'hangs on an impossibility, one which it rarely ventures to speak'. This 'impossibility' is the relationship between adult and child. Rose (1994: 1 – 2) states:

> Children's fiction is clearly about that relation, but it has the remarkable characteristic of being about something which it hardly ever talks of. Children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enter the space in between. To say that the child is inside the book…is to fall straight into a trap. It is to confuse the adult's intention to get at the child with the child it portrays. If children's fiction builds an image of the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp.

Rose (1994:12) seems to believe that childhood is a mere construction, one which persists as something which each individual does not cease to rework in an attempt to build an image of his/her own history. In other words, Rose sees the concept of childhood as something reductive or separate, which adults can analyse or consider a fallacy. Children's difference to adults stands as a sign of just how far adults have come. However, although childhood may be viewed as a mere construction (meaning that it cannot be analysed entirely objectively), there is still something to be gained from informed attempts at analysis by researchers conscious of these limitations. Childhood and children's literature remains something which can in fact be analysed or scrutinized.

However, Wilkie-Stibbs (1999:169) also explains that despite criticism of the unbalanced relationship between reader and writer in children's literature, empirical research has shown that the 'intertextual processes through which children take ownership of a particular text preclude the imperialism of the text and the author'. Intertextuality sets up a

curious kind of authority in children's books, 'in which adults who write for children consciously or unconsciously operate in and are influenced by the intertexual space which is literature they read as children'. The books read in childhood and childhood experiences have an intense bearing on adult perceptions. Many writers of children's books agree with this idea and refer to the influence that their childhood reading still has. However, Wilkie-Stibbs (1999:169) seems to believe that despite children's ability to take 'textual ownership through their own intertextual references' the writer/reader relationship remains 'asymmetrical' as a child's 'intersubjective knowledge' cannot ever be assured.

To continue then, it is interesting to note that Tolkien is adamant that fairy tales are not merely intended for consumption by children. Tolkien ([1964] 1992:34) discusses how those who believe this fallacy believe that children are a different 'creature', or different race, rather than people (although not yet adult) who are a part of the community from which they come.

Pratchett and Comedy/Satire

With the ideas of the Secondary World in mind then, it is interesting to note that in addition to using fantasy, Pratchett, a master of humour and satire, uses comedy as his primary mechanism with which to distance his characters from their Primary Reality. This decision seems to be based on two factors. Firstly, comedy is enjoyable, especially for child readers. Secondly, it also serves to remove or distance the reader from the text. In essence then, in comic fantasy (like the Johnny Maxwell books) the reader is doubly removed from his/her world by the use of both fantasy (activating the Secondary World) and comedy. This removal from the Primary World is likely to allow child and adolescent readers to gain

perspective on their psychosocial development, and thus return to their reality with ways and means of conquering the psychosocial crises they have to endure. Thus, a discussion of comedy as a distancing mechanism is vital for this dissertation. So what is comedy?

Abrams (2009:380) posits that the comic refers to 'any element in a work of literature, whether a character, event, or utterance, which is designed to amuse or to excite mirth in the reader or audience'. This clarification of comedy thus allows us to move onto the next question, which is how comedy functions as a distancing mechanism. According to Greig (1969:70), laughter, and therefore also comedy, provide for the release of excess 'psycho-physical energy' by allowing for a momentary 'weakening' of any difficulties which cause psycho-physical energy to generate in the first place. Nelson (1990:7) agrees with this. He states that laughter arises from 'psychic release' or, as Feibleman (quoted in Nelson, 1990:8) puts it 'the arousal first of terrific fear, then of release, and finally of laughter at the needlessness of the fear'. In other words, we laugh at the fears we have mastered. If we do not gain control over them, we do not laugh (Nelson, 1990:8). Essentially then, comedy acts in much the same way as dreams do in terms of wish fulfilment and allow for the unconscious release of fears (Bentley cited in Nelson, 1990:25). Grotjahn (quoted in Corrigan, 1965:275) provides further clarification by explaining that the purpose of comedy is to allow us to communicate freely with our unconscious, which in turn allows us to gain 'strength for this reality we live in'. Communication with our unconscious allows our 'imagination' and 'intuition' to be kept active, young and alive.

According to Charney (2005), there are three major theories concerning the function of comedy and humour. The first is the superiority theory which states that people laugh at situations or at other people because it allows them to feel in some way superior. Laughter

thus comes from a place of 'joy', which is achieved through the realisation of one's own talents and skills. This 'joy', however, is brought about by the realisation of others' failings (Bardon cited in Charney, 2005:464). In other words, '…when others are seen to be grossly incapable, one's own self-image is enhanced by comparison. For this reason we become joyous and are moved to laugh at the infirmities and absurdities of others' (Bardon quoted in Charney, 2005:464). Hobbes also declares that 'the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves' (Bardon quoted in Charney, 2005:464). In the Johnny books laughter may occur as a result of the 'infirmities and absurdities of others', but it is important to remember that these characters also represent daily childhood struggles and so readers are more inclined to feel a connection with them than to feel superior. And so, I turn to the second proposed function of comedy, the incongruity theory.

Hutcheson (cited by Bardon in Charney, 2005:465) explains that laughter arises from the recognition of some or other strangeness: 'the cause of laughter is the bringing together of images which have contrary additional ideas, as well as some resemblance in the principal idea'. An 'incongruity', simply put, is an incompatibility or contrast between ideas, events or objects. In other words, incongruity occurs when things do not seem to add up or match up, when something happens that we do not quite expect, or when things presented to us are not as we expect them to be. Hutcheson (cited by Bardon in Charney, 2005:466) states that the humour in incongruity lies in the fact that it diverts attention away from negative emotion. In the Johnny books the incongruity of ideas, events or objects is not immediately perceivable. Rather, incongruity lies in Pratchett's constant criticism of society. The society he presents seems to be incongruous with the society he deems as better.

The third theory of comedy, and one which this dissertation will refer specifically to, is the relief theory. In Charney (2005:468), Bardon cites Spencer as saying that the relief theory is the idea that laughter is the release of 'nervous excitement' or 'emotional tension'. In providing evidence for his theory, Spencer focuses on the physiological effects of laughter. He states that there are various ways in which the body stores 'nervous energy' and releases it in the form of a range of physical activities, for example, the reflexes which our body uses to prevent being injured. In essence then, laughter is like the reflex that causes the hand to move away from a hot plate when it starts to feel pain. It is a protective mechanism. The release that we experience when we laugh is essentially, according to Bain (cited by Bardon in Charney, 2005:468), a release from the serious. Bain further explains that all life consists of pain, anxiety and tension which results in the building up of negative emotions. When we laugh, our repressed tension is momentarily released, causing joy and subsequent laughter. The theory finds its origin in Freud's 'pleasure principle', the unconscious mechanism within all of us that drives us to avoid negative or unpleasant emotions and rather steering us towards the experience of pleasure (Bardon cited in Charney, 2005:469). Thus, 'since life is full of opportunities for suffering, the impulse to make jokes out of fear, conflict, or unhappiness is universal. In other words, for Freud all humour is, to some extent, gallows humour' (Bardon quoted in Charney, 2005:469).

Bardon goes on to say that the relief theory may also have something to do with Darwin's survival theory. Laughter and comedy allow for the release of tension, and these result in less tension being built up within societies, which, in turn, allows for stabilisation and prosperous development. Technically then, people who are more inclined toward humour may have certain benefits over others. Therefore, a good sense of humour is 'survival enhancing'. Bardon continues with his argument saying that humour and comedy encourage

social interaction and thus act as a unifying factor within communities. Members of communities will find pleasure in humorous activities and will thus be inclined to want to engage on a more social level. 'The tendency to enjoy humour can confer a survival advantage by checking anger and aggression and enhancing social communication' (Bardon in Charney, 2005:474).

From the above arguments, it is clear that comedy can play a vital role in healthy psychosocial development. The use of comedy in works of children's literature does not simply augment entertainment, but rather enables children to connect with their deep psychological recesses. Comedy allows us to see reality as it is, and so, if we are perceptive enough to realise this fact, we will be able to look upon our reality with more understanding. What is important for this dissertation is the function of comedy as a distancing mechanism. In other words, comedy functions similarly to Tolkien's Secondary World. Whereas fantasy removes readers from their Primary World and enables them to look back onto it with a greater understanding, comedy removes the tinted shades through which we look at our daily reality. Thus, the combination of comedy and fantasy (such as in the Johnny Maxwell trilogy) makes it doubly possible for readers to gain a greater understanding of the worlds in which they live. This combination also allows for a double cathartic release of emotion. I once again highlight the cathartic use of books in child and adolescent therapy.

In addition, comedy functions to strengthen the fantastical's aim of removing readers from their Primary Reality through setting up a separate 'other world', much like Tolkien's Secondary World and Shakespeare's green world. Sypher (cited by Corrigan, 1965:37) explains that comedy is an act in which we remove the masks we use to deal with the world around us. Through comedy, people are thus allowed to unmask themselves, to 'come out for

a moment, from behind the facade of their "serious" selves', the 'selves' required of them by society (Sypher cited by Corrigan, 1965:37). When we eventually put our masks back on, or return to our 'personae', we enter into it with new understanding and with a new perspective of the duality of our existence – our 'real', unmasked and uninhibited selves, versus our socially bound, masked and wary selves.

Sypher (in Corrigan, 1965:37) posits that comedy's domain is headed by some sort of 'Lord of Misrule' which originates from the church's use of comic ritual during Lent. One of the monks was chosen to play the role of the Lord of Misrule, whose job it was to 'chant to liturgy of Folly'. An ass was worshipped and a mass in much the same light as the 'Dionysian' and 'Saturnalian' celebrations of the Greeks and Romans was held. The point of the ritual was to allow people to unmask themselves, and release, even for a moment, any built up tension or repressed emotions. (Wobbler's role as the 'Lord of Misrule' or Falstaff will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3).

Comedy also fulfils an important social function by being a possible form of temporary resistance to authority and thus also an escape from it (Sypher cited by Corrigan, 1965:50). '...[I]ts mechanism is a free discharge of repressed psychic energy or resentment through laughter' (Sypher quoted in Corrigan, 1965:51). Sypher seems to believe that comedy is a way in which we can defeat the 'enemy', whoever or whatever 'He' may be. In this sense, perhaps the enemy for adolescents is the fear of identity confusion, or realities such as divorce, war, crime, racism and so on and so forth. The 'enemy', according to Sypher, will disappear at the moment of comic awareness. In addition, Sypher also claims that comedy is a way in which we can recognise reality. In this sense, comedy functions much the same as the Secondary World of Tolkien. We are taken out of the Primary World,

or out of our Primary Reality, and are taken into a Secondary World, the world of the comic. Upon our return, we are able to look at the Primary World with greater clarity and with new perspective. In this way 'reality', or at least our Primary Reality' becomes clearer and we gain this clarity by laughing at the world around us and at ourselves. When this laughter takes place we feel we are able to conquer the stress and anxiety we feel about the world around us. 'Unflinching and undaunted we see *where we are.* This strengthens us as well as society' (Sypher quoted in Corrigan, 1965:53). The most logical conclusion that can be drawn from this is that by laughing at our stresses and at the evils of the world, we 'surmount' them (Sypher cited in Corrigan, 1965:54). When we realise that our realities are not perhaps what we wish or hoped for, it is the comedian who can help us conquer the 'insuperable defects of actuality' (Feibleman, quoted by Sypher in Corrigan, 1965:54). Comedy is thus an important tool which can underscore the utility of books and fantasy.

In his discussion of satire, Feinberg (1967:4) comments that, although satire is not synonymous with comedy, the use of comedy for satiric purposes is highly effective. Pratchett, being a master of satire, is thus able to use it to its full potential. Comic 'devices' are frequently used for criticism and 'the laughter of comedy', according to Worcester, cited in Feinberg (1967:4), 'is relatively purposeless. The laughter of satire is directed toward an end'. Feinberg adds that although most believe that satire is a thing of the intelligence, it is in actual fact a thing of disorder. Satire appeals to misrepresentation and 'distortion', and to do this, it makes use of 'exaggeration, understatement and pretense [sic]....Reason, then, is used to create unreason; logic is used to create illogic'. Satire is an escape from the 'tyranny of reason' (Schopenhauer quoted in Feinberg, 1967:5) and this is because the purpose of satire is to comment, to be critical, and so naturally, it must be distrustful of so-called 'logic' or reason or generally accepted codes or systems of belief.

But what is satire? Satire is defined by Pope (quoted in Nelson, 1990:23), as being 'Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne / But touched and shamed by ridicule alone'. Baudelaire defines satire as 'significant comedy', comedy that carries some sort of message or meaning and which does not function according to the comedy of 'pure play' (quoted in Nelson, 1990:23). These definitions may seem perfectly succinct and apt for an explanation of what satire is, but what exactly must we make of the ideas of 'significant comedy' and 'ridicule' in terms of how satire functions in a work of children's literature?

Satire arouses laughter, not merely for entertainment (although this aspect is important for its function) but rather to comment on moral or social values. Satire serves to improve the quality of life by showing the 'failings' of peoples' dealings with each other (Baudelaire cited by Nelson, 1990:23). In other words, satire has a corrective function. Greig (1969:187) states that everyone can relate to the displeasure associated with being laughed at. He says that '...when the laugh seems to be aimed at us, the triviality passes over from the laughter to us, the supposed cause of it, making us, as we appropriately say, "feel small"'. The social importance of laughter is that it is a powerful tool for societal construction. People fear being laughed at to such a degree that they will accept the behavioural norms as set by the society in which they live, and act in accordance with it.

There are countless theorists and writers who agree that comedy represents life. In the first century BC Cicero states that comedy is a mirror of manners, while Baldesar Castiglione (quoted in Nelson, 1990:138), sees comedy as a form of writing which expresses 'better than the rest, the trade of man's life'. Even later critics, such as John Dennis (quoted in Nelson, 1990:138), assert that 'comedy is nothing but a picture of common life, and a representation of humours and manners'. It can thus be said that comedy is perhaps the best platform from

which to criticise society. According to Corrigan (1965:11), the purpose of the comedy of 'earlier times' was to see into the comic. Nowadays, however, the comic is used to see into the serious. In Corrigan's own words, 'the comic has become a transparency through which we see to the serious'. According to Christopher Frye (quoted in Corrigan 1965:15), '[c]omedy is an escape, not from truth but from despair....In tragedy we suffer pain; in comedy pain is a fool, suffered gladly'. Frye goes on to say that '[l]aughter may seem to be only like an exhalation of air, but out of that air we came; in the beginning we inhaled it; it is truth, not a fantasy, a truth voluble of good which comedy stoutly maintains'. Even Henri Bergson, cited by Wylie Sypher (in Corrigan, 1965:18) states that comedy is a game that emulates real life. In linking to the idea of comedy as a sense of superiority, Sypher (cited by Corrigan, 1965:25) says that laughing is similar to an animal baring its fangs. Animals only bare their fangs when they feel threatened and so, in a similar way, Sypher believes that we literally bare our fangs when we laugh at other people. This is so as to 'ease our sense of inferiority'. Laughter, still according to Sypher, is then a strategy for survival, a mark of 'superior adaptation'.

The art of satire highlights the negative characteristics of society (Feinberg, 1967:3). In essence then, it does not highlight what is real, but 'what *seems* to be real'. Feinberg (1967:3) goes on to say that the quintessence of satire is its ability to 'contrast between reality and pretense'. In this way, despite the fact that satire most often makes use of comedy to inject its bitter sting, the *function* of satire is also very similar to the function of comedy. Satire serves to highlight the pretence under which most of society lives, and comedy serves to remove it. Satire highlights the double life which people live, and comedy serves to remove people from their unreality into reality.

According to Petty *et al* (1992:1), laughter incites pleasure, and messages such as those sent out by satire are most likely to take effect when people are in a good mood. Petty states that '[p]ersuasive impact is greater when a person is in a happy or benevolent mood when the message comes…'. So, creating a cheerful and happy mood for the reader can play a vital role in persuasive communication. Comedy is therefore a way of sugar coating criticism. If the satirist antagonises the reader, he/she may stop reading and as a result, the message may not be heard (Feinberg, 1967:86).

Using humour as a means to make tragic realities more bearable can clearly be seen in all three Johnny books as Pratchett chooses death and war as his main focus areas. The question, however, is why Pratchett choose such morbid and often horrific subject matter. Lathey's (2005:58) article on the depiction of war in children's novels takes note of the marked increase over the last few decades in the number of children's books which portray war and its impact in a realistic way. Pratchett's Johnny Maxwell series falls into this category; Pratchett divides his commentary on war into three parts – one per Johnny book. *Only You Can Save Mankind* comments on the cruelty and brutality of humankind in war-time situations; *Johnny and the Dead* addresses the futility of war as well as its negative impact on society; and *Johnny and the Bomb* comments on the devastation caused by war and its lasting effects on communities. However, while *Johnny and the Dead* and *Johnny and the Bomb* illustrate war's consequences in a very poignant and realistic way, *Only You Can Save Mankind* divides its commentary into two opposing parts: a satirical portrayal of the Gulf War which takes place in Primary Reality, and a more explicit exposé of the human attacks on the ScreeWee which take place in the Secondary World.

It is important to consider why writers such as Pratchett might choose to use children's literature as a platform from which to launch such serious observations. Lathey (2005:58) questions whether parents would not want to protect their children from this inhumane subject matter for as long as possible, even though it has become an accepted and even common theme in children's literature. But protecting children from the horrors of war has become an exceedingly difficult task (Lathey, 2005:59). One need not look very far to find horrifying images and reports of war in children's day-to-day surroundings. These include child participation in war, with instances going back as early World War I with young boys lying about their ages to join the army or more recent images of child soldiers in Africa (Lathey, 2005:59). The free depictions of war in the news and media today indicate that it has become very difficult to protect children from war and its social impact, even when they are not directly involved in it. Storr (1971:146) explains that due to the rise of television and radio, children are exposed to topics and issues of the adult world and so absorb 'the prevalent attitudes' towards these topics long before they can read.

Lathey (2005:62) specifically mentions Ian Serraillier's *The Silver Sword* (1956) as the book that marked a significant turning point in war stories for children. It transcended the more 'popular, patriotic appeal of earlier war stories and genre fiction' by depicting child refugees searching for their homes and parents in postwar central Europe. The change in focus of the story, Lathey explains, is that Serraillier's story addresses far more serious issues and has an implicit didactic function, which Storr (1971) also discusses. In a similar argument to Bettelheim's about exposing children to serious subject matter, Storr maintains that providing children with knowledge of good and evil allows them to deal with the knowledge and make it tolerable. Lathey's (2005:62) comments on Serraillier's characters echo this. Lathey states that the shock of war reverberates into the future in the lives of Serraillier's

protagonists, and this can even be said of *bona fide* wartime situations, as war not only impacts on its immediate participants, but continues to have an impact on society far into the future. One need only look at tensions between South and North Korea. Commentary on war is perhaps appropriate in children's novels because of their didactic function. Stories about war can give child readers the necessary knowledge of war and equip them with the ability to deal with this knowledge. Alternatively, writers may hope to strike early and prevent wars by encouraging children to question prevalent justifications for it.

Bearing in mind the various discussions presented in this introduction then, this dissertation attempts to explore the subtlety and complexity of the Johnny Maxwell trilogy. As such, it considers the trilogy in terms of theories of childhood, the aesthetic value of children's literature, its didactic function (with reference to bibliotherapy), the various functions and presentations of fantasy, the distancing and satiric role of comedy, the purpose of intertextuality in children's literature as well as Erikson's and Bettelheim's theories of literature's role in the development of identity. The following is a detailed outline of the dissertation:

Chapter 1

In Chapter 1 I discuss *Only You Can Save Mankind* (1992) concentrating on how it functions as a fantasy and on how Pratchett makes use of the Secondary World to distance readers from their Primary World. In *Only You Can Save Mankind*, the Secondary World is a world inside a computer game – suited perfectly to the book's intended contemporary audience. In addition to this, I also examine the various comic techniques that Pratchett uses in order to distance readers from their Primary World (such as irony, sarcasm, and farce). I

consider how Pratchett uses these comic techniques to ridicule or chastise certain characters who do not act in accordance with what society expects. In other words, I examine how Pratchett satirises certain issues, specifically those that can be linked to identity formation. For example, in *Only You Can Save Mankind,* Pratchett is clearly addressing the computer game as a form of propaganda that makes war and death seem like forms of entertainment to which children are becoming increasingly accustomed. Essentially, the computer game on which Johnny becomes fixated is a parallel for the Gulf War which takes place as superfluous entertainment on television as the novel progresses. And so, in a satirical way, Pratchett makes a poignant statement about the state of the world that is accepting of such violence.

Furthermore, this chapter discusses how various characters in the book function comically, satirically and fantastically. In doing this, I consider, for example, Pratchett's re-examination of the hero in the character of Johnny, who can be described as an a-typical hero or a hero who truly does not want to be one.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, I consider how *Johnny and the Dead* functions as an Intrusion Fantasy as defined by Mendlesohn (2008). In addition, I discuss Pratchett's thoughts about the influence that history has on our lives today, the importance of ecology as well as the reality of death in war. Much like Chapter 2, I consider what specific fantasy and comic features are present in the book as well as how these function in relation to Erikson's psychosocial theories. This chapter then also addresses the main concerns of the book, specifically death and how the dead are remembered in society. Pratchett's focus on death in this book is an interesting one, especially because of its child target audience. But in treating the dead as he

would any other character (as very much alive, in other words), Pratchett enables child readers to realise that although death is a part of life, the dead must be remembered. As one of the dead aptly states, 'the living must remember, the dead must forget' (*Dead*, 218). Also, I consider Pratchett's comment on social apathy and the commercialization of society as well as the effects of war with his inclusion of the Blackbury Pals, an army regiment that never returns from the First World War.

Furthermore, I discuss the satirical comments that Pratchett makes on topics relating specifically to identity formation. These include racism (Pratchett uses Yo-Less to portray racism in the book as he is the antithesis of what his society thinks a young, black boy should be), and teen violence (Pratchett uses Bigmac to portray this as Bigmac narrowly escapes death when his friends steal a car).

Chapter 3

The third chapter examines *Johnny and the Bomb* (1996) in which Pratchett criticises racism, comments, once again, on the lasting impact of war as well as demonstrates the influence that our present actions have on the future. Again, as with the previous two chapters, I consider what fantasy and comic techniques Pratchett uses and how these features may influence identity development. In this, the final installment of the trilogy, Pratchett concerns himself with dehistoricisation, which he explores by using time travel and the portrayal of alternate realities. To do this, Pratchett primarily makes use of the character of Mrs Tachyon, the local bag lady who has managed to, quite literally, bag time. Pratchett uses the concept of time travel to allow Johnny, his friends and, by extension, the reader to grasp the horrifying reality of war by experiencing it first-hand. However, Pratchett's use of time

travel also allows him to comment on the interconnectedness of past, present and future: the events of the past affect the future and the events of the present affect our understanding of the past.

Again, Pratchett satirises topics that are linked to the idea of identity formation. Here, the importance lies in the influence that our history can have on our identity. Furthermore, Pratchett satirises the idea of time travel in the character of Wobbler, who is left behind when Johnny and his friends travel back to the future. Pratchett also comments on the treatment of the poor through the character of Mrs Tachyon, who, however unlikely, seems to play the role of the 'wise, old woman', a Romance trope usually portrayed by a wise, old man. In addition, Pratchett makes a comment about commercialism and a tradition of society's non-involvement by using the character of Wobbler, who represents, almost archetypally, a corpulent, Falstaffian youth.

Conclusion

The final chapter of this study draws on the findings of each individual chapter in order to illustrate the importance of fantasy for child readers. This chapter will show how a detailed analysis of a work of children's fantasy, such as the *Johnny Maxwell* trilogy, can illuminate the function of fantasy and comedy as tools that can be used in developmental psychology, especially with concern to identity development in adolescents.

All in all, this dissertation critically analyses the Johnny Maxwell Trilogy in terms of its didactic usefulness and its ability to be used for social criticism. Primarily, however, this dissertation considers the books as works of literature with aesthetic value which, as

Nikolajeva (2005:xi) points out, can be used for educational purposes. It is hoped in this way to demonstrate the continued validity of G.K. Chesterton's assertion that, 'My first and last philosophy, that which I believe in with unbroken certainty, I learnt in the nursery….The things I believed most in then, the things I believe most in now, are the things called fairy tales' (quoted in Bettelheim, 1976:64).

~1~

Only You Can Save Mankind

Only You Can Save Mankind[6] is the first of Terry Pratchett's Johnny Maxwell books. Written in 1992, the book generally comments on war, and more specifically, aspects of the Gulf War and the media frenzy that took place around it. The book further reflects on the gaming industry and the effects of war games on children. Thus, in this chapter I consider the function of *Only You Can Save Mankind* as fantasy, how Johnny functions as 'the hero' (as outlined by Campbell), how Pratchett comments critically on war propaganda and sexism, as well as what Pratchett's thoughts are about the influence of the gaming industry and media on children's perceptions of reality. The premise for *Only You Can Save Mankind* is this: what would happen if a computer game were, in fact, real? As the game's instruction manual (*Mankind*: 3) puts it:

THE MIGHTY SCREWEE™ EMPIRE™ IS POISED TO ATTACK EARTH!

OUR BATTLESHIPS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED IN A SNEAK RAID! NOTHING CAN STAND BETWEEN EARTH AND THE TERRIBLE VENGEANCE OF THE SCREEWEE™!

BUT THERE IS ONE STARSHIP LEFT... AND OUT OF THE MISTS OF TIME COMES ONE WARRIOR, ONE FIGHTER WHO IS THE LAST HOPE OF CIVILIZATION!

YOU!

YOU ARE THE SAVIOR OF CIVILIZATION. YOU ARE ALL THAT STANDS BETWEEN YOUR WORLD AND CERTAIN OBLIVION.

YOU ARE THE LAST HOPE.

ONLY YOU CAN SAVE MANKIND! ™

[6] Referred to as *Mankind* in parenthetical references.

The ironic twist in this book, however, is that the 'Mankind' that truly needs saving is a fleet of innocent alien warriors, the ScreeWee, who have been continually attacked by human starships merely in the name of fun. The irony lies in the fact that the word used to refer to the ScreeWee civilisation, when translated into English, is also 'Mankind' and so, when referring to 'Mankind', Pratchett actually refers to the ScreeWee. Interestingly, however, an in-depth analysis of the book reveals that one of Pratchett's foci is to educate child readers about the realities of war. It would seem then that his aim is to create awareness so as to encourage readers to resist war, or perhaps even prevent wars in future.

Overview

The book begins with Johnny sitting in front of his computer playing the game 'Only You Can Save Mankind'[7]. Johnny's game playing is enthusiastic and he skilfully goes about killing the 'enemy' alien race, the ScreeWee. Johnny flies through the game, literally and figuratively. But, just as he is about to enter Level 10, an unexpected message appears on the screen: '"We wish to talk"' (*Mankind,* 6). Upon inspection of the game's manual, however, Johnny discovers that this particular message is not meant to appear. A confused but unperturbed Johnny continues to play, readying his guns for the final kill as he approaches the Mothership. Yet before he can complete his triumph, the ScreeWee surrender (which is most definitely *not* supposed to happen). Strangely, Johnny finds himself unable to attack, since each human starship is equipped with a Fire button and '…that was what it was *for*' (*Mankind,* 8). Johnny, utterly confounded by this, reaches over and saves the game, opting to complete his homework rather than continue playing. In the meantime, in Game Space where the ScreeWee reside, the Captain of the ship, a female ScreeWee, speaks with her First

[7] The title of the book is italicized throughout, while the title of the game appears in inverted commas.

Officer desperately trying to find out whether the 'Chosen One' – Johnny – has accepted their surrender. To the Captain's dismay, however, the 'Chosen One' has once again simply disappeared into thin air without offering any response. But, since all human enemies have an inexplicable ability to come back to life an infinite number of times, the Captain can simply wait for the Chosen One's return.

The next day Johnny approaches his techno-savvy friend, Wobbler, who has supplied him with an illegal copy of the game. Johnny's thinking is that if anyone knows whether a virus or hacker has attacked the game, it will be Wobbler. Wobbler's response, however, is to tell Johnny to re-read the manual which Wobbler's father spent his whole coffee-break photocopying. Having already done this, Johnny decides to investigate the mystery by continuing to play the game. But his next attempt to enter into Level 10 ends in his having a rather long conversation with the ScreeWee Captain, a newt-like being, who also shows him pictures of the ScreeWee young, which look more like tadpoles or 'egg-shaped blobs with tails' (*Mankind,* 13). The ScreeWee Captain explains to Johnny that Game Space is her reality and that hundreds of ScreeWee die every day due to unprovoked human attacks. New ScreeWee ships may constantly appear on Johnny's screen, but although they look exactly alike, each ship is different, with a new ScreeWee crew, who not only suffer real injuries and real pain, but also true death. After the initial shock of receiving this news (that Game Space is reality for the ScreeWee), Johnny agrees to give the Alien fleet safe conduct until they reach the border of Game Space, beyond which, they believe, is their home.

That night Johnny goes to bed and his Dream Space functions as a portal which somehow transports him into Game Space. After deciphering all the controls in his spacecraft, Johnny begins his quest to lead the ScreeWee safely back home. Before long,

however, a particularly persistent game player attacks the ScreeWee fleet and Johnny's attempts to help are too slow, meaning that some ScreeWee die. Johnny is also attacked and dies in Game Space only to wake up the next morning in his bed, while the ScreeWee are left tending to the damaged ships and wounded members of their fleet. Johnny's next entry into Game Space further cements the reality of the game as Johnny witnesses the destruction of the attack first-hand. He truly *is* the ScreeWee's only hope for survival, as the game's manual initially suggested.

Johnny's friends, although always supportive of him, are convinced that his transportation into Game Space is merely a projection of psychological conflict due to his dysfunctional home life (Johnny's parents are never at home, and details hint that they constantly fight). Johnny considers this but nevertheless continues to return to Game Space. One of his visits allows him to witness the wreckage of an extinct Alien fleet, the Space Invaders, who, like the ScreeWee, were also cast as the enemies of humankind in a computer game that his father used to play. Witnessing this complete destruction of an entire race is enough to convince Johnny of the gravity of the crisis with which he is being presented.

Johnny's friends try to take his mind off 'Only You Can Save Mankind' by presenting him with other computer games. They take Johnny to their local computer store, but while they look around, they overhear a girl complaining to Mr Patel, the store owner, about 'Only You Can Save Mankind'. The girl rightly explains that: '"It says on the box that you fight dozens of different kinds of Alien ships. There isn't even *one*"' (*Mankind,* 49). Johnny's attempt to save the ScreeWee has left Game Space without any aliens to fight. It is at this point that Johnny's friends start to take note of his story.

Johnny continues to journey into Game Space on a daily basis because of his agreement to give the ScreeWee safe conduct home. On one occasion, he even projects his friends into the game in order to help him deliver food to the ScreeWee. The ScreeWee, however, continue to be attacked by one persistent game player and as a result, their Mothership is taken over by the Gunnery Officer, who believes that the ScreeWee should fight rather than surrender. The Gunnery Officer imprisons the Captain and turns the fleet around to go back into the main Game Space and fight the 'human scum' (*Mankind,* 124). He also threatens Johnny's life, despite all Johnny's attempts to help. Johnny, however, bound by his word to the Captain, continues to follow the ScreeWee. As the alien fleet begins to approach the main Game Space, Johnny sees another game player with guns poised to attack the ScreeWee fleet. The player starts attacking the ScreeWee, but Johnny interrupts the hailstorm of lasers by communicating with the game player, whom he discovers is Kirsty – the same girl who complained in the computer store a few days earlier. Kirsty reluctantly agrees to stop killing the ScreeWee until she and Johnny uncover the reasons why they are both privy to the seemingly hidden world of Game Space. Johnny meets Kirsty the next day at her house and explains that the ScreeWee have surrendered to him and he has promised them safe passage home. After much persuasion from Johnny, Kirsty agrees to help. Together they concoct a plan to dream themselves onto the ScreeWee Mothership in order to rescue the Captain and help transport the ScreeWee home. Successful in executing their plan, they free the Captain, who guides them through the ship to the main control room where the Gunnery Officer has made himself at home. He is ready to destroy any human that enters into Game Space. Johnny and Kirsty manage to gain command of the ship, but not before the Captain is attacked by the Gunnery Officer and Johnny is forced to kill him. Johnny then takes charge of the dream by deciphering the ScreeWee controls and transporting the ScreeWee as quickly as possible to the border of Game Space. He and Kirsty then make their way to the escape pod –

which Kirsty has dreamed up – and prepare to make their getaway from the Mothership as they cannot follow the fleet out of Game Space. They fly from the Mothership and witness the fleet disappear into the border and out of Game Space. Having helped save the ScreeWee, Johnny and Kirsty return home.

The Portal and Intrusion Fantasy

In her critical exposition of fantasy, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008), Farah Mendlesohn categorises various works of fantasy into four 'types': the Portal-Quest Fantasy, the Intrusion Fantasy, the Immersive Fantasy and the Liminal Fantasy. According to this set of categories, *Only You Can Save Mankind* can be classified as a 'Portal-Quest Fantasy' which is defined by Mendlesohn as a fantastical story concerning a character who leaves his/her home by crossing through a portal into an unknown world (Mendlesohn, 2008:1). The portal, as Clute clarifies (cited by Mendlesohn, 2008:1) allows for the transition between the Primary and the Secondary World, or between the past, future and present. A portal can take many forms: from a cupboard, which C.S. Lewis uses to transport the Pevensie children into Narnia in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (1950), a hole in the ground, through which Alice falls in *Alice in Wonderland* ([1865] 1972), to an artefact veiled by water such as the 'Guardian of Forever' in *Star Trek* (1966), which gives passage through the space-time continuum. Portals can thus be found scattered throughout the literary world in a multitude of shapes and forms. *Only You Can Save Mankind,* however, also has elements of the Intrusion Fantasy, which, as its name states, involves the intrusion of the Secondary World into Primary Reality. The fundamental basis of the Intrusion Fantasy is chaos (Mendlesohn, 2008: xxii). When the Secondary World or even merely creatures or beings from it encroaches upon the Primary Reality of the book, normality is disturbed. This disturbance, however, does not necessarily

have to be unpleasant. When at last the Secondary World retreats or the creatures go home, normality is once again restored.

Pratchett departs from the characteristic use of the portal in *Only You Can Save Mankind* by creating an ethereal entry point rather than a physical one. He does this by allowing the portal to function within the realm of the unconscious. Johnny is granted access into the Secondary World through his own dreams and so readers are initially led to believe that admission into the world is exclusively Johnny's. It would seem then, that Johnny has been specially chosen by the other world, or Game Space, to be its saviour. As the ScreeWee Captain explains to Johnny in one of their later encounters:

> "…*You're* the saviour of civilization. *You're* all that stands between *your* world and certain oblivion. *You* are the last hope…Only *you* can save *Mankind."* [said the Captain]
> "Yes, but it's not really true!" [said Johnny]
> "If not *you*, then who else?" [said the Captain]
>
> (*Mankind,* 78, [my emphasis])

The Captain rattles off parts of the game's blurb, which has been cited in the introduction to this chapter, in an attempt to persuade Johnny to help the ScreeWee. The irony of the Captain's plea, however, is that despite the universal use of the pronoun 'you', this statement, when spoken specifically to Johnny, holds more truth than can initially be guessed. Johnny truly is the ScreeWee's last hope; he is the only one who can save their kind as he is the only one who has actually listened to the Captain when she has tried to surrender. The Captain has tried many times before to submit peacefully to other game players, but it is Johnny's ability to suspend his disbelief that makes him their 'Chosen One'.

The choice of Johnny as hero may be an obvious one for readers, but it is not for Johnny. He sees himself as an ordinary boy with no special talents or skills. One may even go as far as to say that Johnny sees himself as less-than-ordinary. There are many moments in *Only You Can Save Mankind* which point to this, but none more so than when he first encounters Kirsty in Game Space. She attempts to find out who he is:

> "You're not the fat one who looks as though he could do with a bra, are you?" [asked Kirsty]
> "No. Listen –" Johnny tapped his controls hurriedly.
> "The black one who looks like an accountant?"
> "No. *Look* – "
> "Oh, no…not the *skinny* one with the big boots and the pointy head…?"
> "No, I'm the one who kind of hangs around and no one notices much," said Johnny desperately.
> "Who? I didn't see anyone."
> "Right! *That was me!*"
>
> (*Mankind,* 126)

Holding this rather negative view of himself, Johnny is baffled by the fact that the ScreeWee have chosen to surrender to *him.* Later in the book, Johnny also struggles with the knowledge that he has been the only one to accept contact with the ScreeWee beyond the scope of the game. This is reflected in Johnny's burgeoning frustration at having to watch the ScreeWee, now under his protection, die at the hands of other game players. He may be a skilled game player, but he is most certainly not the best. This can clearly be seen in the narrator's description of a game player's attack on the ScreeWee:

> "I was going after that ship," said Johnny uncertainly.
> "*Yes. It is to be hoped that another time you can do so before one of my ships is destroyed.*"
>
> (*Mankind,* 62)

His lack of skill is also suggested by his tacit admiration of Kirsty's flying skills:

> The attacker roared for the middle of the fleet. Then it rolled gently and fired six missiles, one after another. A moment later, two of the small ScreeWee fighters exploded and one of the larger ships spun around as it was hit. The attacker was already heading for another fighter. Johnny had to admit it – it was beautiful flying.
>
> (*Mankind,* 102)

Quite clearly, the ScreeWee could have made a better choice of protector and Johnny is not oblivious to the fact. His frustration grows with each crossing into Game Space and this is compounded by the fact that the ScreeWee Captain constantly reminds him that the behaviour of game players (and humans in general) is merciless. Johnny attempts to explain the concept of a computer game to the Captain, but he soon realises that his explanations are insufficient to justify the fact that he and other game players have killed many innocent ScreeWee in an attempt to escape boredom.

Johnny's mediocre gaming skills, he soon realises, are not what matter in the end. Excellent abilities may be useful in saving the ScreeWee, but they are not essential. More important is for someone to listen to them and accept that Game Space is a reality that subsists on another plane of existence. Johnny is this person. His uniqueness lies in the fact that he can accept what he does not necessarily understand and acknowledge the existence of a world which is unheard of in his own, and of which he has no comprehension. Johnny realises this towards the end of the book, just in time. When the Captain explains why she chose Johnny she says, '"[h]e listened. He talked. None of the others did. He may be the One"' (*Mankind,* 19).

Johnny also comes to understand the importance of his being able to listen when he desperately tries to convince Kirsty to help him save the ScreeWee at the end of the book: listening means being open to the world rather than being limited by society's construction of it. This idea is in line with Edward Said's (1979:65) concept of Orientalism in which the 'Orient' is 'Othered' or rather, distanced, from the so-called Western 'Self' which is considered to be the norm to which all should aspire. In this way, society's view of 'the Other' is limited since 'othering' does not allow for the possibility of exploration and understanding. Initially, Kirsty, as the 'Self', rejects the ScreeWee, the 'Other', since they exist outside of what she considers normal. This results in her inability to listen to the ScreeWee since her understanding of them is limited by society's construction of the Other. This can also be seen when Johnny chastises Kirsty for ignoring the ScreeWee's call for help:

> "They tried to talk to you, and you didn't even listen! You were the only other one who got that involved! You were so mad to win, you slipped into Game Space! And you'd have been so much better at saving them than me! And you didn't even listen! But I listened and I've spent a week trying to Save Mankind in my sleep!"
>
> (*Mankind,* 148)

The unknown can be frightening, especially for a world which relies so much on logic. Johnny's Primary Reality, very much a reflection of our own world, is filled with the latest in gaming technology, computers and television – symbols of the rational. Then there is also Wobbler who represents an unhealthy obsession with the virtual: 'But he was good at games. They just weren't the ones that people thought you ought to be good at. If ever there was an Interschool First-One-to-Break-the-Unbreakable-Copy-Protection-on-*Galactic-Thrusters,* Wobbler wouldn't just be on the team, he'd be *picking* the team' (*Mankind,* 9).

When Johnny seeks advice from Wobbler, Wobbler attempts to rationalize the problem by trusting what he knows best – computers. He tells Johnny that the ScreeWee surrender is probably something programmed into the game in order to make it more interesting. In other words, he attempts to make the evidence fit his conception of the world. Yo-less, Johnny's highly intelligent friend, is yet another figure of rationality and logic in the book. Yo-less's argument is that Johnny is projecting a 'psychological conflict', namely his parents' impending divorce (*Mankind,* 27), onto his gaming experiences. Johnny's friends immediately turn to logic when faced with what they do not understand. Wobbler relies on computers and technology, Yo-less on psychology and his book smarts, and Bigmac on his need to control represented by his desire to fight and kill. Johnny's uniqueness, in contrast, lies in his ability to look beyond the obvious and see what his friends cannot. His acceptance of the illogical and his capacity for 'Negative Capability' (Keats in Wu, 2005:1351) is what makes him 'The Chosen One' and his trust in his own moral compass is what makes him the reader's hero too.

To continue with the discussion of the Portal-Quest Fantasy, it is important to understand that although the portal grants access to Secondary Worlds, these worlds are completely different from Primary Reality. Unlike in an Intrusion Fantasy, fantastical elements remain on the 'other side' (Mendlesohn, 2008:1) and cannot pass through into Primary Reality. Only the protagonist is given entrance and the fantastic can function only within its own world (Mendlesohn, 2008:1). Johnny is granted access to Game Space while the ScreeWee are never allowed to cross over into Primary Reality. The Captain at one stage does appear to Johnny in his bedroom, but only in Johnny's imagination – an event which is possibly triggered by his guilt.

The ScreeWee know nothing about Johnny's world or the fact that their own world is merely seen by humans as Game Space:

> Johnny thought for a while and then typed: "What happens if I switch of [*sic*] tthe [*sic*] machine?"
> "*We do not understand the question.*"
>
> (*Mankind,* 15)

Further evidence of the ScreeWee's ignorance of the 'real world' is seen in the fact that their Captain does not know Johnny can return to Game Space an infinite number of times since it is merely a game for him:

> *"We saw your starship explode…And then it…returned again. You are alive?"* [asked the Captain]
> "Yes," said Johnny, and then added, "I think so."
> "*Excuse me. I must ask. What happens to you?*"
> "What?"
> "*When you…go.*"
>
> (*Mankind,* 59)

The Captain and the other ScreeWee do not know where Johnny comes from or where he goes when his spacecraft is destroyed. This is because, for them, Game Space is their Primary Reality and so Johnny acts as an intrusive force in their world. In many other Portal Fantasies such as *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1949 – 1954), the fantastical realm is not shocked or surprised by the entry of forces from other realities into its world. Rather, the fantastic permits this access in order to allow for any assistance it may require and knows the intruder will provide. Therefore the entry of the hero via a portal into Secondary Reality is not seen as a form of intrusion, even though the Secondary World may

not know much about the hero's world. However, in *Only You Can Save Mankind,* the ScreeWee are completely unaware of the existence of another world. In addition, the chaos in Game Space is due to the disruption caused by the entry of Primary Reality into Secondary Reality and thus not through any fault of its own. *Only You Can Save Mankind* thus functions interestingly in terms of Mendlesohn's theory, as it is not only a Portal Quest Fantasy, but also a reverse Intrusion Fantasy – with Primary Reality oozing into the Secondary World instead of vice versa. The purpose of this is firstly to emphasise the immorality of humans by making them an interfering force, imposing its power on an innocent species, and secondly to vindicate the ScreeWee's contributions to the fighting taking place in Game Space. The merging of the Portal Quest Fantasy with the Intrusion Fantasy thus makes for an engaging dialogue between Primary and Secondary Reality and raises many questions about morality.

To continue, the Portal Fantasy comprises three phases, namely, entry, transition, and exploration (Mendlesohn, 2008:2). Thus, protagonists move from their home, which is normally mundane and uneventful, into another world which is wholly new and previously unheard of, and in this world they come into direct contact with the fantastic. The protagonist explores this world until it becomes familiar or until he/she is 'knowledgeable enough to negotiate with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm' (Mendlesohn, 2008:2).

In this phase, both readers and the protagonist are treated as naïve and nothing is taken for granted. As discussed in the introduction, Mendlesohn (2008:1) explains that readers of the Portal-Quest Fantasy take the position of 'companion-audience'. Readers are thus bound to the protagonist, experience things at the same time as the protagonist and rely on him/her for 'explanation and decoding'. Readers are thus also treated as though they are

present as the story unfolds in order to enhance the idea that they share the protagonist's experiences. In stating this, however, Mendlesohn (2008:1) hesitates to call the Portal-Quest Fantasy 'infantalising' but realises that more often than not, this type of fantasy requires total 'intellectual commitment' from readers. The 'intellectual commitment' mirrors the suspension of disbelief of which Coleridge (1985:365) speaks, and so one can conclude, as Mendlesohn does, that the Portal-Quest Fantasy may be more apt for a child audience rather than an adult market.

In *Only You Can Save Mankind* the readers are, like Johnny, never given a full view of things. We only discover and understand as Johnny does and are never in a superior or inferior position to him. As Johnny enters Game Space for the first time, so do we. As Johnny explores that world and learns more about the creatures that inhabit it, so do we. And as Johnny learns to manipulate Game Space, so do we. An example of this can be seen when Johnny discovers an extinct fleet of spaceships known as the Space Invaders for the first time:

> "Captain?" [asked Johnny]
> "*Yes*?"
> "Can you see this thing here? What is it?"
> "*We find them sometimes. We think they belonged to an ancient race, now extinct. We don't known what they called themselves, or where they came from. The ships are very crude.*"
>
> (*Mankind,* 38)

The Portal-Quest Fantasy begins with a sense of stability, but this stability is only that of a 'thinned land' (Mendlesohn, 2008:3). The ruler of the land or kingdom is most often associated with the happiness of the land and, in turn, the condition of the land is associated

with the land's moral state. The idea of the 'thinned land' can readily be seen in *Only You Can Save Mankind,* but not in the manner which Mendlesohn identifies. The book does make use of a 'thinned land' in which the morality of the land is characterized by its condition, but the 'thinned land' is not the fantastical world, or Game Space, but rather Primary Reality itself. War pervades Johnny's world in many ways – from the violence of the Gulf War to the low-key 'Trying Times' of Johnny's household and the impending divorce/separation of his parents. The chaos of Johnny's world reflects its moral ambiguity and this is then highlighted by the situation in which the ScreeWee find themselves. As already stated, the ScreeWee Captain is the one who points out Mankind's cruel and selfish nature which has largely gone unnoticed, particularly since the media turns the war in Johnny's Primary Reality into mere entertainment, much like a computer game: 'There were some more pictures of missiles and bullets streaking over a city. They looked pretty much the same as the ones he'd seen last night, but were probably back by popular demand' (*Mankind,* 26).

To further strengthen this presentation of mankind as cruel and selfish, Pratchett makes use of the ScreeWee Gunnery Officer, who glorifies war as being heroic and honourable. Although the Gunnery Officer's intentions may in fact be honourable, he subscribes to a romanticised idea of war which Pratchett rejects. His bravery and code of valour are presented as futile – mere ways of furthering the body count. The Gunnery Officer is especially villainised when he attempts to take Johnny's life. Readers thus reject him because he works against the Captain's and Johnny's attempts to safely and peacefully transport the ScreeWee home, and also because he threatens the hero's life.

Game Space, thus, does not function according to its own moral code, but rather to the seriously compromised morality of Primary Reality that has been imposed upon it.

Such thematic elements, according to Mendlesohn (2008:3), serve to structure the 'directive and coercive' narrative, which limits the possibility for a dissident ending. In fact, characteristic of the Portal Fantasy is the happy ending, which occurs with the restoration of the land or the land's ruler, and thus also of the land's moral code.

Interestingly, the happy ending is not only a vital component of children's literature, but also of comedies. For a writer like Pratchett then, who writes comical children's fantasy, the happy ending is non-negotiable. But what constitutes a happy ending? Bettelheim (1976:9) believes that a happy ending is one in which the enemy loses. This is done by either making the enemy look bad or by making the enemy experience the same pain and suffering which he/she/it has inflicted upon others. In *Only You Can Save Mankind* then, the happy ending is based on the fact that Johnny (with the help of Kirsty) is successful in his quest to help the ScreeWee across the border safely. In addition, Johnny defeats the Gunnery Officer, whom he kills, and even though this is done in self-defence, it still functions as the enemy receiving his comeuppance. What leads to his downfall is the fact that he subscribes to an antiquarian conception of war, which Pratchett rejects. The Captain, on the other hand, humbles herself in order to save her fleet.

Bettelheim (1976:9) goes on to explain that the happy ending does not constitute 'virtue' or 'morality' that will always conquer evil and allow the happy ending to transpire, but rather constitutes a sense of *justice* which always prevails. Ultimately, the hero must win as it is with him that the child identifies. Evil must be defeated as a way of illustrating what is possible with strength and determination. The fairy tale, and thus also fantasy, conveys aspects of a child's inner turmoil, giving the child's anxiety, anger and fear 'body and specific content' (Bettelheim 1976:9). But the happy ending is also needed because it is

necessary for the child to feel that some form of justice has been achieved. The hero must be rewarded and evil must receive its due punishment (Bettelheim, 1976: 123,144). It is therefore important that no character in children's literature should be ambivalent in terms of good and evil (Bettelheim, 1976:9). Characters, as types, must be either wholly good or wholly bad, so as to make it easier for the child to identify (or not) with them. Bettelheim (1976:10) calls this polarization, which is important because, '[m]orality is not the issue in these tales, but rather, assurance that one can succeed'.

In all of the Johnny Maxwell books, this polarization is clearly evident, and in *Only You Can Save Mankind,* Johnny and his friends are all essentially good, as is the Captain. The Gunnery Officer, on the other hand, although acting within a code of honour that he believes to be correct, is portrayed as being essentially bad because of his resistance to the fundamentally good Captain, and also because of his belief in a system of valour and honour that is rejected by the author. Kirsty, even though she is the cause of many ScreeWee deaths, is also presented as essentially good. She represents those whose understanding of reality has been influenced by the media and war games. She is redeemed, however, as she begins to realise that the ScreeWee are not mere constructions of a computer game, but rather beings, not unlike herself, that exist in an alternate reality to her own. She is exculpated by being the one who helps Johnny save the ScreeWee as well as by her inability to shoot the Gunnery Officer. This reveals her sense of humanity and shows her ostentatious bravado to be merely an act.

Linking to this, it is interesting to note that Kirsty not only represents those affected by the media and computer games, but that she and Johnny also act as a masculine/feminine pair which serves to emphasise Pratchett's undermining of gender stereotypes. Johnny, in

being a more passive character, displays values which are traditionally viewed as being feminine, while Kirsty, a more aggressive character, has closer affinity with masculine stereotypes. Like Kirsty, the Gunnery Officer demonstrates the traditionally masculine, while, like Johnny, the Captain displays those values which are traditionally associated with female behaviour. By contrasting different gender pairs, Pratchett highlights how conventional gender roles can be constricting. The Captain finds it difficult to gain the respect of the male members of her fleet even though most ScreeWee warriors are female. It is also hinted that Kirsty is rejected by her peers because of her aggressive and authoritative behaviour. However, despite these difficulties, both the Captain and Kirsty are successful in their actions and so Pratchett reveals the possibilities which may lie in the reversal of gender stereotypes.

Tolkien ([1964] 1992:62) believes that the most important part of the fairy tale is the happy ending, which he terms, 'consolation'. He defines consolation as a 'sudden joyous turn…However fantastic or terrible the adventure, it can give to a child or man that hears it, when the turn comes, a catch of breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to tears' (Tolkien, [1964] 1992:63). This 'sudden, joyous turn' he defines more specifically as the 'eucatastrophe' or 'miraculous grace' ([1964] 1992:62). Just as tragedy has its catastrophe, so too does the fairy tale, but it ends with a happy turn of events – much like a comedy. According to Tolkien ([1964] 1992:62), the 'eucatastrophe' does not repeat itself and it does not deny the possibility of catastrophe or failure which, in fact, plays a vital role in the deliverance of joy, as the possibility of failure makes the reward of success so much sweeter. Fairy tales thus give '…a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief' (Tolkien, [1964] 1992:62). Essentially then, what makes the happy ending so much more joyful is the very real possibility of disaster and defeat. The fact that the Gunnery Officer very nearly kills Johnny makes the readers' sigh of relief at the end of the book that

much greater and more joyful. Even Johnny voices this idea as his escape becomes increasingly complicated: "'I should have *known!* said Johnny as they ran. "*No one* gets that long to escape! James Bond never turns up with enough time to have a cup of coffee and clean his shoes before he disarms the time bomb!"' (*Mankind,* 193). The obstacles to the escape increase and, with this, the reader's anxiety and concern for Johnny's well-being. When Johnny and Kirsty finally escape by using the escape pod, the reader's cathartic release is great.

However, Pratchett does not allow for a wholly joyous ending, and in fact, undercuts the elation with a solemn reminder of the personal struggles that Johnny will still have to face. At the end, Pratchett tells the readers: 'These were still Trying Times. There was still school. Nothing actually was better, probably. No one was doing anything with a magic wand. But the fleet had got away. Compared to that, everything else was…well, not easy. But less like a wall and more like steps' (*Mankind,* 206).

Northrop Frye's (1965:165) idea that social integration occurs at the end of comedy in order to show that a moral norm has been set and that society is now free, does not occur in *Only You Can Save Mankind*. This is perhaps because the society in Johnny's world, representative of society in the Primary World, is not yet free since the 'moral norm' of which Frye speaks, has not yet been reached. Pratchett suggests that Johnny's problems (still to be dealt with) have become more like 'steps' and this illustrates a movement towards the establishment of a moral norm, but also clearly indicates that this movement will not be easy. Frye's theory is that those people who are not a part of the celebrations at the end of a comedy have not yet reached a state of self-knowledge (Frye, 1965:165 – 166). In *Only You*

Can Save Mankind then, the implication is that society itself has not yet reached this state of self-knowledge, but that with time and patience a communal celebration can transpire.

Nelson (1990:186) perhaps explains this point best. He states that the most honest ending which comedy can offer is one which returns to the 'inadequacies of the real world'. In other words, life is a struggle and no one can continually be on the winning side. Some day we may have to play the role of the victim, scapegoat or fool. This is the deeper truth of reality, the more difficult realisation and more complete revelation that comedy is said to present. The happy ending of the myth, the fairy tale and the 'divine comedy of the soul' are thus to be read 'not as a contradiction, but as a transcendence of the universal tragedy of man' (Nelson, 1990:186).

And so, the restoration of morality or even just a move towards the elimination of moral ambiguity almost guarantees a positive and uplifting ending. The conclusion of a Portal-Quest Fantasy therefore allows for 'restoration' rather than 'instauration (the making over of the world)' (Nelson, 1990:186). Johnny can be happy in the knowledge that he helped save an entire race of living beings, but his own reality remains poignantly troubled. Moreover, morality in Johnny's world is not restored in the way the typical happy ending would have it. It is not the Secondary World that has 'thinned morals': although Johnny does save the ScreeWee, which provides a joyous ending, he does not restore any previously existing moral code, since the terror that has been imposed upon the other world has originated from a corrupt Primary Reality. Despite this, however, if one can look beyond Johnny's immediate situation, a happy ending does lie in sight, and this is due to what Johnny has learnt by being privy to a parallel world. Game Space acts as a mirror to Johnny's world, distorted though it may be, and what he learns on his quest can be applied to his reality. In

Game Space, he realises how cruel and merciless mankind can be, and with this knowledge both he and Kirsty return to Primary Reality ready to apply a new understanding to the world around them. The readers then also take this knowledge back with them into their Primary Reality. With an understanding of mankind's capacity for malice, they too can apply this to the world around them. Johnny and Kirsty thus learn about their Primary Reality from Game Space (their Secondary World) while readers learn about Primary Reality from the book (their Secondary World). Both Johnny and Kirsty return to their own world with new insight into society's behaviour, as do the readers, but the moral ambiguity of Primary Reality is not eliminated. The didactic function of children's literature serves to correct or re-establish the moral codes of both the readers' and Johnny's primary realities. This is an ongoing process with Johnny and the readers being morality's victors which is in itself is a happy ending.

Mendlesohn (2008:4) explains that most contemporary Portal-Quest Fantasies are supported by the postulation entrenched in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: a quest is a process in which the reward is more than just a mere token. The *real* reward is a moral one that either constitutes 'moral growth' or 'redemption'. What supports the function of fantasy is that it is underpinned by 'moral expectation', as Mendlesohn (2008:5) points out. Fantasy relies on morality or a 'moral universe' and so is less an argument with the world than a lesson in the ways things should be – 'a belief that the universe should yield to moral precepts'. As such, 'the journeyman succeeds or fails to the extent he listens to those wiser or more knowledgeable than him, whether these be spiritual, fantastical, or human guides' (Mendlesohn, 2008:4). The Portal-Quest Fantasy supports this idea and, as such, is structured around reward.

In *Only You Can Save Mankind,* however, there is not one guide more knowledgeable than Johnny. Instead, Johnny gains his wisdom by gathering information from a number of sources including his own, self-realised insights. These include his friends, homework, Game Space itself and even an encyclopaedia. The most notable of these sources of information is the ScreeWee Captain who educates Johnny about the cruelty of man. She further helps him to realize his own potential as a hero by making him aware of the gifts he possesses. An example of one of the Captain's lessons is:

> "You humans are strange," she said. "You are war-like. But you make rules! *Rules* of war!"
> "Um. I think we don't always obey all those rules." said Johnny.
> "Does that matter? Even to have made such rules…You think all of life is a game."
>
> (*Mankind,* 63)

In addition, the Captain teaches Johnny to be introspective or rather, aware of and responsible for his actions:

> "I'm sorry. I – I didn't want to fire. It's not easy, shooting another ship."
> "*How strange that a human should say that. Clearly the Space Invaders shot themselves?*"
> "What do you mean?"
> "*Were they doing you any harm?*"
> "Look, you've got the wrong idea," said Johnny. We're not really like that!"
> "*Excuse me. Things appear differently from where I sit.*"
>
> (*Mankind,* 63)

Johnny makes the perfect hero since from the very beginning he possesses strong moral potential as is witnessed by the fact that the ScreeWee surrender to him and rely on him. As the narrator explains, 'He wondered if he would launch a missile or

something….No…they'd surrendered. And there was that thing about safe-conduct' (*Mankind,* 22). In addition, Pratchett tells the readers that '"[the ScreeWee] have shown [Johnny] where they live…. They trust [Johnny]"' (*Mankind,* 23).

The next characteristic of the Portal Fantasy about which Mendlesohn (2008:9) speaks is the use of 'familiarisation'. This allows for the layering of detail that is familiar to the protagonist, and thus also the readers. In *Only You Can Save Mankind,* this can be seen in Pratchett's presentation of Johnny's space craft. Although on a parallel plane of existence where unheard-of creatures roam, Johnny easily comes to terms with controlling his space craft since its controls are very similar to his controls at home. There is a joystick used to steer the craft, a radar screen and the weapons console, and these are all exactly the same as that which he sees on his computer screen every night. Johnny's reaction to the space craft serves to further embed the idea that it is based on detail from his Primary Reality: '"Hey, *much* better than the computer!...And better graphics. You get much better graphics in your dreams"' (*Mankind,* 21).

The insertion of familiar detail into Game Space is only to be expected as Johnny's portal into the Secondary World is his own Dream Space. Game Space may exist independently of Johnny, but as soon as Johnny enters into the world, he populates it with his own detail which comes from what he knows – Primary Reality. This will be discussed later in the chapter.

There is, however, danger when using familiarization. In constantly being exposed to familiar detail, the protagonist's detailed explanation of his/her experience is compounded by having to further adorn the story with exciting new information in order to prevent the reader

from becoming familiar with the story. But continually providing readers with detailed information may work to obscure the readers' view of the protagonist. The solution is to use 'reverie – a form of mimetic excess' (Mendlesohn, 2008:9). The reverie is the point at which the protagonist reflects upon his/her own character in order to achieve a 'profound dialogic and polemical nature of self-awareness and self-affirmation' (Mendlesohn, 2008:10). What is important to note about the reverie is that it concentrates more on the story of the protagonist and not on emotion, as this would be considered as memory. A form of reverie occurs as a moment of introspection towards the end of the book when Johnny realises the importance of the task at hand: '"I listened and I've spent a week trying to Save Mankind in my sleep!...I've done my best! And I'm going to go on doing it!...And I'll be there every night!"' (*Mankind,* 148).

Dream and Game Space

In *Only You Can Save Mankind,* Pratchett does not make use of a physical portal through which Johnny can gain access to Game Space, but rather allows Dream Space to act as the entry point. This allows for an interesting dynamic in the structure of the Portal Fantasy as readers are never fully aware of the genuine nature of the portal – is it just a vivid dream or is it a unique access point into a Secondary World? However, the very fact that Kirsty is also able to gain entry into Game Space signals to the readers, even if only at the very end of the book, that Dream Space is indeed a portal into a Secondary Reality. It is perhaps more appropriate to term this *shared* Dream Space. It is important to note here that Dream Space and Game Space are not synonymous. Dream Space is another plane of consciousness in which both Kirsty and Johnny can enter into and experience Secondary Reality. Game Space is still another world, and not merely a 'dream' or existent only in

Dream Space. Johnny's 'dreams' are also not dreams in the true sense of the word, but rather a space of higher consciousness which gives him, and others who can gain access to their higher state of consciousness, use of it as a portal. Johnny, in trying to understand his movements into Game Space, explains this phenomenon in his own words:

> "I'm not sure it's a dream," said Johnny. "I'm not sure *what* it is. Not exactly a dream and not exactly real. Something in between. I don't know. Maybe something happens in your head. Maybe you're in there because – because, well, I don't know why, but there's got to be a reason." he ended lamely.
>
> (*Mankind,* 142)

Towards the end, however, Johnny seems to gain clarity on the subject:

> "You think about doing things in dreams, but we're always wrong about dreams. When people talk about dreams they mean *day*dreams. *That's* where you're Superman or whatever. That's where you win everything. In dreams everything is weird. I'm in a dream now. Or something like a dream. And when I wake up, all the ScreeWee will be back in Game Space and they'll be shot at again, just like the Space Invaders…Hang on…Hang on…This is *my* world, too. It's in my head."
>
> (*Mankind,* 175)

Mendlesohn (2008:18) states that the use of the dream as a portal into the fantastic is closer to something prophetic, than something unreal. And so, despite the fact that Dream Space is not a dream, it still exists on a plane of higher consciousness. Those who can gain access to it can also manipulate it according to their own individual realities. Game Space is thus designed on a very basic level, but Johnny and Kirsty are the ones who populate it according to what they know. Interestingly, Johnny and Kirsty source much of their inspiration from the media and television which is clear from Johnny's descriptions of what

the Captain's ship *should* look like: '"Corridors and cabins and stuff like that. Nuts and bolts and panels and sliding doors. Scotsmen saying the engines canna tak' it anymore. Bright blue lights!" [said Johnny]' (*Mankind,* 151).

Clearly, Johnny is drawing inspiration from classic science fiction stories such as *Star Trek*. In addition, Johnny is able to dream his friends into Game Space when he needs help transporting masses of food to the ScreeWee. This is because he has a certain amount of control over Game Space. As he says: 'The ScreeWee were inside the game because it was their world. Wobbler and the rest hadn't really been in it; he was pretty sure he'd just dreamed them in because he needed someone to pilot the food tankers' (*Mankind,* 105).

Game Space, in functioning alongside Dream Space, can thus become an extremely chaotic place since Johnny and Kirsty have their own unique ideas about how aliens should act, and how spaceships should look. Kirsty's views of the ScreeWee are far more ominous and sinister, and this is largely because she objectifies the ScreeWee – a fact influenced by her desire to win by killing them. Johnny's vision of Game Space is far more innocent and neutral. The spaceship is just a spaceship and the Captain is just an ordinary newt – not a nice newt or an evil newt. But, as soon as Kirsty enters into Game Space, Johnny immediately notes how it changes. The corridors become 'darker, with more curves; the walls [glisten] and [drip] with menace' (*Mankind,* 163). Even the Captain takes on a more ominous appearance. Her teeth and claws become 'more obvious' and she changes from being 'an intelligent person who just happened to be an eight-legged crocodile' into 'an eight-legged crocodile who just happened to be intelligent' (*Mankind,* 163). This, in turn, parallels the way in which media perspectives can distort the ordinary person's views of reality. Dream Space can thus

become highly chaotic as more dreamers enter into it, and the fact that it allows access to the Secondary Reality means that harmony can only be restored once the 'dreamers' have left.

Pratchett's decision to use Dream Space as a portal is an interesting one and allows for a number of interpretations. It might well be that the author chose to use the concept of the dream due to the fact that dreams are a space in which people deal with daily issues and experiences. Both Johnny and Kirsty become the readers' envoy in learning about and coming to terms with the cruelty of mankind. Yo-less, the more rationally minded of Johnny's friends, agrees with this concept and explains to Johnny that '"…dreams like this are a way of dealing with real life"' (*Mankind,* 204). However, Johnny has his own theory – he thinks that '"…it's the other way round"' (*Mankind,* 204). Johnny's theory about the interaction of dreams and real life is an excellent example of his heroic ability to see beyond the immediately obvious, as discussed in the introductory chapter to this dissertation. The idea that real life is a mechanism which allows people to deal with dreams is another way in which Pratchett questions the validity of reality, as Game Space is a more accurate reflection of Primary Reality than Primary Reality is of itself. Johnny continually questions the existence of reality and so the readers are never quite sure of the true nature of Game Space. In fact, Mendlesohn (2008:19) explains that the dream serves to distance readers from the text and remind them that they are mere external observers which in turn creates doubt. Pratchett illustrates this idea in one of the boys' typical conversations (even though it occurs in Johnny's dream):

> "Will we remember this when we wake up?" said Wobbler.
> "How can we?" said Yo-less. "*We're* not dreaming."
> "OK. OK. Um. So will we remember this when *he* wakes up?"
> "I don't think so. I think we're only here as projections from his own subconscious mind," said Yo-less. "He's just dreaming us."
> "You mean we're not *real*?" said Bigmac.

> "I'm not sure if *I'm* real," said Johnny.
> "It *feels* real," said Wobbler. "Smells real too."
> "Tastes real," said Bigmac.
> "Looks real," said Yo-less. "But he's only imagining we're here. It's not really us. Just the us inside his head."
>
> (*Mankind,* 87)

In addition, Johnny tells the readers that "'[i]t *felt* real, but that was just the dream….Dreams always felt real"' (*Mankind,* 40) and "'…when you got right down to it, dreams were often horrible, and they felt *real*...You couldn't trust dreams"' (*Mankind,* 65).

Johnny's observations about his own dreams clearly illustrate the point that Pratchett seems to be making: if dreams *feel* real and if they are untrustworthy, they present a definite danger. The danger is the blurring of the lines between reality and dream, much like the blurring of lines between the media's representation of reality and of reality itself. If there is no clear demarcation between what is real and what is a dream, then the dreamer can easily find him/herself in a situation where the dream becomes his/her reality. In *Only You Can Save Mankind* then, the fact that Dream Space and Game Space merge in Johnny's mind points to exactly this. Game Space *is* real and so Dream Space, which gives Johnny access to Game Space, is also real. There are thus consequences to his actions – such as the death of the ScreeWee. As Johnny begins to accept that Game Space is real, the consequences of his movements in Game Space also start to actualise. At the beginning of the book, Johnny merely needs a sudden fright in order to exit Game Space, just as one wakes up abruptly when one dies in a dream. However, as the authenticity of Game Space sinks in, death in Dream Space is insufficient. Johnny begins to feel physical pain when his spacecraft is attacked:

> He opened his eyes. Right. And you wake up back in your bedroom. A light winked at him. There was something beeping. Bound to be the alarm clock. That's how dreams end….He lifted his head. The flashing light was oblong. He tried to focus. There were shapes there. But they weren't saying 6:≡. They were spelling out "AIR LEAK" and behind the insistent beeping was a terrible hissing sound…His head ached. He reached up, and there was real blood on his hand. And he knew that he was going to die. Really die.
>
> (*Mankind,* 41 – 42)

This makes Johnny's sojourns in Game Space far more serious as the book progresses, and at the end of the book, when the ScreeWee successfully cross the border, one must wonder how Johnny and Kirsty will exit Game Space if death in the Secondary World becomes real and is not merely a means to get back to Primary Reality anymore. Kirsty addresses this when she tells Johnny that, '"You can't get out if you win"' (*Mankind,* 205). However, Pratchett allows for escape by providing the pod with a mysterious 'green button'. The readers are never told what it is, or exactly how it helps Johnny and Kirsty re-enter Primary Reality, but at least the readers are allowed to relax in the knowledge that there is going to be something of a happy ending for Johnny after his success. How Johnny and Kirsty are able to get back home is not of major concern; what is important is that they get back home safely with a greater understanding of the world around them.

War

Pratchett opens the 2004 edition of *Only You Can Save Mankind* with an introductory note explaining that the book's presentation of the media hype surrounding the war which is broadcast daily in Johnny's Primary Reality largely alludes to the coverage of the Persian Gulf War (1990 – 1991) in which coalition forces declared war on Iraq after Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. The war was a media phenomenon and media coverage was revolutionary in

its immediacy with live satellite transmission showing the coalition forces in the field (Taylor, 1992:7). In fact, the coverage of the Gulf War allowed people from all over the world to see, first hand, live images from the battlefront as well as bombs and missiles destroying targets. News of the war dominated prime time television, which – instead of merely being a source of information – was transformed into the day's foremost entertainment. Hallin and Gitlin (cited by Bennett and Paletz, 1994:149) explain that CNN had an 11.7 % prime-time rating in January 1990 which was over ten times their normal daily rating. These ratings then increased to 15 % just a few weeks into the war and news of the war was even presented on 'Entertainment Tonight' and in *People* magazine.

However, it is important to note (and this is important to Pratchett's commentary on the presentation of war in general) that although the images presented on television were from live satellite transmissions, there was an enormous amount of censorship involved. So much so that Taylor (1992:2) even uses the aphorism 'truth is the first casualty of war' in the introduction to his book on the Gulf War. He goes on to say that media coverage of the Gulf War was important in affecting the world-wide opinion of 'the enemy' (Iraq) as a serious 'military, economic and ideological threat to the New World Order' (Taylor, 1992:5). The ability of television to be a 'window on the world' became distorted because of the military restrictions placed on it. Ultimately, media coverage of the Gulf War glorified it by using propaganda and distorted representations of reality. 'The window thus bec[a]me a mirror for the images generated by those controlling the information' (Taylor, 1992:9):

> …preparations were made for a war of words and images in order to secure the moral high ground in advance of any conflict against Saddam Hussein. Iraq was presented as a formidable military power which was striving to achieve nuclear weapons, if it had not already done so, and to dominate the Middle East.
>
> (Taylor, 1992:5)

So why such an enormous interest in the television images of the war? Hallin and Gitlin (Cited by Bennett and Paletz, 1994:150) explain that interest in the war obviously stemmed from concern about one's family and community. However, together with concerns about the Gulf War and the live, daily coverage, interest also stemmed from the fact that people were now finally able to witness, first hand, the common man take centre stage. Ordinary people became heroes and the human drama element became something mesmerising.

Pratchett's introductory note also refers to the innovation that has taken place in the computer gaming industry which has allowed for the creation of increasingly realistic graphics and visual effects in computer and television games. The purpose of Pratchett's introductory note seems to be to orientate new readers to the time during which Pratchett originally wrote. The book was originally published in 1992, more than 20 years ago. For today's readers, this may seem like a completely different world in terms of the media and gaming technology, but the principles underlying Pratchett's argument remain valid. Pratchett's introductory note also details his views of war and the cruelty displayed by mankind in war-time situations and he uses the media and the computer gaming industry as the targets of his attack. Pratchett writes:

> *Only You Can Save Mankind* was written during the Gulf War – not the one we've just had, which was the sequel, but the one more than ten years ago. I hope no one intends to make it a trilogy. Computers were just getting powerful enough to run realistic-looking games, although they were pretty clunky by today's standards. At the same time, people were watching the first "video war." Every night the news showed the views from bombsight cameras, in what looked like live action, often presented by General "Stormin' Norman" Schwarzkopf, who was in charge. On your computer: games that looked like war. On your TV: a war that looked like a game. If you weren't careful, you could get confused…
>
> (*Mankind,* xii)

The last two sentences of Pratchett's statement are perhaps the most important in understanding his aim for the book. Quite paradoxically, he presents the readers with an extremely life-like war game and combines this with the presentation of war as game-like when presented on the television by the media. The purpose of this is to make the readers question their conception of reality which is largely tainted or rather, distorted, by the media and gaming industry.

In addition, Pratchett criticises the media and its role in making war seem less real. Many have even described the Gulf War as being divided into two: first, the war of the coalition forces against Saddam Hussein, and second, the war as *portrayed* by the media (Taylor, 1992:8). Some journalists, however, took the notion of the 'television war' even further. According to Taylor (1992:46), journalist Leslie H. Gelb described the media coverage of the war as 'Iraq, the Movie', with 'glamorous stars [specifically General 'Stormin' Norman], non-stop virtual action and…not a single dead body on screen' (coverage of the war was centred on avoiding images of dead bodies). It was a 'clinical, clean conflict in which impressive footage of "video-game" type images stood out' (Taylor, 1992:48). In addition, images of the 'blackened' skies in Baghdad were lit up with the fire of 'Triple A' (anti-aircraft artillery) which resembled lighting. This gave an eerie and surreal effect to the images shown on television and so people could be forgiven for thinking that they were not witnessing a 'real' war. Pratchett specifically alludes to these descriptions of the 'television' and 'video game' war in his portrayal of the daily news broadcasts which provide Blackbury with daily updates about the war taking place in Primary Reality. For example:

> There was more news these days than normal. Half the time the TV was showing pictures of tanks and maps of deserts with green and red arrows all over them, while in the corner of the screen would be a photo of a journalist with a phone to his ear, talking in a crackly voice. It crackled in the background while Johnny phoned up Wobbler.
>
> (*Mankind,* 34)

The 'red and green arrows' are similar to the yellow and green arrows used in 'Only You Can Save Mankind'. In the game, the green arrows indicate allied forces while the yellow arrows indicate enemy forces. In Primary Reality, the red arrows indicate enemy forces and the green arrows allies. It is interesting that such colour coding is needed to tell the two opposing sides apart and Pratchett's agenda, over and above adding to the game-like feel of the televised war, may be to reveal the equality of all men in war (they can only be separated using colour coding). This will be discussed in detail further on in the chapter.

Interestingly, the television 'crackles' in the background while Johnny has a conversation with Wobbler over the telephone. War is thus transformed into something just happening on television, a mere background event which is not given due attention. War is further degraded to simple entertainment or something which merely breaks the silence while one is engaged in more important activities. Pratchett expands upon his commentary by using Johnny's friends to illustrate the effects of the gaming world on society's reception of war. Bigmac begins the discussion:

> "Anyone see the war on the box last night?" said Bigmac. "Way to go, eh?"
> "…We'll give them the 'Mother-in-law of All Battles', eh?" said Bigmac, still trying to stir some patriotism.
> "Nah, it's not like real fighting," said Wobbler. "It's just TV fighting."
>
> (*Mankind,* 47)

There is clearly a disjunction in Wobbler's understanding of the daily images displayed on television. He seems to think that by being broadcast on television, war somehow loses its 'realness' and, in some way, is altered or distorted into just another programme on the day's television line-up:

> Then there was a program about saving whales. They thought it was a good idea. Then you could win lots of money if you could put up with the game show's host and not, for example, choke him with a cuddly toy and run away. There was the news. The walking desert again, and pictures of bombs being dropped down enemy chimneys with pinpoint precision. And sports.
>
> (*Mankind,* 57)

In addition, Johnny's seeming lack of interest in the news broadcasts further emphasises their status as entertainment: '[t]here was a film on the news showing some missiles streaking over some city. It was quite good. Then he went to bed' (*Mankind,* 21).

The television then, is associated only with entertainment; it does not and cannot reflect reality. Real war is something that happens somewhere far away, it is not something presented to Johnny on his television screen, since the television is a mere source of amusement. Yo-less supports this idea when he speaks to Johnny about the computer game. He explains that, '"…it's not real. Real's real. But stuff on a screen isn't"' (*Mankind,* 28). Like Wobbler, Yo-less sees the computer as solely a source of entertainment. Yo-less's understanding of the world is such that what is real can only exist in reality. When presented on a television or computer screen, 'real' loses its ties with reality.

Johnny, however, with his ability for deeper understanding, is quick to point out the flaws in this argument. He asks Bigmac:

> "Are the people on the television real?" [asked Johnny]
> "Course!" [said Bigmac]
> "Why're we treating them as a game, then?"
>
> (*Mankind,* 113)

Johnny's ability to understand what his friends cannot is clearly illustrated when he explains, "'[g]ames look real. Real things look like games. And…and…it all kind of runs together in my head"' (*Mankind,* 136).

The core of Pratchett's criticism is directed against the gaming industry and the use of computer games depicting war. His observations are largely based on the idea that computer games (and the media) have desensitised people, and in *Only You Can Save Mankind,* children too, to the gravity and impact of war on society. There are various branches to Pratchett's argument, but the two over-arching themes are man's obliviousness to death in war and the cruelty meted out in the name of so-called valour and honour. Pratchett begins the story with a particularly realistic description of an enthusiastic Johnny playing his new computer game so as to highlight aspects of his commentary. What is interesting about Pratchett's description is, firstly, Johnny's eagerness to kill and, secondly, the ease with which he does so. The opening paragraph reads as follows:

> "Right. Come in quick, let a missile target itself – *beep beep beebeebeebeeb* – on the first fighter, fire the missile – *thwump* – empty the guns at the fighter – *fplat fplatfplatfplat* – hit fighter No. 2 and take out its shields with the laser – *bwizzle* – while the missile – *pwwosh* – takes out fighter No.1, dive, switch guns, rake fighter No. 3 as it turns *fplatfplatfplat* – pick up fighter No. 2 in the sights again up the upcurve, let go a missile – *thwump* – and rake with it –"
>
> (*Mankind,* 5)

The description reveals the effortlessness with which Johnny is able to kill 'the enemy'. He need only push a button to release his missiles and other fire power, while the missile 'target[s] itself'. Johnny's actions may initially seem harmless as he does not actually kill anyone since 'Only You Can Save Mankind' is only a game. However, with what seems to be Pratchett's social agenda in mind, the opening depiction of a child playing a war game extends beyond the bounds of mere criticism of the entertainment world. In fact, his criticism is a moral one which points to the idea that war games, such as the one described in the book, have desensitised players to the reality of war as well as the reality of death in war. In a computer game, no one truly dies, no one permanently gets hurt, and no irreparable damage is done. Pratchett's theory then seems to be that if children are constantly exposed to this version of reality, it becomes the frame of reference from which they view the world. Games imply that there are no irrevocable consequences of war and if there are, they are minor and can be eradicated with a simple reboot. As such, those who continually play games, especially children, seem to have a diminished ability to understand that in reality war causes countless deaths and injuries as well as severe and lasting damage. Some psychologists even suggest that one need only consider recent killing sprees in America, such as the Columbine Murders and the Arizona Killings, to find proof of the effects of war and strategy games on children and teenagers (Walsh cited in Doriane Coleman, 2002:68). David Walsh (quoted in Coleman, 2002:68) states that computer games in general can be:

> …a gateway to more dangerous obsessions….The technology behind most video games…is based on a psychological principle called "operant conditioning" – essentially, a stimulus-response-reward. Research has shown that operant conditioning is a powerful shaper and influencer of behaviour…The obsession is not about violence; it's about how engrossing the game becomes.

Coleman (2002:69) herself states that computer games have the ability to 'captivate, engross, or addict the user' to the point that he/she is no longer interested or even capable of engaging in 'real world relationships and activities that are essential to the development of these skills and traits'. Further evidence of Pratchett's unreal representation of war can be seen in the fact that no matter how many times Johnny dies, he can always re-enter the game. This is mentioned many times throughout the book. In the very opening description of Johnny's enthusiastic playing, for example, Pratchett tells the readers that, '[Johnny had] died six times already. And it was only five o'clock' (*Mankind,* 5). The nonchalance of this statement clearly points to Johnny's understanding that he, as a game player, is not bound by death. There are no consequences for his actions. In fact, killing and destruction are the main purposes of the game and as such, death and ruin are reduced to mere leisure activities. Pratchett clearly indicates this when he explains to the readers that 'Johnny fired the laser one more time. *Swsssh.* He didn't really know why. It was just because you had the joystick and there was the Fire button and that was what it was *for.* After all, there wasn't a Don't Fire button' (*Mankind,* 7 – 8).

The lack of a 'Don't Fire button' also emphasises that the game discourages reflection and attempts to minimise choices. As such, killing becomes a mindless and emotionless action: 'Johnny realised he wasn't thinking about it. His eyes and hands were doing all the work. He was just watching from inside' (*Mankind,* 89).

In order to strengthen his point, Pratchett also provides evidence of Johnny's detachment from the reality of war. The presentation of death on television is minimised by Johnny's understanding of it in gaming terms: 'It's a game, Johnny thought. There's not a *real* person in that ship. It's someone playing a game. It's *all* a game. It's just things happening on a screen somewhere' (*Mankind,* 25).

This can further be seen in Johnny's thoughts about the game: '[i]t wasn't as if anyone would die, after all. Whoever had been in there would just have to start the game again' (*Mankind,* 40). Kirsty, however, embodies this idea best when she argues with Johnny about the game. Her response to the idea of her and Johnny dying is simply '[s]o what? Dying's easy' (*Mankind,* 129).

In addition, Pratchett highlights how these games facilitate murder by endowing it with a structured and formulaic nature, much like mathematics or science. There is a certain *modus operandi*, which, if followed, will guarantee success. There is thus no moral dimension attached to killing, as it merely becomes a means to an end, a way of advancing to the next level. The game's instruction manual alerts players to this formula: 'A ScreeWee heavy cruiser, it said on page seventeen, could be taken out with seventy-six laser shots. Once you'd cleared the fighter escort and found a handy spot where the ScreeWee's guns couldn't get you, it was just a matter of time' (*Mankind,* 7).

Kirsty initially embodies this idea (that death is a means to an end) and is also representative of game players generally. This can be seen in her conversation with Johnny, which precedes their combined entry into Game Space. Johnny tells her that he is 'not killing anyone' to which she replies: '"[t]hen you *can't* win"' (*Mankind,* 147). Kirsty's belief that

killing is the *only* way to achieve success is a disturbing one, especially for Johnny, who has come to grasp the reality of the situation. Kirsty clearly sees winning as the only path to success, and one can perhaps take this a step further by saying that she sees winning and killing as synonymous. Johnny, on the other hand, has come to understand that there are various ways in which he can achieve his desired end and that, in fact, this might not be the end to which the game's designers have tried to direct him. He thus seems to understand that the desired end may not always be to win, but rather, to act morally. Johnny voices this idea in his reply to Kirsty: '"I don't want to win. I just don't want to see them lose"' (*Mankind,* 147).

Pratchett underscores his argument by suggesting that war has become a faceless and nameless institution and, once again, the gaming industry is used as a metaphor. Players of 'Only You Can Save Mankind' receive the instructions for their mission from an unknown and unnamed source. Game players therefore trust blindly, relying on the fact that what they are being told is the truth. As Johnny's interpretation of the instruction manual explains:

> The ScreeWee had turned up out of nowhere and bombed some planets with humans on them. Nearly all the starships had been blown up. So there was only this one left, the experimental one. It was all that stood against the ScreeWee hordes. And only *you*…that is to say Johnny Maxwell, aged twelve, in between the time you get home from school and get something to eat and do your homework…can save Mankind. Nowhere did it say what you were supposed to do if the ScreeWee hordes didn't want to fight.
>
> (*Mankind,* 13)

Indefinite descriptions such as 'nowhere' and 'some' allude to the vagueness of the instructions given. No detail about who the ScreeWee are, where they come from, what planets or how many they destroyed, etc. is given, and so the players' only choice is to

uncritically adhere to the instructions given. This parallels Pratchett's criticism of distorted media coverage, as viewers receive their information from the media and so their reality is moulded according to what the media present. This detail seems to relate directly to the chain of command imposed upon soldiers in war and military operations. Subordinates often have no choice but to follow unquestioningly the orders of their superiors, and although this may be important for reasons of safety and order, it also removes choice, reason and logic from the equation. In addition, the set of instructions given to the game players suggests that an alternative to fighting and killing does not exist. Surrender and peace are not options and so will not even be considered by most game players. This further gives emphasis to the argument pointed out in the previous paragraph – that winning and killing can become synonymous in a game player's mind.

Pratchett's implied criticism is given impetus by his allowing the ScreeWee to proclaim their innocence. This occurs while Johnny attempts to discover the reasons behind the ScreeWee surrender:

> Johnny typed: "It says in the book you blue [*sic*] up a lot of planets."
> "*Lies!*"
> Johnny stared at the screen. What he wanted to type was: No, I mean, this cant [*sic*] happen…Johnny typed: "I shoot at you and you shoot at me. That is the game."
>
> (*Mankind,* 14)

Even Johnny, however, initially struggles with the idea that, perhaps, what he has come to believe may be incorrect. Nevertheless, the ScreeWee pledge of innocence is enough to awaken in Johnny a wariness of war in general. As he says to the ScreeWee Captain, '"…youre [*sic*] Aliens, you cant [*sic*] not want to be shot at, no other game aliens have ever

stopped aliening across the screen, they never said We DonT [*sic*] Want to Go. And then he thought: *They never had the chance. They couldn't…*"' (*Mankind,* 6 [my emphasis]).

Pratchett further shows Johnny distancing himself from the ScreeWee in the following description: 'Stars roared past as he accelerated out of the melee. It'd leave him short of fuel, but by the time *they* caught up, the shields would be back and he'd be ready, and two of *them* would already have taken damage, and…here *they* come…' (*Mankind,* 6 [my emphasis]).

The ScreeWee are continually referred to as 'they' and 'them', which, in addition to highlighting their status as the enemy, places them in the position of the Other. Naturally different and apart from the Self, the Other is not one of 'us' (humans) and is therefore placed in an opposing and foreign position. The implication then is that the Other can become the enemy, which in *Only You Can Save Mankind* it does.

However, in order to counter this idea, the plot branches in two directions which merge only in Game Space – Johnny's world and the Secondary World of the ScreeWee. Pratchett does this in order to reveal the ScreeWee's innocence as well as to highlight mankind's cruelty and destructive power. Pratchett is able to achieve this by giving Tolkien's (1992:53) idea of 'recovery' free reign. Recovery allows readers to regain a clear view of their Primary Reality by contrasting it with a Secondary Reality. Therefore, in *Only You Can Save Mankind,* as Johnny enters into Game Space, the reality of mankind's cruelty starts to sink in. This realization occurs at a poignant moment in the book which relates a moment in which Johnny is witness to the ruin caused by mankind. The debris Johnny sees once belonged to a now extinct race of aliens called the Space Invaders. Johnny is familiar with the

ship as in a previous conversation, his father tells him about the game, 'Space Invaders', which he used to play as a young boy. His father describes the ships as '[r]ows of spiky triangular green aliens with six legs…' (*Mankind,* 32). This is exactly what Johnny sees:

> It drifted along, absolutely dead, tumbling very gently. It was green, and vaguely triangular, except for six legs, or possibly arms. Three of them were broken stubs. It looked like a cross between a spider and an octopus, designed by a computer and made out of hundreds of cubes bolted together. As the giant hulk turned, he could see huge gashes in it, with melted edges. There was a suggestion of floors inside.
>
> (*Mankind,* 38)

The detail of this narrative description indicates Johnny's absolute awareness of the wreckage, presumably because he has not seen anything like it before, but also because of the totality of the devastation which the starship has incurred. One must add that Johnny has never been privy to the utter destruction of game playing. And so, his travels into the Secondary World highlight the inadequacies of Primary Reality since game players such as he and his friends have been responsible for wiping out an entire race of beings. The poignancy of this moment is also reflected in the fact that Johnny begins to realise that mankind's destructiveness has been happening for many years and is not a new phenomenon.

Tolkien's theory of recovery effects a similar realisation in readers. To do this, Pratchett depicts the veracity of the ScreeWee's situation as a secondary plot, which means that readers of *Only You Can Save Mankind* are doubly removed from their Primary Reality. Firstly, they are transported into the book's Primary World, and secondly, into the book's Secondary World. Both the book's Primary World and Secondary World serve to highlight aspects of the readers' Primary World that may have previously gone unnoticed. The detailed

description of the wreckage in space serves to demonstrate not only to Johnny but also to the readers mankind's ability and power to destroy. But the secondary plot, which takes place in the Secondary World and which recounts the reality of the ScreeWee ship, further highlights the shortfalls of the readers' Primary Reality. Pratchett explains that after an attack by a game player:

> The ScreeWee Mothership was in uproar. There was still a haze of smoke in the air from the last bombardment, and indistinct figures pattered back and forth, trying to fix things up well enough to survive the journey…half the fighters were damaged, and the main ships were in none too good condition, and there was hardly any room and certainly no food for all the survivors they were taking on board.
>
> (*Mankind,* 18)

Only the reader is privy to this description from which Johnny is completely excluded. The revelation of the damage caused to the ScreeWee ships is a distressing one which draws attention to mankind's defects. This narrative technique shifts the focus from Johnny and helps establish ScreeWee reality in an unusual way for a Portal Fantasy as discussed earlier.

As Johnny begins to question the values behind both the televised Gulf War and the game he is playing, he attempts to explain his insights to his friends. If the people on the television are real, then what they engage in is also real. Therefore, the war is real and not simply a game. In the same way, the ScreeWee are real, and thus so is the destruction enacted upon them by humans. With this, Pratchett insinuates that there is a definite blurring between the lines of reality and fiction. What is real when a computer game becomes truth and when a news broadcast becomes entertainment? What is real when the boundary between reality and

virtual reality becomes indistinct? Computer games have become exceedingly realistic and Pratchett seems to suggest that the cause of the blurring of lines between games and reality is exactly this. One need only look at the online gaming community in order to realise the effects these life-like games can have on society. 'Second Life', for example, is an online community in which players can create their own avatars (animated versions of themselves) and, quite literally, live vicariously through them. Although 'Second Life' postdates *Only You Can Save Mankind,* it is a good example of how games can distort players' view of reality. Some reports about 'Second Life' even suggest that players have come to see their 'second life' as primary in their daily existence (Second Life, 2011:n.p). Pratchett seems to expound this point (the blurring margins of games and reality) in a conversation between Johnny and Wobbler:

> "Nothing…funny…happened?" [asked Johnny]
> "Like what?" said Wobbler.
> "…Weird. Um. Lifelike, I suppose."
> 'It's *s'posed* to be. Just like the real thing, it says…"
>
> (*Mankind,* 10 – 11)

However, as Johnny continually converses with the ScreeWee Captain, he becomes conscious of authentic conflict and death in war:

> *"But we die,"* [said the Captain]
> "Johnny typed: Sometimes I die. I die a lot.'
> "*But YOU live again.*"
> Johnny stared at the words for a moment. The he typed: "Dont [*sic*] you?"
> "*No. How could this be? When we die, we die. Forever.*"
>
> (*Mankind,* 15)

Johnny also comes to comprehend the reality of death in war as the result of the time he spends in Game Space. One situation in particular, when Johnny's ship is attacked and seriously damaged, alerts Johnny to the very real possibility of death in war:

> He pushed himself up. There were lots of red lights...there were whole rows of flashing alarms that suggested that a lot of things he didn't know about were going wrong. He stared at some red letters that said "SECONDARY PUMPS FAILURE." He didn't know what the secondary pumps were either, but he wished, he really wished, they hadn't failed.
>
> (*Mankind,* 42)

This realisation, along with subsequent moments of understanding and insight, shows Johnny that all his actions, even the seemingly small ones, can have considerable consequences. As such, it becomes increasingly difficult for Johnny to fight in Game Space especially since his targets are now physical and not mere dots on a screen anymore. For example, just as Johnny is about to fire at an enemy game player, he hesitates: 'Press the button and a million volts or amps or something of white-hot laser power would crackle out and – His thumb trembled. It didn't seem to want to move' (*Mankind,* 60).

Along with these realisations also comes a certain amount of frustration at the fact that his friends do not (or perhaps cannot) come to the same conclusions. Johnny becomes increasingly irritated with the media hype surrounding the Gulf War: 'The war was still on television. It was getting on his nerves. It was worrying him. You'd really think everyone would have had enough by now' (*Mankind,* 133). Johnny finally voices his annoyance in a class discussion:

> "Do you think it's easy? Do you think the pilots *really* just sit there like…like a game? Do you think they laugh? Really laugh? Not just laugh because they're still alive, but laugh because it's…it's fun? When they're being shot at for a living, every day? When any minute they might get blown up too? Do you think they *like* it? But we always turn it into something that's not exactly real. We turn it into games and it's not games. We really have to find out what's *real*!" [said Johnny]
>
> (*Mankind,* 138)

Johnny's desperation to find out what is real in his life solidifies Pratchett's commentary of the distortion of reality by the media and gaming industry. He, unlike his friends, teachers and parents, is able to question 'what's *real*' since he understands the fact that both war games and the media have the power to misrepresent reality. The media especially has this power and can distort reality according to the agenda it wishes to pursue. War games make death and devastation seem illusory, while the media propagates images of war that seem game-like and as seemingly unreal as the war game which Johnny plays. Johnny's frustration is further informed by the fact that he has had first-hand experience of what it feels like to be in an actual conflict situation and can thus question, with some authority, the validity of what the media and gaming industries represent. However, it is Wobbler who perhaps most appropriately summarises the idea that war games affect society. He says: '"There was a man on the box saying that the bomb aimers were so good because they all grew up playing computer games"' (*Mankind,* 136).

The other side of Pratchett's criticism is to question the ever-prevailing idea of valour and honour in war. Johnny as well as his friends seem to think that honour and bravery are directly associated with war and this becomes a reason to fight instead of a means to an end. This can be seen in Johnny's motivation for playing 'Only You Can Save Mankind': 'Wobbler Johnson, who'd given him the disk and photocopied the manual on his dad's

copier, has said that once you'd completed level 10, you got given and extra 10,000 points and the Scroll of Valor and moved on to the Arcturus Sector, where there were different ships and more of them. Johnny *wanted* the Scroll of Valor' (*Mankind,* 7). The Gunnery Officer is the embodiment of what the book attacks – false ideas of heroism. He advises his Captain as follows:

> "This is not a wise move," he said.
> "It is the only one I have," said the Captain wearily.
> "No! We must fight on!"
> "And then we die," said the Captain. "We fight, and then we die. That's how it goes."
> "Then we die gloriously!"
> "There's an important word in that sentence," said the Captain. "And it's not the word 'gloriously.'"
>
> (*Mankind,* 19)

The Gunnery Officer's ideas of valour and heroism are further ed when he tells the Captain that, '[i]f [they] are going to die, [he] for one would rather die fighting' (*Mankind,* 72). The Gunnery Officer, however, is painted in a negative light because of his desire to fight and kill humans. The readers are thus inclined to favour the Captain as she ceases fighting and is a victim of human cruelty. The Gunnery Officer, on the other hand, is most likely to be the focus of the readers' dislike and as such, his ideas of heroism are also tainted by negativity. His attempts to foil the Captain's plans for a peaceful surrender further assure the readers' dislike of him. Is it important, at this point, to note that although Johnny also continues to fight, his actions are acceptable to the readers because of the moral intention that informs his conduct. The Gunnery Officer's activities, however, are informed by his ideas of heroism rather than any moral code (he does not adhere to the terms of the ScreeWee surrender). His cruelty can be seen when he aims to kill Johnny despite Johnny's trying to

help the ScreeWee: "'*Listen to me. You have sixty seconds to get beyond range of our guns. For honor. After that, you will be fired upon with extreme force*"' [said the Gunnery Officer] (*Mankind,* 123).

The distortion of ideals such as honour and valour is further emphasised by Johnny's explanation of the ScreeWee's tactical abilities: '…the ScreeWee weren't very *good* at fighting. After the first few games it was quite easy to beat them. They couldn't seem to get the hang of it. They didn't know how to be sneaky, or when to dodge' (*Mankind,* 39). Clearly the ScreeWee's ability to fight is inferior to the game players', and this serves to villainise game players as their attacks on the ScreeWee fleet are unfounded. This is on top of the fact that the ScreeWee are so eager to surrender. Pratchett persistently highlights the similarities between the ScreeWee and mankind in order to draw attention to mankind's inadequacies as well as the negative relationship between Self and Other. In essence, the ScreeWee are exactly the same as we and so the very idea of the alien-human war is reduced to being the result of mankind's trivial and arrogant quest for power.

This is Johnny's final realisation: '"I'm not even sure there *are* aliens. Only different kinds of us. But I know what the important thing is. The important thing is to be exactly sure about what you're doing. The important thing is to remember it's not a game. None of it. Even the games." [said Johnny]' (*Mankind,* 205).

Pratchett uses Bigmac to emphasise the point he makes about the effects of video and computer games on children. In a relatively long digression from the main plot, Johnny visits Bigmac in an attempt to find out more about Kirsty (Bigmac knows Kirsty's brother, Plonker). Johnny finds Bigmac and a group of Bigmac's friends outside his apartment block

attempting to steal a car. Bigmac, however, in an auspicious turn of fate, is sidetracked by Johnny's questions and walks away from his friends who are successful in their attempt to break into the car and drive away in it. But not long after, Bigmac's friends are in an accident. Although we are never explicitly told what has happened to them, the suggestion is that his friends die. Pratchett writes that, 'Johnny caught a glimpse of – well, not a car, but maybe what a car would look like after trying to be in the same place as a cement truck' (*Mankind,* 116).

On a superficial level, Pratchett seems to be making a comment about teenage delinquency and the dangers of underage drinking and driving (we can assume that the boys have been drinking because they tease Johnny about *not* drinking when he first arrives). However, when taken within the context of Pratchett's main criticism, this subplot supplements Pratchett's idea that computer games affect children's conception of reality. Pratchett moves away from his more specific criticism of war games and broadens his commentary to include racing car games such as, *Stunts* (released by Distinctive Software in 1990), *The Duel: Test Drive II* (developed by Distinctive Software in 1989), and *Red Racer* (developed by Square in 1897) (List of Racing Video Games#1989, 2011:n.p.). Once again, these games represent a reality which is not authentic. Players of any age can race their cars at top speeds and crash into barriers or other cars on the road and even drive off the edge of a cliff without any serious consequence. They merely resume their race from the point at which they crashed, or, quite simply, restart the game. As with war games, no one gets hurt, no one dies and the cars' scratches and dents magically disappear as soon as a new race starts. It is no wonder then, that Bigmac's friends can race a stolen car down the road without any qualms, not because of delinquency or a lack of moral sensibility, but because their view of reality has been skewed. These youths seem to believe that they are invincible and Johnny's

description of them as 'harder' (*Mankind,* 111), combined with the details of their exit as well as Bigmac's reaction to them, serves to highlight this point. Pratchett describes their escape: 'One of the kids said something to the other one, and they both laughed. Then they got into the car. After a little while it started up, bumped up onto the pavement and off again, and then accelerated into the night. They heard the tires screech as it turned the corner on the wrong side of the road' (*Mankind,* 112). Bigmac's attitude around the boys is also a clear indication of their attitude: 'Bigmac relaxed. Suddenly he was a lot less tough, and a bit shorter, and more like the amiable not-quite-thicko Johnny had always known' (*Mankind,* 112).

Bigmac's 'tough-guy' attitude, which he plays up in front of his friends, is a clear indication of their superciliousness. The laughter of the boys as they get into the car can only been read as arrogant and their reckless speeding off into the night despite their obviously poor driving skills points to the sense of invincibility that any player experiences while playing a racing car game. Bigmac's reaction to the accident, however, noticeably reveals his shock. Upon seeing his friends in the wreckage, Bigmac totters 'over to a low garden wall by the roadside, and [is] sick' (*Mankind,* 116). His whole body shakes with 'cold' and 'terror' (*Mankind,* 116). His body physically rejects the idea of his friends' death since it is real, and is not compatible with his affected sense of reality. Clearly, he had not thought of his friends' antics as life-threatening or dangerous, and one can perhaps conclude that he too bought into the idea of their indestructibility.

Divorce and Family Relations

Pratchett parallels his commentary on war with a discussion of domestic warfare in the form of Johnny's dysfunctional family relations. Pratchett specifically comments on

divorce and the effect it can have on the children involved. Pratchett's criticism, however, is not solely focused on the negative effects of divorce on familial relations; the present threat of divorce serves to make the book more realistic. Constant reminders of Johnny's 'ordinariness' combined with the very distressing depiction of Johnny's home life thus work to create a sense of realism which, in turn, allows for a greater connection between the readers and Johnny, as he becomes someone to whom they can relate.

Pratchett refers to the situation at Johnny's home as 'Trying Times', but the word, 'divorce', is only ever used by his friends and never by Johnny or the narrator. This euphemistic reference most obviously serves to make the situation seem more agreeable than it truly is, but Pratchett constantly undercuts the euphemism by giving detailed information about the state of affairs at Johnny's home. These details create a gloomy picture. For example, '[h]e heard his mother downstairs complain about *Cobbers* [an Australian soap opera], and by the sound of the raised voices, that started Trying Times again' (*Mankind,* 29). It is interesting that his mother seems to be so concerned with the Australian soap opera. This detail serves to illustrate how it is not only children whose reality may be skewed by the entertainment world. Adults are also susceptible. Another example of Johnny's dysfunctional reality is that '[t]he advantage of [it] was that helping [himself] from the fridge was OK. There didn't seem to be any proper mealtimes anymore in any case. Or any real cooking' (*Mankind,* 20).

The continuous capitalisation of 'Trying Times' also has an interesting effect. Firstly, it gives the impression that Johnny's situation is somehow official and together with the pluralisation of the word 'times', contributes to the idea that his situation is not unique in any way, but rather a recurring event. True to Pratchett's style, particularly in the Discworld

series, the capitalisation of descriptions most often signals cliché or Pratchett's satirical treatment of a topic or issue. In *Only You Can Save Mankind* then, the capitalisation of 'Trying Times' serves to make this period seem hackneyed. 'Trying Times' is therefore portrayed as being something that happens generally and on a regular basis and by which children are often affected. This is one of the primary foci of Pratchett's criticism. This cliché-effect is depicted by Pratchett who explains that all of Johnny's friends have gone through the self-same 'Trying Times' and therefore know what he is going through. For example:

> "You still having trouble at home?"said Yo-less
> "It's all gone quiet," said Johnny
> "That can be worse than shouting."
> "Yes."
> "It's not that bad when your mum and dad split up," said Wobbler, "although you get to see more museums than is good for you."
>
> (*Mankind,* 46)

In addition, Pratchett uses Johnny's friends and even the ScreeWee Captain to highlight the negative effect of the divorce on Johnny. Pratchett's main focus, however, is on the physical toll that the divorce takes on Johnny, rather than any emotional toll. Johnny's health and physical well-being become representative of the inner turmoil which plagues him as well as children in general, during these trying times.

The manifestation of Johnny's inner turmoil as physical difficulties is perhaps best explained by Yo-less:

> "What you've got here is a projection of a psychological conflict. That's all....Your mom and dad are splitting up, right? Well-known fact," [said Yo-less]

> "Could be. It's a bit of a trying time," said Johnny
> "O-*kay.* And there's nothing you can do about it."
> "Shouldn't think so," said Johnny
> "And this definitely affects you," said Yo-less
> "I suppose so," said Johnny cautiously. "I know I have to do a lot of my own cooking."
> "Right. So you project your…um…suppressed emotions onto a computer game. Happens all the time….You can't solve the *real* problems, so you turn them into problems you *can* solve. Like thirty years ago, you'd probably dream about fighting dragons or something. It's a projected fantasy."
>
> (*Mankind,* 28)

Further examples of the effect of Johnny's emotional state on his health are voiced by the Captain and Yo-less's mother. For example, the Captain, upon hearing about Johnny's fainting spell says: '"Did I not say? Too much sugar and carbohydrate, not enough fresh vitamins. You should get out more'" (*Mankind,* 163). And Yo-less relays his mother's opinion: '"She said you did everything right, anyway,' said Yo-less. 'And she said you aren't being properly looked after….She said you ought to come round our house to eat sometimes – "' (*Mankind,* 135).

It is interesting to note that both the Captain's and Yo-less's mother's responses to Johnny's health are maternal. This highlights Johnny's dysfunctional home life as he only seems to receive this maternal concern from women other than his own mother. Johnny's situation is not favourable, but Pratchett does allow for moments in which Johnny's parents are presented in a more flattering light. These moments mean that Johnny's life is not all doom and gloom, and that his parents are not wholly negative forces in his life. Instead, they are presented as struggling with the divorce too, and this further highlights the total impact of divorce on families. A description of Johnny's rather awkward father-son time serves to show how little contact Johnny has with his parents. They seem to have lost touch with what is

going on in his life, and he seems to have forgotten how to interact with his parents. An example of this awkward interaction goes as follows:

> On top of it all, his father came upstairs to be fatherly. This happened about once a fortnight. There didn't seem to be any way of stopping it. You had to put up with twenty minutes of being asked about how you were getting on at school, and had you *really* thought about what you wanted to be when you grew up. The thing to do was not encourage this, but as politely as possible…Johnny waited until he heard the living-room door shut again. He wondered if he ought to have asked where the instruction manual for the dishwasher was.
>
> (*Mankind,* 30, 33)

Johnny may seem like an ordinary boy. Even his name, a very common one, serves to suggest this. He is the only one of his friends that does not have a nickname and so does not seem to have any defining features or quirks that could possibly be used to define him as different, at least physically, from his friends. However, despite his apparent ordinariness, Johnny is different. His ability to see beyond the obvious allows him to understand what those around him cannot and thus also allows him to continually gain new perspectives on his own life as well as on society.

It seems, although it is never directly stated, that Johnny is constantly looking for more in the world and this is further emphasised in the following book, *Johnny and the Dead,* when Pratchett explains that '[m]ost people's minds don't let them see things that might upset them ... because he's spent his whole life not seeing things' (*Dead* 9). The point of making Johnny seem completely mundane and ordinary boy, with his own personal problems, however, is an important one. By doing this, Pratchett ultimately reveals to readers that no matter how ordinary people may seem, they are still capable of doing

extraordinary things. In this way, readers, who experience the adventures with Johnny and his friends, also become heroes as they form a personal connection with Johnny. Johnny's problems at home continue, but he is always able to overcome them through perseverance. This is what readers ultimately learn from the book. As Keeble (quoted in Mendlesohn, 2008:15) explains with regard to the hero: 'The regenerate are distinguished from the unregenerate not by any exceptional abilities or virtue but by their faith: they keep on going'. Mendlesohn (2008:15) also points out that the Portal-Quest Fantasy is imbued with the Puritan belief that 'it is by playing a full part in this world that salvation is won'.

~2~

Johnny and the Dead

Johnny and the Dead[8] is the second book in Terry Pratchett's trilogy about the young Johnny Maxwell. It follows on from *Only You Can Save Mankind* (1992), not only chronologically, but also in the themes and issues it addresses, namely the realities of death (the primary concern of the book) and war. In this chapter I discuss the concept of 'Intrusion Fantasy', the impact of the past on the present and future, the importance of ecology as well as the reality of death in war.

Published in 1993, the book once again focuses on the adventures of Johnny Maxwell and his friends, Wobbler, Bigmac and Yo-less. In this instalment, the unlikely hero and his accomplices set out on a mission to save the local cemetery, all the while uncovering forgotten history and making friends with some unusual characters. The story commences with Johnny and his mother having recently moved in with Johnny's grandfather due to 'Phase Three of Trying Times' (*Johnny and the Dead,* 11). We gather that the relationship between Johnny's mother and father is deteriorating and that their home life has become dysfunctional: 'This was Phase Three of Trying Times, after the shouting, which had been bad, and the Being Sensible About Things (which had been worse; people are better at shouting)' (*Dead,* 11). As a result of the move, Johnny starts walking home from school with Wobbler instead of taking the bus, and discovers that walking through the local cemetery cuts their journey in half. On one such journey home, Johnny suddenly succumbs to an urge to

[8] Referred to as *Dead* in parenthetical references.

knock on the door of Alderman Thomas Bowler's (1822 – 1906) mausoleum. To his surprise, the door unexpectedly opens and the Alderman steps out into the sunshine, glares at Johnny and says: 'Yes?' (*Dead,* 19)

Both boys make a run for it, but Johnny soon realises that he is the only one who actually saw the Alderman. Consequently, he returns to the mausoleum in order to ascertain whether his imagination had simply got the better of him, or whether he had actually seen a ghost. He knocks once more on the door and, against all reason, the deceased Alderman answers for a second time, after which they enter into a discussion about Michael Jackson.

The discussion with the Alderman ignites Johnny's unrelenting curiosity which then inspires him into learning more about the dead buried in Blackbury's cemetery and the history of his hometown. The time spent in the cemetery makes Johnny realise how beautiful the grounds are: a poignant realisation since the city council has sold the cemetery to a development company, United Amalgamated Consolidated Holdings, which has plans to build on the grounds. The dead soon find out about these plans and, horrified, ask Johnny for his help. The cemetery is, after all, their home. Johnny agrees, although initially reluctantly, and recruits his friends, Wobbler, Bigmac and Yo-less to help him in this quest. Johnny's plan to save the cemetery is to find someone famous who has been buried in the graveyard. He believes that the community will then take a greater interest in it and thwart United Amalgamated Consolidated Holdings' plans for expansion. Johnny's task, however, proves to be exceedingly difficult as his findings, or rather lack thereof, indicate that Blackbury is not a town known for fostering fame.

During his quest Johnny comes across many interesting individuals buried in the cemetery who are 'famous', not in terms of being widely known, but for having been part of the town's history and for having contributed, each in his/her own special way, to its development. Among the dead are, for example, the Alderman (who worked *pro bono publico* on Blackbury's council for over fifty years), William Stickers (who would have invented communism if Karl Marx had not), Solomon Einstein (a distant relative of Albert Einstein) and Mrs Sylvia Liberty (a lively women's rights activist). Johnny realises that the value of the cemetery is as a means for the town's people both to remember the dead and appreciate their involvement in shaping the town and its people. A large part of this realisation arises from Johnny's discovery of the 'Blackbury Pals', a group of young men from Blackbury who fought in the Great War together. His interest in the young men is sparked by a picture of them that Johnny comes across in an old edition of the *Blackbury Guardian,* the local newspaper. The young men smile for the photographer just before their deployment and the significance of this moment for Johnny is his realisation that, except for one of the young men, all the Blackbury Pals died just four weeks after the photograph was taken. Johnny finds it hard to accept this, especially since the Pals were not much older than he and his friends. Soon after this discovery, Johnny goes to a council meeting and makes an impassioned plea to save the cemetery. The council turns a deaf ear, but Johnny's passion touches the people of Blackbury and soon the whole community fights against the corporation and council to save the cemetery. Johnny succeeds in creating interest in the burial ground and the rescue of the cemetery seems to become possible. However, despite this triumph, the dead soon discover that they are not as inextricably bound to the graveyard as they used to be. They are able to let go of their fear of being forgotten and instead realise that the graveyard is a place for the living to remember their history rather than for the dead

to inhabit. They are free to wander the world and forget who they once were as it is the living who have to remember, and the dead who have to forget (*Dead,* 102).

Pratchett's tale about Johnny, his friends and the dead is full of satirical commentary on death and war which are inextricably bound as themes. The most obvious indication of this is Pratchett's use of the Blackbury Pals. Pratchett clarifies his intentions in an introductory note in which he states that although he has '"bent history a little bit…There were such things as Pals's Battalions, just as described [in the book], and they really were a horribly innocent device for wiping out a whole generation of young men from one particular area with one cannon shell'" (*Dead,* 7).

Linked to his satirical take on war is the poignant social commentary that Pratchett makes both on the dead and society's attitudes towards the dead and death. He characterises the dead as 'real people' by giving them names, detailed biographies, physical features and personalities that mirror those of the living (albeit stereotyped). In doing so, he demystifies the dead for young readers. In essence, Pratchett points out that the dead are an undeniably important part of history and have made valuable contributions to society in general.

But this is not where Pratchett's commentary concludes as *Johnny and the Dead* is further set against a background of the burgeoning greed and materialism of the 1980s. Pratchett uses this backdrop in order to enhance his primary thematic observations as well as his auxiliary commentary about ecology and other social issues, which are discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Intrusion Fantasy

The key to understanding *Johnny and the Dead* is the fact that it functions within the realm of fantasy. The word, 'fantasy' originates from the Latin word *phantasticus*, meaning that which is made visible, visionary or unreal (Jackson, 1981:13). One may thus infer that works of fantasy are creations of 'unreal' or 'visionary' worlds, some of the most well-known examples of which are Pratchett's Discworld, Tolkien's Middle-Earth and Le Guin's Earthsea. *Johnny and the Dead,* although a fantasy comprised of a 'Primary World' and an 'unreal' or 'Secondary World', functions differently from the works of fantasy alluded to above. Instead of locating the tale solely within the unreal, as the Discworld, Middle-Earth and Earthsea do, *Johnny and the Dead* positions its characters in a realistic representation of the readers' Primary Reality, which functions alongside the unreal. In other words, the readers are doubly removed from their Primary Reality: firstly, through a depiction of 'reality', no matter how realistic, and secondly, through the depiction of a Secondary World which intrudes upon the book's Primary Reality. This Pratchett does in all three Johnny Maxwell books, but *Johnny and the Dead* specifically can be classified as an 'Intrusion Fantasy' as defined by Mendlesohn (2008).

The 'Intrusion Fantasy', as explained in the previous chapter, creates a Primary Reality into which a Secondary World enters or intrudes. Chaos ensues when the Secondary World intrudes upon the Primary. When the Secondary World retreats or the creatures go home, normality is once again restored (Mendlesohn, 2008:xxii). In *Johnny and the Dead* then, the dead, whom Johnny has helped, realise that they no longer have to attach themselves to the cemetery as a sombre waiting place or in a vain attempt to be remembered by the living. As a result, they finally move on, taking the disruption to the Primary World with

them. In this way, fantasy aids readers in gaining a sense of 'recovery' in Tolkien's (1992:53) terms. By reading *Johnny and the Dead* child readers are helped to regain a clear view of the world around them.

Also important to the Intrusion Fantasy is the fact that the two worlds, the Primary and the Secondary, are clearly distinguishable from one another. They are two completely separate worlds, with the Secondary World or the fantastical realm merely infiltrating the book's Primary Reality. Typically, however, only the protagonist is aware of this permeation and so characters other than the protagonist are most often not conscious of the fantastical realm's penetration into their world but are still affected by its presence in many ways (Mendlesohn, 2008:xxii).

In *Johnny and the Dead* it is only Johnny, the hero, who has the ability to see and speak to the dead when they infiltrate his reality. However, despite the fact that Wobbler, Bigmac and Yo-less cannot see or hear the dead, they can feel their presence. This is affirmed in the following conversation at the end of the boys' first so-called 'meeting' with the dead:

> "Have they gone?" said Wobbler.
> "Not that they were here," said Yo-less, the scientific thinker.
> "They were here, and they've gone," said Johnny.
> "It definitely felt a bit weird," said Bigmac. "Very cold."
>
> (*Dead,* 59)

Even Johnny, despite his ability to see and speak to the dead, can relate to the eerie feeling his friends become aware of when they are around the dead: 'He felt he was being watched in some way that had nothing to do with eyes. It wasn't exactly creepy, but it *was* uncomfortable. You didn't dare scratch your bottom or pick your nose' (*Dead,* 31).

Johnny's friends are aware of this breach in reality because Johnny discusses it with them, but it is clear that they can also sense it some way. And then there is always the fact that they see a newspaper being read mysteriously in mid-air (*Dead,* 52).

The characteristics of the Intrusion Fantasy, according to Mendlesohn, form an ideal basis from which the traditional structure of the hero's journey can operate. The hero, in the romance tradition, is typically granted a gift of some kind, and the gift in the Intrusion Fantasy is the ability to perceive those other-worldly creatures who intrude upon Primary Reality. Johnny is granted the profound ability to communicate with the dead, and so, naturally, he is the novel's hero. Interestingly, however, and as will be discussed later in the chapter, Johnny is the hero of the story not only because of his gift, but because of his ability to understand what others cannot; this is the very reason for his special abilities. His friends may not understand his abilities, but are nevertheless aware that Johnny is different. As Yo-less states:

> "Now, *personally,* I think you're very nearly totally disturbed and suffering from psychosomatica and hearing voices and seeing delusions…and probably ought to be locked up in one of those white jackets with the stylish long sleeves. But that doesn't matter, 'cos we're friends."
>
> (*Dead,* 61)

Further contributing to the functioning of the Intrusion Fantasy is language. Mendlesohn (2008:xxii) argues that language is one of the most important aspects that has an impact on the way in which a fantasy communicates with readers. The language of the Intrusion Fantasy comprises much description and explanation as readers are placed in the same position as the protagonist, or the 'point-of-view character' as Mendlesohn (2008:xxii) terms it. In this way the readers are as ignorant of the intrusive forces and their intentions as

the protagonist is and, as the protagonist is made aware of things, so too are the readers. They are taken on a journey with the hero, instead of being mere bystanders who observe the hero's adventures. As Johnny discovers his ability to communicate with the dead, and more importantly, as he comes to terms with his ability, so too do the readers. And, as Johnny comes to realise the importance of the dead as a necessary link to history, so do we. Finally, Johnny's journey helps him to recognise the senseless nature of war and, as he gathers more information about the Blackbury Pals and Tommy Atkins, the readers also begin to comprehend Pratchett's fervent argument against war.

One consequence of the readers' first-hand involvement, as Mendlesohn (2008:xxii) argues, is that the language of the fantasy reflects a constant sense of amazement. This is due to the fact that the characters are never expected to become fully inured to the fantastic. However, with this sense of awe also comes a sense of scepticism on the part of the readers since it is difficult to maintain a constant state of amazement, whether in language or in the ways characters react. In the beginning of *Johnny and the Dead,* this state of awe is made apparent, especially in Johnny's character. After he first sees Alderman Thomas Bowler, for example, his language is marked by exclamation, shock and surprise, as can be seen in this conversation with Wobbler:

> "What happened? What happened?" [Wobbler] panted.
> "Didn't you see?" said Johnny.
> "I didn't see anything!"
> "The door opened!"
> "It never!"
> "It did!"
>
> (*Dead,* 19)

Further examples of this awe can be found when Wobbler, Bigmac and Yo-less also 'encounter' the dead for the first time:

> "You're just trying to wind me up!" [Wobbler] yelled.
> "I'm not going to hang around practising being satanic!..."
>
> (*Dead,* 20)

This is even more apparent when Johnny sees all of the dead together for the first time:

> "Look," said Johnny. "They're here! They're all around us!'
> "I'll tell my mum of you!' said Wobbler. "This is practising bein' satanic again!"
>
> (*Dead,* 50)

This initial sense of awe, as has already been stated, is only natural. Here, we have four teenage boys encountering the 'living dead' for the first time, and that preliminary sense of shock, awe and even terror that Pratchett depicts mirrors a realistic reaction. If the Primary Reality closely mirrors the 'real' world, then the reaction of the readers to the intrusive forces will be enhanced that much more. Mendlesohn (2008:xxii) argues that the characters in intrusion fantasies are never expected to become fully accustomed to the fantastical forces around them. However, as Johnny sees the dead on a regular basis, they become his friends and he quickly forgets that they are dead. In this way, he does indeed lose his sense of awe and becomes familiar with the intrusive forces of the Secondary World, no matter how strange or fantastical they may be. As Johnny says while trying to acquire a transistor radio for the dead from his grandfather: '"This is...for some *friends*"' (my italics). We believe that this is a truthful indication of Johnny's feelings as Pratchett tells us that '[Johnny] was by nature an honest person...' (*Dead,* 64). Wobbler, Yo-less and Bigmac also gradually begin to

lose their sense of awe and this can be seen when Wobbler starts reaching for an explanation as to why Johnny is able to communicate with the dead. He exclaims: '"Poltergeist activity!...You get that around adolescents! I read something in a magazine! Saucepans flying through the air and stuff! His head'll spin round in a minute!"' (*Dead,* 51).

Pratchett, however, does allow his readers to regain a sense of the awe they experience in the beginning by periodically reminding them of the existence of the Secondary World – the world that functions differently from both Johnny and the readers' Primary Reality:

> It was amazing how sounds died away in the cemetery. There was only a set of overgrown iron railings and some unpruned trees between them and the road, but noises were suddenly cut right down, as if they were being heard through a blanket. Instead, silence seemed to pour in – pour *up,* Johnny thought – like breathable water. It hissed. In the cemetery, silence made a noise.
>
> (*Dead,* 43)

This is another example of Tolkien's 'recovery' since, for the first time, Johnny really sees the cemetery for what it is. Pratchett later invokes the readers' sense of awe again with further detailed descriptions of intrusion which are scattered throughout the text. The following description of the dead's 'passing on' is an example of this:

> The air sparkled. Glowing lines, blue as electricity, thin as smoke, poured out of the clear sky. Where they touched the fingers of the dancing woman they stretched out and broke, then reformed. They crawled over the grass. They whirred through the air. The whole cemetery was alive with pale blue comets. *Alive*...Johnny looked at his own fingers. There was a blue glow crackling over his right hand, like St Elmo's Fire. It sparkled as he waved it towards the stars and felt his feet leave the gravel path…The lights spun around him and let him drift gently back down.
>
> (*Dead,* 215)

Adjectives such as ‘sparkled’, ‘glow’, ‘electricity’, ‘smoke’, ‘dancing’, ‘whirred’, ‘alive’ and ‘spun’ evoke a sense of magic and wonder. The detail of this passage is another example of how Pratchett is able to ignite the imagination of child readers and transport them into the Secondary World.

Mendlesohn (2008:xxii) does, however, briefly acknowledge the difficulty that comes with trying to maintain a sense of awe. She suggests that this difficulty may in fact create a dependence upon ‘stylistic realism’, which assists in upholding the opposition that exists between the two worlds. There is a tendency in the Intrusion Fantasies to constantly introduce new protagonists and to ‘up the ante on the nature of the horrors’. Maintaining this ‘horror, amazement, and surprise…’ is difficult if the protagonist becomes familiar with them (Mendlesohn, 2008:xxii). Therefore, Mendlesohn suggests that an aspect of what she terms ‘escalation’ is necessary and often inevitable in Intrusion Fantasies.

Although ‘escalation’ does occur in *Johnny and the Dead* it takes place as a natural intensification towards a climax rather than to uphold any initial sense of awe that both Johnny and the readers experience when they meet the dead for the first time. Upon an initial reading of the book the state of awe which Pratchett creates in the opening may seem to be constant, especially in relation to Johnny’s character, but I do not believe that this sense of awe stems from any maintenance of ‘horror, amazement and surprise’ (Mendlesohn, 2008:xxii). It rather stems from Johnny’s progressive realisation of the importance of the dead in the lives of his community, and with this recognition comes an acceptance of his gift. The source of his continual amazement then, is the growth of his social and socio-historical awareness, and so the ‘stylistic realism’ of which Mendlesohn speaks functions to mirror very real social issues. One can perhaps conclude that in Johnny’s acceptance of the dead and also

of his gift, Pratchett rather diminishes this state of awe and terror as the book progresses in order to enhance the message he wishes to communicate – that the dead are not mysterious or frightening, but rather an important part of society. And so, recovery takes place as readers become familiar with the dead and are thus able to look upon the dead from a new perspective. This is further discussed later in the chapter.

Yet another important characteristic of the Intrusion Fantasy is that it ends with the return of fantastical elements to the Secondary World. This is necessary to restore 'normality' once again in the Primary Reality of the protagonist. The restoration of normality is vital because the protagonist must be conscious of a clear demarcation between the real world and the realm from which these fantastical elements emerge. *Johnny and the Dead* is no different. Once Johnny has completed his task, the dead begin to fade and that 'sensation of travelling', which Johnny so often experiences around the dead returns and echoes the movement that the dead make away from the graveyard '…as if the dead were going back to a different world' (*Dead,* 58).

This consciousness, however, is often painful as the existence of 'normality' stands in complete opposition to the existence of the intrusive fantastical world. 'Protagonists know what is normal even if we [the readers] do not and express this clearly and forcefully' (Mendlesohn, 2008:xxii). Johnny suffers from this painful awareness and this is most apparent in his first meeting with the Alderman. However, this painful realisation also leads Johnny to confront this breech in normality, which in turn, is vital for the eventual acceptance of his gift and hero's task:

> Johnny hesitated. I could turn around now, he thought, and go home. And if I turn around, I'll never find out what happens next. I'll go away and I'll never find out what happens next. I'll go away and I'll never know why it happened now and what would have happened next. I'll go away and grow up and get a job and get married and have children and become a granddad and retire and take up bowls and go into Sunshine Acres and watch daytime television until I die, and I'll never know.
>
> And then he thought: perhaps I did. Perhaps that all happened and then, just when I was dying, some kind of angel turned up and said would you like a wish? And I said, yes, I'd like to know what would have happened if I hadn't run away, and the angel said, OK, you can go back. And here I am, back again. I can't let myself down.
>
> (*Dead,* 22)

Clearly, Johnny is unsure about this new adventure since he realises that his experience is abnormal. But his inquisitive nature encourages him to immerse himself in this fantastical situation. Normality is once again restored when the dead decide to leave the cemetery, much to Johnny's dismay. Initially, Johnny cannot understand why the dead would ever choose to leave their home, especially after they have so vehemently rejected their pending eviction and after Johnny has worked so hard to prevent that eviction.

However, the dead come to realise that their departure is a necessary step in the cycle of life. The realm of the dead was never meant to encroach upon the world of the living and its intrusion is not natural. The very concept of death requires the dead to move on to a different world, separate and distanced from the living, and so their intrusion is not sustainable. The only option the dead have is to finally and permanently cross over into the Secondary World. The dead do not understand this at first and their hopes of existing in Primary Reality, voiced by Mr Grimm, are based on their desire to be remembered. Mr Grimm warns the rest of the dead before they leave the graveyard: "'You will get lost! Something will go wrong, you know! And then you'll be wandering around forever, and

you'll...forget"' (*Dead,* 138). But their existence in the cemetery cannot be maintained as they are not from Johnny's world anymore. Instead, they are intruders and the forces of the living world will resist them, in order to protect the Primary World.

As Mr Fletcher states: '"We had to find it out. You have to find it out. You have to forget who you were. That's the first step. And stop being frightened of old ghosts. Then you've got room to find out what you *are*. What you can *be*"' (*Dead,* 217). In essence, Mr Fletcher points to the fact that change is inevitable. It is important to remember the past, but more important to leave the past in the past and become who you are meant to be. The departure of the dead then enables Johnny, as well as the rest of the living, to do this. He must remember the dead and the past but move forward from it. In essence, memory becomes a form of recovery. The intrusion of the fantastic into the Primary World is necessary to reaffirm memory and recovery, but once this is achieved, the intrusion must end.

Comedy, Satire and Death

Pratchett's satirical style of writing means that he comments on certain issues or concerns in a comical way. Comedy and exaggeration are his weapons of criticism and in the satirical mode he is able to achieve what Feinberg (1967:4) describes as critically distorting the familiar in order to highlight irregularities and deficiencies in society. In aiming to reveal aspects of reality, satire, according to Gilbert Highet (1962:158), works in one of two ways. It either presents the world in an 'apparently factual' way, which becomes ridiculous and absurd, or it functions to present an image of another world, which, in turn, highlights aspects of this world, or rather, mirrors our reality. So, in *Johnny and the Dead* Pratchett allows the dead to intrude upon Johnny's so-called 'real' world in order to illuminate the aspects of our

reality which he wishes to criticise. Before considering how Pratchett makes use of both satire and fantasy, however, it is necessary to first consider what features of society Pratchett seeks to criticise in *Johnny and the Dead.*

This is especially important as the book is targeted at child readers, who are among the more impressionable readers in society. Taking into consideration the more-often-than-not pedagogic nature of children's literature, the social criticisms voiced by children's authors need to be analysed. In addition, when considering the didactic function of children's literature, as explained in the Introduction, it seems that Pratchett's primary moral and social concerns focus on the disconnection of individuals from each other and of society from history. Pratchett's pedagogic thrust in *Johnny and the Dead* is enhanced by the presentation of faceless corporation in the form of United Amalgamated Consolidated Holdings which highlights society's disregard for history as expressed specifically through the forgetting of the dead.

The main concern of *Johnny and the Dead,* as the title hints, is death, or more specifically, the importance of people's attitudes towards the dead. The fact that Pratchett has chosen to critique society's attitude towards death and the dead is especially interesting given society's view of death as the ultimate 'taboo', as Ariès (1981:109) explains. According to Ariès (1981:106), society has 'banished death', 'weeping is synonymous with hysteria' (1981:110) and 'the tears of the bereaved have become comparable to the excretions of the diseased' (1981:111). He explains that in the early 20th Century death 'solemnly altered the space and time of a social group that could be extended to include the entire community' (1981:105), and that the quality of 'generality' which death once had has disappeared in modern society. Where there were once 'codes' to assist in the 'transition from the calm and

monotonous world of everyday reality to the inner world of the feelings', there is now nothing to help 'establish communication' and 'feelings too intense for the ordinary forms either do not find expression and are held in, or break forth with intolerable violence because there is no way to channel them' and it is for this reason that 'everything having to do first with love and then with death became forbidden' (Aries, 1981:109). However, Ariès (1981:106) does admit that 'all the changes that have modified attitudes toward death in the past thousand years have not altered this fundamental image, this permanent relationship between death and society'.

And so, although the presentation of death in children's fantasy may seem quite odd, the fantasy, owing to its origins in the fairy tale, is able to address certain bleak realities. It can do so because it offers the child certain 'symbolic' suggestions on how to deal with such issues. As Bettelheim (1976:8) argues, all children will have to deal with unpleasant realities eventually. By exposing children to such certainties then, Fantasy equips the child not with any clear-cut solutions, but with a means of dealing with life and its ups and downs. By demonstrating that conquering these struggles is emotionally, psychologically and even physically possible, fantasy may empower child readers.

Pratchett also chooses to approach his serious subject matter in a comical way. The effect of this is to lighten the severity of the serious while still maintaining its impact. Pratchett's comic take on the dead, although important in its ultimate message, demystifies the very concept of the dead and makes it more emotionally manageable for child readers.

One of the pivotal objectives of *Johnny and the Dead* is to demystify death and the dead. Johnny realises the everydayness of death early on in the novel: '"There's just dead

people [in the cemetery]! That doesn't make it scary does it? Dead people are people who were living once!'" (*Dead,* 43). This is a prime example of Pratchett's attempts to deflate views of the dead as ominous and eerie. As the narrator later explains, '[t]hey didn't lurch. They didn't ooze any green. They just looked grey, and very slightly out of focus' (*Dead,* 48). Pratchett even uses one of the dead, William Stickers, to assist in this demystification of the dead. He says to Johnny: '"It's a perfectly understandable scientific phenomenon… Never let superstition get in the way of rational thought, boy. It's time for Mankind to put old cultural shibboleths aside…"' (*Dead,* 29). Further evidence can be found in one of the boys' lunch break conversations:

> "Ghosts," said Yo-less, when he'd finished.
> "No-oo," said Johnny uncertainly. "They don't like being called ghosts. It upsets them, for some reason. They're just...dead. I suppose it's like not calling people handicapped or backward."
> "Politically incorrect," said Yo-less. "I read about that."
> "You mean they want to be called," Wobbler paused for thought, "*post-senior citizens*."
> "Breathily challenged," said Yo-less.
> "Vertically disadvantaged," said Wobbler.
> "What? You mean they're short?" said Yo-less.
> "Buried," said Wobbler.
>
> (*Dead,* 34)

These examples show that Pratchett highlights the normality of death as well as the importance of society's remembering the dead as a meaningful part of history. Johnny's speech to the council about saving the cemetery is perhaps an even better example of this:

> "I've had a good look round the cemetery," said Johnny, plunging on. "I've been...doing a project. I've walked round it a lot, it's full of stuff...It's wrong to think that the past is something that's just gone. It's still there. It's just that *you've* gone past. If you drive through a town, it's still there in the rear-view mirror. Time is a road, but it doesn't roll up behind you. Things aren't over just because they're *past.* Do you see that?"
>
> (*Dead,* 151)

With this speech, Johnny makes the point that the dead are always relevant to society. Remembering the dead is therefore vital because they are part of our *history*, but also because they have had an impact on creating our present. The dead are therefore representative of tradition. To strengthen this point, Pratchett allows the dead to argue that they still have the right to vote. In doing so he suggests that their impact on society is not only due to their part in creating it, but also to the lasting impact they have on the present. This can be seen in one of their discussions:

> "...you can't use a dead person's vote," said William Stickers. "It's called Personation..."
> "I'm not proposing to let anyone use my vote," said the Alderman. "I want to use it myself. No law against that."
> "Good point."
> "I served this city faithfully for more than fifty years," said the Alderman. "I do not see why I should lose my vote just because I'm dead. Democracy. That's the point"
>
> (*Dead,* 57 – 58)

Of course the dead cannot literally vote, but they still have a say of sorts and an effect on the living. Their say comes from the fact that they are a part of the community's history and also, indirectly, of each individual's history. In essence, they have an impact on our identity as individuals as they define where we come from because they represent tradition. Johnny, for example, remarks:

> "…if we forget about [the dead], we're just a lot of people living in…in buildings. We need them to tell us who we are. They built this city. They did all the daft human things that turn a lot of buildings into a place for people. It's wrong to throw that all away…They are here and they have got a vote. I've been working it out. In my head. It's called tradition. And they outvote us twenty to one."

(*Dead,* 154)

Pratchett presents the dead as being as much alive as any of the living characters in the book. They are portrayed as a type of community, living and working together to get through each day like the rest of society – living society, that is. They refer to their death as 'life', and the graveyard as their 'home' and are utterly perplexed at the living's fear of them. Evidence of their three-dimensionality lies in the specificity of their biographies. For example, the Alderman is a loyal and dedicated leader of the community, who is appalled at the fact that the modern woman is allowed to show her legs, especially in a swimming costume. Mr Vinceti is of Italian decent and is believed to have been a 'Capo de Monte in the mafia' (*Dead,* 10), but was actually a novelty salesman [which 'was as exactly like not being in the Mafia as it was possible to get' (*Dead,* 10)]. Mrs Liberty is an enthusiastic suffragette and suffragettes would 'chain themselves to railings and chuck eggs at policemen and throw themselves under the Prince of Wales's horse on Derby days' (*Dead,* 53). Solomon Einstein is a taxidermist who speaks with a distinct German accent and is a distant cousin of Albert Einstein. William Stickers is a passionate communist who, we are told, would have invented communism if Karl Marx had not (*Dead,* 11). With such detailed descriptions of the dead, both the readers and Johnny come to know them and as such form a connection with them. The dead are presented as benign individuals who are more alive than dead and so lose their capacity to frighten. More important, however, is that the details which Pratchett provides are humorous. If the reader is able to laugh at the dead, then they will lose their fear of the dead.

As Storr (1971:149) explains, if a child can laugh at his enemy or villain, the power of the villain (here, death) is greatly reduced.

As Johnny and the readers bond with the dead they become less afraid of them and of death itself since they begin to understand its true nature. It is not mystical and terrifying. It is an inevitability and just another part of the cycle of life. To add to this argument, I turn to Bettelheim (1976:10) who explains that the realisation of death as an eventuality can dispel fears of it, but it is also important to take note of 'that which alone can take the sting out of the narrow limits of our time on this earth, specifically forming bonds with others' (Bettelheim, 1976:10). Making bonds with other people can take the sting out of the finality of death as it means that we will, at least, be remembered. In this way, the finality of death is lessened. In fact, as Bettelheim (1976:10) argues, once this conclusion has been reached, so too has a state of 'emotional security', knowing that relations with other people is one of the ways in which the fear of death can be dispelled.

Bearing this in mind, Johnny's initial plan to save the graveyard is to demonstrate to the community and United Amalgamated Consolidated Holdings that the graveyard is an important historical site, and to do this, he has to find as many famous people buried in the cemetery as he can. However, as has already been mentioned, this proves to be an impossible task. Yet, as Johnny soon comes to realise, this is not important. 'Fame' is relative and does not necessarily validate existence. Instead, each of the dead was and still is important in his/her own right and this directly confronts the materialist celebrity culture that contemporary children are exposed to on a daily basis. Johnny puts it best in his speech to the council: '"It doesn't matter that no one in there is really famous. They were famous *here.* They lived and got on with things and died'" (*Dead,* 151 – 153).

Pratchett reveals people's existing attitudes towards the dead by describing the cemetery's derelict and unkempt condition. In doing this, he draws attention to the insignificance of the cemetery to the inhabitants of Blackbury as well as the community's disregard for the dead. Society does not seem to care about the dead or realise the important role that the dead play in its past and identity. One of the descriptions of the cemetery reads:

> Behind it there was a canal, which wasn't used anymore, except as a rubbish dump; old prams and busted televisions and erupting settees lined its banks like monsters from the Garbage Age....But now it was just a road you cut through to get to the bypass from the industrial estate. On the fourth side was nothing much except a wasteground [*sic*] of fallen brick and one tall chimney…
>
> (*Dead,* 31 – 32)

In addition to these descriptions of the cemetery, its sale also highlights Blackbury's neglect of its dead. The payment of five pence for the cemetery may seem ridiculous, but this price highlights the value that the cemetery, and thus also the dead, have for the living. Clearly, the very concept of remembering the dead is worthless and has been replaced with material desires. The dead find this to be an appalling act: "'And how shameful to be sold for fivepence!" said dead Mrs Liberty. "That's the living for you," said William Stickers. "No thought for the downtrodden masses"' (*Dead,* 55 – 56).

Throughout the book it is also clear that the dead are very much aware of the community's disregard. They even use the fact that no-one ever visits them as an excuse to misbehave. For example, Johnny asks the dead: "'...what would your descendants think if they could see you acting like this?"' to which they reply, "'Serves them right for not visiting us!"' (*Dead,* 107).

Throughout the book it is also clear that the dead are aware of their seeming irrelevance to the community and this serves to make their neglect even sadder and more poignant. They are conscious of people's disregard, but at the same time they are also aware of the important role they could play in the lives of their descendants – given the chance. Yet they can do nothing about this realisation. They are stuck in the cemetery because they believe that by remaining there, the living may eventually begin to remember them. At the end of the book, however, the dead are finally able to leave the cemetery because of the attention the living begin to give them and the cemetery in the form of an environmental protest against United Amalgamated Consolidated Holdings' plans for development. The dead therefore no longer need the cemetery since the living suddenly take an interest in the graveyard and this translates into their remembering the dead. Pratchett suggests that the living are the ones who actually need the cemetery in order to subconsciously quell their own fears of being forgotten after death. The dead initially feel the need to remain in the cemetery as they believe that leaving will result in their being forgotten. However, their attachment to the cemetery only prevents them from being able to progress into the afterlife: they need to forget the past in order to move on. This pivotal point can be seen in the following dialogue:

> "But we don't need [the graveyard] anymore," said the Alderman.
> "We do!" [said Johnny].
> The dead looked at him.
> "We do," Johnny repeated. "We…need it to be there."
> "This iss [sic] of course very true," [said Solomon Einstein], in his excited squeaky voice. "It all balances, you see. The living have to remember, the dead have to forget."
>
> (*Dead,* 218)

Solomon Einstein's rationale captures the gist of Pratchett's commentary. The living must remember since the dead are part of their history. By remembering, the living learn from the past and thus attain a greater understanding of their present. The act of remembering

allows the living to ease their fear of the unknown, their fear of death, and most importantly, their fear of being forgotten. As Mr Vicenti states: '"Enjoy looking after the cemetery. They're places for the living, after all"' (*Dead,* 223). Remembering then, quells the living's fear by implying that they too will be remembered one day when they pass on. The dead, however, remain in the graveyard, trapped in a world that is neither here nor there. They stay perhaps in order not to be forgotten, but ironically, despite their presence in the cemetery, the living still forget. Therefore, the dead need to let go of their ties to the Primary World, so that they can move beyond it to the Secondary World. As such, they need to 'forget'. The implication here is that the dead initially believe they will only exist if the living remember them. However, they exist and have existed regardless of the living.

Ultimately then, the main concern of the book is this: the dead are a part of our history as a society and as individuals. They make us aware of where we have come from and perhaps even where we are going. They, play an important role in helping us achieve a sense of identity. And so, because Johnny sees and listens to the dead he sets them free acknowledging their existence and quelling their fears of being forgotten. Again, it is Mr Vicenti who provides this insight:

> "But now you see us and hear us, you're making us free. You're giving us what we don't have," [said Mr Vicenti].
> "What's that?" [asked Johnny]
> "I can't explain. But while you're thinking of us, we're free."
>
> (*Dead,* 111)

Death and people's attitudes to death are perhaps the most apparent foci of Pratchett's critique. True to his style, however, Pratchett comments on a multitude of additional social aspects in *Johnny and the Dead.* The dead and the concept of death are thus used as a

platform from which Pratchett highlights certain other social and political issues, including the central theme of the entire series: the futility of war.

War

Protecting children from the realities of war, as explained by Lathey (cited in Reynolds, 2005:58), has become an exceedingly difficult task since technological advances have led to the development of television and computer and console games. Exposing children to war in children's literature has therefore become increasingly accepted by adults as a way of equipping children with the ability to deal with this terrible reality. The most significant reference to war and its senseless nature in *Johnny and the Dead* is the story of the Blackbury Pals whom Pratchett uses to reveal to the readers the reality of death in war. Johnny's morbid interest in the Pals serves to underscore this and seems to be generated by three facts: firstly, that only one of the Pals survived; secondly, that they died so soon after leaving Blackbury (and after the photograph had been taken); thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, that the Pals were not much older than Johnny and his friends. This is also the point at which Johnny begins to realise the futility of war and starts to question the reasons for the young men's involvement in it.

Johnny's sad realisation can be seen in his reaction to the photograph: 'Johnny stared. He could hear people's voices, and the background noises of the library. But the picture looked as if it was at the bottom of a dark, square tunnel. And he was falling down into it. Things outside the picture were inky and slow. The picture was the centre of the world' (*Dead,* 76).

Johnny is conscious of the magnitude of his discovery and this can be seen when he chastises Wobbler for making a joke about the possible relocation of the dead:

> "...They get taken to some kind of storage place called a necropolis. That's Latin for City of the Dead," [said Yo-less].
> "...Sounds like where Superman lives," said Bigmac.
> "Necropolis!' said Wobbler, zooming his hands through the air. "By day, mild-mannered corpse – by night...duh duh duhduh DAH...ZombieMan!"
> Johnny remembered the grinning young faces, not much older than Wobbler.
> "Wobbler," he said, "If you make another joke like that – "
> "What?"
> "...well...just don't. Right? I mean it."
>
> (*Dead,* 81)

Clearly Johnny's friends are less sensitive to the serious nature of what they have discovered. Wobbler, a Falstaffian character, is particularly oblivious to the magnitude of their discovery. However, although Wobbler is the one who makes jokes about the dead as well as the Pals, it is Bigmac who is the best representation of the boys' narrow understanding of war and what it represents. This can be seen in a conversation which takes place after the boys' discovery of the photograph:

> "It probably sounded like a good idea at the time. Sort of…jolly," [said Yo-less]
> "Yes, but…four weeks…," said Bigmac. "I mean…"
> "You're always saying you can't wait to join the Army," said Wobbler. "*You* said you were sorry the Gulf War was over. And all the legs of your bed are off the ground because of all them copies of *Guns and Ammo* underneath it," [said Yo-less].
> "Well…*yeah*…war, yeah," said Bigmac. "Proper fighting, with M16s and stuff. Not just all going off grinning and getting shot."
>
> (*Dead,* 79)

This piece of dialogue highlights the romanticised notion which the boys, perhaps representative here of society as a whole, have of war. The boys, and Bigmac especially, seem to believe that glory and valour are associated with war, an idea discussed in detail in the previous chapter. However, Pratchett undoes this notion by highlighting the grim reality of war by the use of the Blackbury Pals. The Pals were also local boys, they were excited about going off to war, but died very soon after leaving Blackbury and, most importantly, they were all very young. These sober realities are what make Johnny realise the true nature of war and its reverberating impact on society. The boys soon begin to realise this and as the sombre reality starts to sink in, the boys' tone becomes equally grave:

> "Wow," said Wobbler. "I mean – all those names...everyone killed in this big battle..."
> "...They all died," said Johnny, eventually.
> "...I wonder if they all got there?" said Yo-less. "Eventually," he added.
> "That's dreadful," said Bigmac.
> "...They all marched off together because they were friends, and got killed," said Yo-less.

(*Dead,* 78 – 79)

The boys understand that the Blackbury Pals were not much different from them which causes the boys to become conscious of the gravity of war and its lasting effects. However, Johnny's friends are not as willing to accept this reality as he is. This unwillingness is seen in Yo-less's comment about the Blackbury Pals: '"Look…that's all in the past, right? It's just *gone.* It's a shame they died but…well…they'd be dead anyway, wouldn't they? It's just history. It's nothing to do with…well, with *now*"' (*Dead,* 86). But Johnny quickly helps them think otherwise. Again, this reveals the importance of memory acting as a form of recovery.

On a deeper level then, Pratchett not only comments on the gravity of war in terms of lives lost and land destroyed, but also on the fact that even the youth are negatively affected by it, not merely indirectly, but also because of child participation in war. Furthermore, it is ironic that the only Pals survivor was a youngster named Tommy Atkins since 'Tommy Atkins' used to be a generic name for soldiers in World War I. Pratchett explains that the name was used on documents in the British Army in the way that people would now use 'A.N. Other' as an example of how to write one's name on a form. As such, it came to represent every soldier. Johnny realises this when he talks to Mr Ronald Attebury, a British Legion Officer:

> "And to help them do it, the Army did a kind of guide to how to fill it in, and on the guide, where it said Name, they put: Thomas Atkins. It was just a name…Tommy Atkins came to mean the average soldier – " [said Ronald Atterbury].
> "So…in a way…*all* soldiers were Tommy Atkins?" [asked Johnny].
>
> (*Dead,* 121)

Tommy Atkins, however, does not only represent the average soldier. The 'real' Tommy Atkins also won medals for his participation in the war, and thus he further represents the idea that all soldiers, even the ordinary soldier, should be commemorated in some way – even if this is merely by being remembered in a cemetery. Pratchett relates this idea to readers in Johnny's conversation with Ronald Atterbury:

> "Tommy Atkins's medals. Were they for anything special?" [asked Johnny].
> "They were campaign medals. Soldiers get them, really, for just staying alive. And for being there."
>
> (*Dead,* 126)

This sense of irony is further exploited by the fact that, in having one name for all soldiers, they remain unnamed and are not given any sense of individuality even in death. The remembrance of the real Tommy Atkins thus represents the remembrance of all Tommy Atkinses and the recognition that they had an important role to play in history and also in shaping the present. Deep down inside, Johnny realises the importance of the Pals and Tommy Atkins, although he does not initially know why. Once again the hero's gift, the gift of greater awareness, comes to the fore: 'He'd known the Pals were important. Not for *reasons.* Just because it was' (*Dead,* 134).

The use of the Blackbury Pals can also be seen as more than just a comment on war. Their presence in the book highlights Johnny's realisation that his town indeed has a history and that this history is not only important to him, but the community as a whole. The Blackbury Pals were Blackbury's representation in the war and, as such, Blackbury was a part of World War I and also the greater history of the world. This affects Johnny's view of his town and also of all those who had a part in creating it. This realisation gives Johnny further impetus to save the cemetery. In addition, saving the cemetery also means that Johnny and his friends will be preserving nature, another important topic on Pratchett's agenda.

Ecology

Recalling the use of children's literature to make didactic comments about society, it is interesting to note the use of comedy in *Johnny and the Dead* to talk about ecological issues. Comedy, as discussed in detail before, has the ability to distance readers from a text and in doing so, it may also influence the way people think about a text or life in general. Comedy can therefore have an important role to play in today's society, especially with the

increasing pressure to be more aware of the environment. It is a good thing then that, according to Don Elgin (1985:1), the genre of comedy can influence people to be more ecologically minded as comedy provides a mirror from which humanity can create a perception of itself. Elgin (1985:3) uses the term 'literary ecology' to describe the idea that literature can both create and reflect attitudes that people hold about nature. To underscore his argument, Elgin refers to Weiss who states:

> Man, whatever else he be, is a part of nature. So his artistic world cannot be one of sharply demarcated opposition to his natural world, but rather must be viewed as a fluid and continuous extension of his domain as ordinary member of animate nature – subject to all the limitations of biological reality, into a realm of unreality of his making, stripped of those limitations. And since artistic endeavour is thus a direct organic outgrowth of nature, its elements are, of necessity, the same as those of primitive biological experience.
>
> (Weiss quoted in Elgin, 1985:29)

With this in mind, *Johnny and the Dead* can be seen as functioning within the realm of 'literary ecology' as it exposes readers to a more ecologically minded point of view. The driving force behind this message is the fact that the Blackbury community is brought together by their concern for the cemetery, the 'only open space for miles' (*Dead,* 17). The concept of community is a typical feature of comedy. But one can perhaps define 'community' in two ways: firstly, in terms of a social community (the coming together of people with a similar mindset) and secondly, in terms of society's communion with nature (the inextricable union we have with nature). Hence, the concept of 'community' functions doubly in supporting the text's ecological agenda.

According to Elgin (1985:16), there are three basic assumptions of comedy that make it the perfect mechanism for a discussion of ecology. Firstly, comedy is both a confirmation

and a celebration of life. This function can also be termed a 'Carrying Away of Death', which, according to Sypher (quoted in Elgin, 1985:16), is a triumph over mortality by some 'absurd faith in rebirth, restoration, and salvation'. If comedy functions to carry death away, it is interesting then that Blackbury is only linked to nature by the graveyard. Although the cemetery is a place where death, or at least the idea of death, is most prominent, it is, ironically, a place of life as it allows for a greater understanding of oneself and offers to make valuable contributions to the living. The cemetery is therefore a place that has the ability to 'carry death away' since it allows for the remembrance of the dead which means that the dead never truly die, since society keeps them alive in their memories. Pratchett's treatment of the dead allows for comedy, and if comedy is a celebration of life, the cemetery's function is doubly reinforced. Furthermore, the cemetery is the only green space in Blackbury for miles, and so its ecological function becomes intertwined with its social function. Pratchett's comment on the dead as an important part of society thus extends to a comment about the function of the cemetery as a site of ecological importance. Johnny is the first to realise this when he hears of the news to build on the cemetery:

> Johnny looked at the cemetery. It was the only open space for miles.
> "I'd have given them at least a pound," he said.
> "Yes, but you wouldn't have been able to build things on it," said Wobbler. "That's the important thing."
> "I wouldn't want to build anything on it. I'd have given them a pound just to leave it as it is."
>
> (*Dead,* 17)

The second idea that Elgin (1985:18) posits as important to the comic tradition and its use for environmental commentary is that humans are a part of nature and must adapt to it, rather than believe it must adapt to them: 'comic humanity' never considers itself as greater than nature. Although humanity may use the laws of nature for its own benefit, it can only do

so to the extent that the system remains in balance since balance is needed for the system to survive. Therefore, comic humanity seems to sustain the struggle for gaining personal freedom within the system. But humanity must return the system to its original form once a disturbance has taken place. In working within the realm of the 'Faerie', Pratchett exploits this function of comedy, the 'comic humanity', in order to complement the function of the Secondary World. And so, child readers are removed from their Primary Worlds not only for the purposes of identity, but also to understand the purpose of balance by confirming the return of the system to a state of stability through which our own chances for success are enhanced.

And so, as is detailed earlier, the intrusion of the Secondary World into the Primary initially functions as a type of disturbance in the Primary Reality of *Johnny and the Dead.* However, this intrusion may also function to highlight the more obvious disturbance within the Primary World itself: that is, the neglect of the cemetery which represents the 'environment' as a whole. This disturbance is made clear by Wobbler's comment about the cemetery: '"My dad says this is all going to be built on. He said the Council sold it to some big company for fivepence because it was costing so much to keep it going"' (*Dead,* 17). This can also be seen in the following comment about the space surrounding the Joshua Che N'Clement building (The apartment building where Bigmac lives): '…it had been built in the middle of a huge area of what was theoretically grass ("environmental open space"), but which was now the home of the Common Crisp Packet and Hardy-Perennial Burned-Out Car' (*Dead,* 40).

Furthermore, the function of the cemetery as representative of the environment can be seen by Johnny's comment early on in the book:

> "A lot of people come for walks here," said Johnny. "I mean, the park's miles away, and all there is there is *grass.* But this place has got tons of bushes and plants and trees, and, and – "
> "Environment," said Yo-less.
> "And probably some ecology as well," said Johnny.
>
> (*Dead,* 44)

The two boys clearly do not understand what 'ecology' means and use it more as the buzz word which it has become in recent years. However, what is clear from this conversation is that the boys do understand the difference between a patch of earth covered with grass and a true, living and natural environment. The boys may not understand why the cemetery as a natural environment is so important, but they seem to have a vague understanding of the importance of the cemetery as an open space.

The cemetery, as the only natural space in Blackbury, thus functions in a similar way to the Secondary World as the forest does in Shakespearean comedies. It forms a romantic landscape in which the 'real and the symbolic meet' (Corinne Saunders, 1993:1). Saunders (1993:23) explains that Classical mythology needed a landscape or location in which humans and the supernatural could meet. The forest became this place and retained its supernatural link even after the intrusion of Christianity into the Classical world. In addition, the term 'forest' originates from the Latin term *foris* which means 'outside' (Saunders:1993:1). Taken in the context of *Johnny and the Dead* the cemetery, functioning as 'the forest', is literally 'outside', but it also functions 'outside' Primary Reality. In other words, the cemetery – the forest – is the Secondary World, or at least the plane which allows for the intrusion of the Secondary World.

Saunders explains that the word 'forest' also envelops the Greek and Latin terms for forest, *hyle* and *silva* respectively, which were associated with 'disorder, chaos and primordial matter'. This links to Mendlesohn's idea that the Secondary World is a world that creates disorder in the Primary Reality. In a similar vein, the cemetery sets the scene for transformation. This transformation allows for change since once characters enter into the 'forest', they are removed from their Primary Realities (Saunders, 1993:103). As such, 'the forest becomes a landscape of delight, escape and marvel, the counterpart of the court and the essential part of the knight's existence' (Saunders, 1993:113).

And so, the Secondary World intrudes into the Primary and further disrupts it, making Johnny and the rest of Blackbury realise the importance of the cemetery in terms of its ecological value. Once this realisation has been achieved, the dead can leave since balance has once again been restored. This restoration of balance takes place at the very end of the book, once the dead have finally left the cemetery:

> The cemetery was already looking more lived-in. There were endless arguments between the Volunteers who wanted it to be habitat and the ones who wanted it to be ecology and a middle group who just wanted it to be clean and tidy, but at least it was wanted, which seemed to Johnny to be the most important thing.
>
> (*Dead,* 228)

Elgin's third assumption is that comedy avoids 'abstractions'. This is based on the fact that at the heart of most comic characters are the 'common sense, humility, and acknowledgment that one belongs to a larger system whose survival is essential to the survival of individual members' (Elgin, 1985:55). Although the comic may often present

humanity as 'foolish', 'smelly', 'pretentious' or 'lecherous', it also presents people as 'compassionate' and caring in response to 'the accumulation of experience' (Elgin, 1985:21).

The 'foolishness' and 'pretentiousness' of which Elgin speaks is clearly presented in *Johnny and the Dead* as humanity's self-importance is made visible in the way in which the Blackbury community treat each other and their surroundings. The most obvious example of this is the community's neglect of the cemetery:

> For the first time he really began to *notice* the cemetery... In front was the Cemetery Road, which had once had houses on the other side of it; now there was the back wall of the Bonanza Carpet Warehouse. There was still an old phone box and a letter box, which suggested that once upon a time this had been a place that people thought of as home. But now it was just a road you cut through to get to the bypass from the industrial estate.
>
> (*Dead,* 32)

Elgin's proposition that the comic often presents humanity as 'foolish' and 'pretentious' functions to make a comment about the environment, since mankind functions as an antagonist to the environment (Elgin, 1985:19-20). Nature's survival is essential to the survival of the individual members (which includes humanity) (Elgin, 1985:21). However, there are further examples of degradation within the community itself that speak of its pretentiousness on a social level. A prime example of this is the description of the Joshua Che N'Clement block of flats: 'If you had to be somewhere frightening when it got dark, Johnny thought, the Joshua N'Clement block rated a lot higher on the *Aaargh* scale than any cemetery. At least the dead didn't mug you' (*Dead,* 39). This can further be seen in the in the following description:

> Often the *Blackbury Guardian* had pictures of people complaining about the damp, or the cold, or the way the windows fell out in high winds…or the way gangs roamed its dank passageways and pushed shopping trolleys off the roof into the Great Lost Shopping Trolley Graveyard. The lifts hadn't worked properly since 1966. They lurked in the basement, too scared to go anywhere else…*no one* liked the Joshua Che N'Clement block. There were two schools of thought about what should be done with it. The people who lived there thought everyone should be taken out and then the block should be blown up, and the people who lived *near* the block just wanted it blown up.
>
> (*Dead,* 40)

Another example of society's self-importance as mirrored in the social degradation is the description of the old age home in which Johnny's grandmother lives. Johnny describes his visit to his grandmother in a humorous way, but the humour has a serious and tragic undercurrent:

> It wasn't that Sunshine Acres was a *bad* place…But it was more gloomy than the cemetery. It was the way everyone shuffled around quietly, and sat waiting at the table for the next meal hours before it was due, because there was nothing else to do. It was as if life had stopped and being dead hadn't started, so all there was to do was hang around.
>
> (*Dead,* 98)

Firstly, it is important to note the irony in the name, 'Sunshine Acres'. Clearly the name of the home contradicts the nature of the facility. The description of the old age home is a tragic one as it reveals society's general disregard for the aged. It also links with the commentary that Pratchett makes about the dead as the aged are also a link with history and with the past. The implication is that they, like the dead, should be treasured for the role that they have played in making the community what it is. What makes this description all the more tragic is the fact that the aged are still alive, but are treated as though they were dead.

The dead, in fact, are presented as being more alive and well than the aged who seem to live 'gloomy' lives and are merely waiting to die.

The 'compassion' and sympathy of which Elgin speaks, however, can be seen at the end of the book when the community bands together in order to protect what they have finally come to realise, with the help of Johnny and his friends, about the historical, social and ecological importance of the cemetery. The clearest example of this banding together can be seen straight after the council meeting when the community starts to gear itself up for social changes:

> "And then we ought to do something about the High Street," said someone.
> "And get some decent playgrounds and things again, instead of all these Amenities all over the place."
> "And blow up the Joshua N'Clement and get some proper houses built – "
> "Yo!" said Bigmac.
> "Here here," said Yo-less.
> Mr Atterbury waved his hands calmly.
> "One thing at a time," he said. "Let's rebuild Blackbury first. We can see about Jerusalem tomorrow."
> "And we ought to find a name for ourselves!"
> "The Blackbury Preservation Society?"
>
> (*Dead,* 159)

A further example of the community's joining forces can be seen in the following dialogue:

> "Exciting day, isn't it? You started something, eh?" [said Mr Atterbury].
> "Didn't mean to," said Johnny, automatically. Things were generally his fault.
> "It could go either way," said Mr Atterbury. "The old railway site isn't so good, but…things look promising, I do know that. People have woken up."
> "That's true. A *lot* of people."
> "…[United Amalgamated Consolidated Holdings] are a bit shifty but we might win through. It's amazing what you can do with a kind word."
>
> (*Dead,* 188 – 189)

From this dialogue and from the action the community takes to save the cemetery and the rest of Blackbury, Pratchett shows that people are not solely pretentious and self-absorbed. In fact, Pratchett reinforces Elgin's idea that at the very core of humanity is actually 'compassion' and care. All humanity seems to need is a nudge in the right direction or to be made aware of the possible negative influence that disunity can have. As Hoy (quoted in Elgin 1985:18) states:

> Comedy imposes, then, an acceptance of life, which implies as well an acceptance of man. And to accept man, one must be prepared to forgive the weakness, the treachery, the downright depravity which, in spite of man's best intentions, are inherent in his behaviour….That is why comedy, again and again, emphasizes the need for man to undeceive himself about the limitations of humanity, to see life for what it is, and to make the best of it.

It is clear then why Pratchett has chosen the comic genre to strengthen his commentary on ecological awareness. Working in tandem with this ecological awareness is a social awareness, which seems to stem naturally from an awareness of the environment. In working to protect the cemetery, the community of Blackbury also bands together as a society in which various other social issues are given light. And so comedy with its natural inclination towards social bonding is an obvious choice for such social commentary. But why does Pratchett also use fantasy for ecological and social commentary?

Elgin (1985:23) states that the fantasy genre is unique in that it has adopted comedy's view of humanity and has also become a dual form both accepting and rejecting aspects of the medieval Romance tradition that preceded it as well as the tradition of formal realism. In other words, the fantastical has accepted the wonder and mystery presented in Romance, allowing for such processes as Tolkien's and Coleridge's subcreation. At the same time it allows for aspects of realism within its characters and most often places them in a series of

logical and sequenced events. The result is 'a new kind of realism, one that depend[s] upon the truth of experience rather than the confusion of abstractions, and one that create[s] characters true to the social situation of the created environment rather than to the external environment which [is] the traditional subject of the novelist' (Elgin, 1985:24).

Pratchett manages to achieve exactly this. In fact, *Johnny and the Dead* can largely be viewed as a realistic depiction of a few weeks in a young boy's life in which the fantastical intrudes upon his reality. Johnny is an ordinary young boy; he is neither popular, nor completely unpopular; he neither hates nor loves school. Together, he and his friends comprise a group of misfits, but each of them, although unique in his own way, also represents well-known stereotypes – Bigmac, the 'wannabe' gangster, Yo-less, the 'nerd', Wobbler, the 'fat kid', and Johnny, the unlikely hero. Johnny comes from a broken home, as does Bigmac. Blackbury is a typical English town and Johnny and his friends are 'typical' English kids – they go to school, they get homework, they 'hangout' at the mall, they watch daily soap operas and they play video games in their spare time. On the surface level then, *Johnny and the Dead* is largely realistic, rather than fantastical. However, as we delve into Johnny's character, we realise that he is not an 'ordinary boy'. He is rather extraordinary because he has a gift which no other character (or reader) has. He can see and speak to the dead, and more importantly, he has the ability to suspend his disbelief, or open his mind to things which he does not necessarily understand. Subsequently, Bigmac, Yo-less and Wobbler also transform into extraordinary boys, even though they do not have the same gift as Johnny, but because they believe in Johnny and help him on his hero's quest. And so, their unique skills, personalities and social views (unique in the group) serve as gifts which Johnny uses to successfully complete his task of both saving the cemetery and sensitising young

readers to the importance of memory, the horrors of war and the importance of promoting a healthy social and ecological environment.

~3~

Johnny and the Bomb

In *Johnny and the Bomb*[9], Pratchett introduces child readers to the idea of time travel and parallel histories which exist alongside each other in the same time, but in different spaces. In order to do this, Pratchett creates a narrative split between the past and the present as well as between the present and alternate forms of the present. The focus of this chapter is thus on Pratchett's use of time travel which allows him to comment on the interconnectedness of past, present and future. Pratchett also makes a comment about commercialism and a tradition of society's non-involvement by using the character of Wobbler, who represents, almost archetypally, a corpulent, Falstaffian youth However, the chapter also discusses Pratchett's criticism of racism and his comments on the lasting impact of war.

Pratchett sets *Johnny and the Bomb* in motion by giving readers a glimpse into the past. More specifically, he introduces readers to Blackbury in 1941 at the beginning of World War II. Initially, Pratchett does not give any specific information about the time in which the novel is set, but by using words such as 'cobbles' and 'wireless' (*Johnny and the Bomb,* 9) he quickly alerts readers to the fact that the story begins at some time in the past. In addition, Pratchett hints that readers have entered into a war scene through his descriptions of sandbags piled in front of shop windows and search lights which try to 'pry bombers out of the clouds' (*Bomb,* 10).

[9] Referred to as *Bomb* in parenthetical references.

The story opens with a policeman who wanders along Blackbury's high street and stumbles upon a van which has been illegally parked. The van, however, is occupied by English soldiers who have been ordered to guard the site of a house in which an unexploded bomb has been found. The house is in Paradise Street, which we later find out has been bombed and destroyed by the Luftwaffe. The soldiers offer the policeman a cup of tea and during this five minute break, they abandon their guard. The result is that the site is infiltrated by old Mrs Tachyon, the local bag lady, whose only belongings consist of a few mysterious bags, a trolley from Tesco (a present day English supermarket chain) and an extremely irritable cat named Guilty. She wanders through the site, moving bricks and other bits of rubble, presumably searching for any items that she can add to her trolley. Hearing a clamour coming from the site, one of the soldiers, together with the policeman, runs to the scene and arrives almost immediately. Together, they attempt to coax Mrs Tachyon gently into moving away from the site, but just before they can do so, the bomb explodes.

The narrative then jumps forward in time to Blackbury in 1996, and the readers are told that Johnny has lately been having extremely vivid dreams about the bombing of Paradise Street, which took place 55 years before. Johnny seems to believe that his dreams are due to the information he has been collecting about the bombing for a school history project. The readers are also informed that Johnny's home life has not yet improved. If anything, the dysfunction has worsened. During one of the boys' regular conversations about Johnny's supposed certifiability, Johnny, Bigmac, Yo-less and Wobbler are interrupted by a 'hissing' noise that seems to emanate from the alleyway closest to them (*Bomb,* 24). The boys are terrified of investigating the cause of the ungodly sound but Johnny catches a glimpse of a shopping trolley turned on its side and can only presume that the hissing noise is made by Guilty, Mrs Tachyon's cat. The trolley is the most obvious clue to Mrs Tachyon's

presence: firstly, because she is always seen pushing it around town and, secondly, because most people fear her trolley (she uses it as a weapon to bump people out of her way). Upon inspection, the boys find Mrs Tachyon badly wounded and lying on the ground with Guilty pacing about her body, protecting it. The boys attempt to help her, but after Johnny is quite severely scratched on the hand by Guilty, they phone 999, the National English Emergency Service. An ambulance arrives on the scene to take Mrs Tachyon to the local hospital while her trolley (with Guilty in it) is taken into safe keeping by Johnny.

Subsequently, the narrative moves through space into a parallel time (another version of the present) and introduces the readers to Sir John, an older gentleman, who, we discover, is extremely wealthy and in bad health. Sir John owns a chain of burger bars, and on this particular day he has decided to take a trip to Blackbury in order to inspect the town's branch of his burger franchise.

The focal point then returns to Johnny, and the readers find out, along with the hero, that the police are searching for a group of young boys whom they suspect of attacking Mrs Tachyon. Yo-less, worried about the fact that Johnny has Mrs Tachyon's trolley in his garage, convinces Johnny to go to the police station and inform the officers that they were the ones who discovered Mrs Tachyon in the alleyway, already injured, and called for help. Kirsty (who now calls herself Kasandra) offers to go with Johnny to the police station and, after she and Johnny inform the police of the previous night's events, they decide to visit Mrs Tachyon in hospital. After a short visit, Johnny and Kirsty return to Johnny's house – and out of curiosity – take the opportunity to finally discover what Mrs Tachyon keeps in her mysterious bags.

With much trepidation, Johnny opens one of the bags and finds himself travelling back in time to the day on which his garage was built. After a few seconds, Johnny returns to the present and he and Kirsty are shocked to discover that Mrs Tachyon has been pushing around 'bags of time'. Kirsty and Johnny go back in time once more, but upon their return to the present, they discover a car waiting outside Johnny's house. A man in a black suit then gets out of the car and approaches Johnny's front door. Kirsty, the ever-imaginative conspiracy theorist, believes that the man is some sort of government official there to silence Johnny and Kirsty about their discovery of Mrs Tachyon's bags, and so convinces Johnny to run. The two enter Johnny's garage (where he has been storing the trolley) and jump onto it while rolling it out of Johnny's driveway and down the road at high speed. The car follows, but Johnny and Kirsty move through time again in order to escape the car, before rolling directly through the front door of the local shopping mall, where Bigmac, Yo-less and Wobbler are. The security guards become suspicious of the arguing teens and Johnny, in order to prevent any trouble, opens one of the bags and sends them all travelling backwards in time by accident. After some investigation, Johnny realises that he has transported himself and his friends back to 21 May, 1941, the day on which Paradise Street was bombed 55 years before.

While in the past, Wobbler wanders off by himself and meets a young boy who is trying to run away to London. The boy's plans are foiled, however, when Wobbler piques his interest, and as a result, the young boy follows Wobbler around for the rest of the day accusing him of being a spy. Bigmac, in the meantime, tries to steal a car but is caught by the police. He escapes his incarceration (only to be shot at) and the group eventually reunite and hide in an old church. Johnny uses the bags of time to get his friends safely back to 1996, but upon their return they realise that Wobbler has been left behind. Before they can go back,

however, they meet Sir John, who claims he has something important to tell the group. He takes them for a burger at the local burger joint and on their way the boys and Kirsty slowly begin to realise that much has changed since they were last in 1996 – especially the burger bar – which has a different name and corporate colours. Sir John reveals to the group that he is, in fact, their friend, Wobbler, who has been waiting to contact them for 55 years ever since he was left behind in 1941. He urges them to go back to the past as soon as possible and 'do the right thing' (*Bomb,* 172). Johnny does not initially understand what Sir John means by this, but upon returning to 1941, he realises that he must prevent the bombing of Paradise Street or at least stop as many people as possible from dying in the bombing. Johnny further realises that the little boy whom Wobbler met on their previous journey to 1941 is in fact Wobbler's grandfather, and because his plans to go to London were thwarted by Wobbler's presence in 1941, the young boy died in the bombing, resulting in Wobbler's not being born.

Johnny, Yo-less, Bigmac, Kirsty and Wobbler succeed in saving the people of Paradise Street, but not without help from a soldier named Tom, who turns out to be Johnny's grandfather. The gang then return to 1996, but Johnny and, for a brief period Kirsty, are the only ones who can recall their adventure.

Time Travel

As the plot summary reveals, the main feature of *Johnny and the Bomb* is time travel. Pratchett uses this feature to underscore his criticism of war, which pervades all three of the Johnny books. The chance to travel back in time allows Johnny and his friends to grasp the horrifying reality of war by experiencing it first-hand. However, Pratchett's use of time travel

also allows him to comment on the interconnectedness of past, present and future: the events of the past affect the future and the events of the present affect our understanding of the past.

The following discussion of time in *Johnny and the Bomb* focuses mainly on Nikolajeva's arguments in *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic* (1996). More specifically, I focus on Nikolajeva's expansion of Bakhtin's 'chronotope', which Nikolajeva (1996:121) explains as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature'. As she argues, the chronotope is used to suggest 'unity of time and space' (Nikolajeva, 1996:121). She refines this definition by explaining that the term 'chronotope' refers specifically to a unity of fictional time and place, or as Bakhtin states, 'a formal category', an 'abstract literary notion' (quoted in Nikolajeva, 1996:121). The chronotope is the *inseparable* unity of time and space and time and space are mutually dependent (Nikolajeva, 1996:121).

When considering how a chronotope functions in fantasy, Nikolajeva (1996:122) explains that a chronotope is usually easy to recognise. This is because time and space are vital aspects of the fantasy, especially considering that characters often move back and forth between the Primary and Secondary Worlds, and consequently, also back and forth through different times and spaces. Even if the Secondary World merely intrudes upon the Primary, there is still a definite movement through time and space. In *Johnny and the Bomb,* however, the chronotope is perhaps more difficult to recognise. This is because time and space, although inseparable, branch into different directions as a result of the actions of Johnny and his friends in the past. This creates multiple versions of the space-time continuum.

Nikolajeva (1996:122) refers to fantasy as being linked to Primary Reality, 'our own time and place'. Thus, the 'magical' adventures that the characters undertake as well as their passage into the Secondary World create a distinct contrast with Primary Reality. Nikolajeva further explains that the Secondary World has its own time and space which is separate and free of influence from Primary Time, otherwise known as 'real' time. However, time in *Johnny and the Bomb* is still connected to space – the past is inextricably connected to the present as the past influences the direction the future must take. As such, Secondary Time does not function as a separate or independent element from Primary Time.

This is clearly related to the readers by Kirsty and Yo-less in the following conversation:

> "That's a very bad idea," said Kirsty. "I told you anything you do affects the future."
> "She's right," said Yo-less, trying to keep up. "You shouldn't mess around with Time. I read this book where a man went right back in time and trod on…on a dinosaur, and changed the whole future."
>
> (*Bomb,* 124)

Both Kirsty and Yo-less understand that all time is connected and that the events of the past have a direct impact on the future. However, Kirsty and Yo-less do not understand that time, as represented in the book, does not merely function on a linear plane. Different streams or branches of time and space exist which causes the creation of another version of the future which exists on a parallel stream of space. Thus Primary Time does not stand still while Johnny moves through it, but continues on its linear path, while other linear versions of the future are created and branch out in several different directions. Time is thus even more connected to space than Johnny and his friends initially realise.

Mendlesohn (2005:54) defines this kind of presentation of time as 'B-series' time which she explains as being 'absolute time'. Time is thus fixed according to a set of 'coordinates' which are ordered: one event precedes another, proceeds yet another and occurs simultaneously with a third (Mendlesohn, 2005:54). The past cannot be altered. Mendlesohn (2005:55) refers to Charlotte, from Diana Wynne-Jones's *The Time of the Ghost* (1981), who perhaps gives the best explanation of B-series time. Charlotte explains: "The only thing you can alter is the future. People write stories pretending you can alter the past, but it can't be done. All you can do to the past is remember it wrong or interpret it different". Mendlesohn (2005:56) then explains:

> …one way to conceptualize B-series/absolute time is as something with geographical density in which one can move around. Block space is probably the easiest of the images for the nonmathematician to hold in his or her mind. It is simply a cube of space-time, which one can leave and then choose to reenter at another coordinate on the map.

In other words moments in time are fixed by the events that precede and succeed them. Each moment has its own coordinates. Johnny relates this idea to his friends by using Yo-less's analogy of a train: 'They'd moved in time at his house. But Yo-less was right, you probably could move in time like a train on a track, so you flipped over onto another track just a little bit further along. You moved in space, really' (*Bomb,* 159).

As Yo-less explains it, time and space function along an unchangeable continuum. One can thus move back and forth through time without changing the future that already exists on the same track. This is because each moment in time has unique coordinates and thus cannot be changed. The changes that Johnny and his friends make in the past cannot change the future as the past has already happened and so the future is set in a specific and fixed direction. Changes made to the past merely create a division leading to another version

of the future. When Johnny and his friends return to the present after having changed the past, they return to a different plane of space. Ultimately, Johnny and his friends move through a network of various spaces, and various linear times. Johnny provides a simple explanation: 'Paradise Street was always going to be bombed. It was being bombed. It would *have been* bombed. Tonight was a fossil in time. It was a *thing*. Somewhere, it would always have happened. You couldn't steer a train!' (*Bomb,* 211). Later, Johnny explains this again saying, '"Everything you do changes everything. And every time you move in time you arrive in a time a little bit different to the one you left. What you do doesn't change *the* future, just *a* future"' (*Bomb,* 243).

Nikolajeva (1996:123) further distinguishes between the 'Secondary-World Fantasy' and 'Time-Shift Fantasy' which she explains is made possible by the concept of the chronotope. If one were to categorise *Johnny and the Bomb* then, upon initial inspection, it would fit neatly into the concept of the 'Time Fantasy', which, as Nikolajeva (1996:123) suggests, is focused on time as well as the notion of time, its 'philosophical implications' as well as its 'metaphysical character'.

Many discussions about the notion of time travel as well as its philosophical implications exist in *Johnny and the Bomb.* However, these explanations are initially rather complex and perhaps difficult for child readers to understand. Even the characters themselves struggle to understand the metaphysical nature of time and time travel. However, it seems that Pratchett deliberately confounds the readers in order to highlight the complex natures of time and space. This deliberate confounding becomes evident as the story progresses and as the characters begin to use simple and understandable analogies for time and space (such as Yo-less's train track theory). This happens as they start to comprehend the complex nature of

time and time travel. The readers are thus placed in the same position as Johnny and his friends, who, at the outset, are very confused but become less so as they continue to move through space and time. An example of this initial confusion can be seen in one of Yo-less's attempts to comprehend time travel:

> *"Anyway*," said Yo-less, "if you changed things, maybe you'd end up not going back in time, and there you would be, back in time, I mean, except you never went in the first place, so you wouldn't be able to come back on account of not having gone. *Or*, even if you could get back, you'd get back to another time, like a sort of parallel dimension, because if the thing you changed hadn't happened then you wouldn't have gone, so you could only come back to somewhere you never went. And there you'd be – stuck."
>
> (*Bomb,* 22)

The length and awkwardness of the sentences combined with the fact that Yo-less provides two different explanations of time travel indicate this initial confusion. However, the clarifications of the notion of time become far shorter and less complex as the characters begin to fully understand the situation better. What they are experiencing can be seen in one of Johnny's later explanations: '"That's right," said Johnny. "Everything that happens…stays happened. Somewhere. There's lots of times side by side."' (*Bomb,* 171).

Pratchett does not seem to be concerned with making the concept of time and space clear to his child readers. Instead, he simplifies his concepts of time and space so as to highlight the plain message he wishes to convey: our actions in the present will affect the events of the future. Thus, it is important to live with awareness and a sense of responsibility. The conveying of this message seems to be his main aim.

Primary and Secondary Time

The growth of the fantasy genre has come to allow for a fluid boundary between Primary and Secondary Time and Space which in turn permits movement towards 'psychological depth' (Nikolajeva, 1996:124). Any changes that occur within the space-time continuum result in different versions of the future being created. This idea, in itself, is an example of psychological depth as it allows the readers to realise that history has shaped our present. Therefore, our actions in the present will directly impact the future; in this regard, *Johnny and the Bomb* is didactic (as are the previous Johnny books). Brian Attebery (1992:55) argues a similar point. He states that important to fantasy is the 'magical code' which functions according to a set of rules. Once readers are allowed to enter into the fantastical, which in *Johnny and the Bomb,* is the ability to travel through time, this magic plays an important role in 'redefining' everything else. Mendlesohn (2005:53) agrees with this idea and explains that time travel must affect a character's 'experience of the world'.

The 'magic' to which Attebery refers is found in *Johnny and the Bomb* in the form of Mrs Tachyon's 'bags of time'. Johnny and his friends do not travel through time using any time machine, science or technology. Instead, time is somehow captured by Mrs Tachyon in her shopping bags, and so the bags of time – and the ability they grant to travel through time – are magical as they exist beyond the constructs of the physical universe. The redefinition of reality which magic effects allows the author to send the readers messages about 'narrative sequence', character and 'the ontological status of narrative statements, or, in other words, about the boundary between the fictional and the real' (Attebery, 1992:55). The author is thus able to criticise the Primary World by presenting an alternative world or time. The concept of cause and effect is therefore important in any narrative (Attebery, 1992:55).

Male and Female Time

An additional aspect to consider is the difference between male and female time especially when one takes into account that the book is not exclusively a boy's book, even though most of its characters are boys. Nikolajeva (1996:125) speaks about the concepts of male and female time (in terms of second wave feminist criticism) and states that male time is linear and female time is circular. However, she argues that female as well as male time are both connected to place. Male time is open (it generally takes place outdoors or far away from home) and so time is experienced as a series of adventures, tasks or trials, with time not being immediately apparent between the various 'stations' of the adventure. The male chronotope is thus 'corpuscular, discontinuous, a chain of different separate time-spaces which are held together by a final goal' (Nikolajeva, 1996:125). In addition, the male chronotope is also 'expandable' in that each 'station' of time and place can take place progressively further from the initial time and place – the time and space from which the story began.

Nikolajeva sees female time as completely different since it is closed or confined (Nikolajeva, 1996:125). Girls' actions mostly takes place indoors such as at home or at school. Female time, according to Nikolajeva, is 'cyclically closed and marked by recurrent indications'. The gaps that appear in female time are filled in by the readers, who understand that plants take time to grow and seasons change over periods of time. Female time can thus take place over many years with recurring points in time as the female is moved through space from one enclosed space to another (Nikolajeva,1996:126). Nikolajeva (1996:126) also explains that female time is '…primitive, primeval time, nature's own time: "to every thing there is a season and a time (Eccl 3:1)"' while 'linear male time is a product of enlightenment

and is the spirit of action and progress'. Julia Kristeva (1981), a second generation feminist on whose work Nikolajeva draws, also distinguishes between female and male time with female time being linked to cyclical time (motherhood, reproduction, menstrual cycles). Kristeva explains:

> As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock, but whose regularity and unison with what is experienced as extrasubjective time, cosmic time, occasion vertiginous visions and unnameable jouissance. On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word "temporality" hardly fits…[An example is] Christianity, in which the body of the Virgin Mother does not die but moves from one spatiality to another within the same time via dormition (according to the Orthodox faith) or via assumption (the Catholic faith).
>
> (1981:16-17)

When applying Nikolajeva's and Kristeva's explanations of female and male time, then, it is important to note that in female time, the development of time takes place in 'inner space' and affects the maturity of the protagonist (Nikolajeva, 1996:126), whereas the male chronotope is 'determined by the basic premise of the genre, that is, the protagonist's primarily superficial maturation' (Nikolajeva, 1996:125).

The Relativity of Time

Inglis (1981:252) refers to Marx's announcement made in 1848 that '"a history has become world history" and suggests that our models of time have become various and

contradictory. Rates of change speed up and slow down in wholly unpredictable ways, they vary according to the knowledge you have, and where you live, according to whether you are inside or outside a particular society'. Marx's comment on the relativity of time also alludes to the instability of time. The nature of time as unpredictable and the positioning of time as relative to each person's knowledge, context and position in society is best presented in *Johnny and the Bomb* by Mrs Tachyon.

Mrs Tachyon, Blackbury's most well-known bag lady, only makes brief appearances in the previous two Johnny Maxwell books. For example, in *Johnny and the Dead* Mrs Tachyon is the only person who still visits the cemetery. In *Johnny and the Bomb*, however, she plays a pivotal role around which the story of Johnny's time travel develops. Mrs Tachyon's name is an allegorical depiction of her function in the book, and one need only understand what a 'tachyon' particle is to discover how Mrs Tachyon functions. A tachyon particle is a theoretical particle that can travel faster than the speed of light (Tachyon, 2011:n.p.). With this ability, it can literally bend time and space, and is thus able to move through the two, between past, present and future. Mrs Tachyon seems to be able to do exactly the same thing – move through the space-time continuum – which results in her mysterious and curious appearances in the book. Pratchett alludes to the mystery of Mrs Tachyon's presence by noting how she regularly seems to disappear and reappear out of the blue: 'Sometimes she'd disappear for weeks on end. No one knew where she went. Then, just when everyone was beginning to relax, there'd be the *squee…squee…squee* behind them and the stabbing pain in the small of the back' (*Bomb,* 30).

Her ability to move through time is due to the fact that she has collected time in shopping bags and one can only assume that she has accumulated time as a result of her

various travels across time and space. In other words, the more she travels through time and space, the more she is able to do so. Further evidence of Mrs Tachyon's ability is discovered by Kirsty, who questions Mrs Tachyon's age:

> "My grandad said he and his friends used to tip up her trolley when *he* was a boy. He said they did it just to hear her swear."
> Kasandra hesitated.
> "What? How old is your grandad?"
> "Dunno. About sixty-five."
> "And how old is Mrs Tachyon, would you say?"
> "It's hard to tell under all those wrinkles. Sixty?"
> "Doesn't that strike you as odd?"
> "What?"
> "Are you dense or something? She's *younger* than your grandfather!"
>
> (*Bomb,* 58)

The question, however, is how Mrs Tachyon initially began to collect time. Furthermore, why has Mrs Tachyon, a mere bag lady, been gifted with the ability to do so? Mrs Tachyon's position in society is perhaps hints at an answer to these questions. She is a bag lady – poor, homeless and shunned by society. She is therefore positioned at a distance from society's parameters of normalcy since she functions outside of that which is deemed acceptable by society. In this space she is free to roam. She is disconnected from the space to which society is bound and because of this, she can also disconnect herself from the time bound to this space. Her separateness from society can be seen in the fact that there are no records of her existence. In this way, she is not bound to a particular time or space. A caretaker realises this fact when Mrs Tachyon is admitted to hospital: '"There's no record of her *anywhere.* There's no records of *anyone* called Tachyon anywhere," said the woman, her voice suggesting that this was a major criminal offence' (*Bomb,* 56).

She keeps time in her shopping bags, and releases the time whenever she wishes to travel. Her shopping bags thus become known as 'bags of time'. The play on the saying 'bags of time' is evident and conveys the idea that because Mrs Tachyon has access to time travel, she also has plenty of time to do whatever she wants. She has the ability to pass through time and can thus move between the past and present as much as she desires. This means that she has ample time to do as she pleases. However, what is most interesting about Mrs Tachyon is her confusing, stream-of-consciousness type speech, which no-one can understand. One example can be seen in her reference to 'thunderbirds': '"Thunderbirds Are Go!" she chortled. "Wot, no bananas? That's what you think, my dollypot!"' (*Bomb,* 14). Another example can be seen in her daily ramblings:

> "…I sez, that's what you sez, is it? That's what *you* think. An' I could get both hands in yer mouth and still wind wool, I sez. Oh, yes. Tell Sid! Yer so skinny yer can close one eye and yer'd look like a needle, I sez. Oh, yes. They done me out of it! Tell that to the boys in khaki! That's a pelter or I don't know what is!"
>
> (*Bomb,* 30)

Mrs Tachyon's speech is interesting because it acts as proof of her ability to roam through time. It also acts as evidence of her previous adventures through time and space. 'Thunderbirds', for example, was a television programme of the mid-1960's which made use of marionette dolls. Amongst others, however, Thunderbird was also the name given to a United States B-17G Flying Fortress which was used in World War II raids beginning on 29 January, 1944 in Frankfurt, Germany and ending on 22 March, 1945 in Gelsenkirchen, Germany (Thunderbird_(B-17), 2011:n.p.). This is particularly relevant to *Johnny and the Bomb* as both Johnny and Mrs Tachyon travel back in time to World War II. The Dollypot was one of the columns of '*The Western Mail*', a newspaper which existed between 1936 and

1942. It provided factual information about the 'Westralian goldfield pioneers', but during the war it was considered to be mere 'creative writing' (Dollypot, 2011:n.p.). The 'Boys in Khaki' is a reference to the British soldiers of World War I, while 'Tell Sid' could make reference to a 1986 ad campaign which encouraged British citizens to invest in the newly privatised British Gas Corporation under the government of Margaret Thatcher (British-_gas_plc, 2011:n.p.). The variety of references in her speech highlights her movement through time and space. As she moves through time, she picks up various sayings from the media or popular culture of the time. These are examples of polyphonic voices, voices from all times which serve to highlight the instability of linear time.

As Pratchett explains Johnny's own experiences of time travel: 'Images filled his eyes. If this is how Mrs Tachyon sees the world, no wonder she never seems all there – because she's *everywhere*' (*Bomb,* 203). Mrs Tachyon is not bound to any particular time or space and so her existence stretches across time and space. Her speech is thus an outward representation of her ability to exist everywhere and every time. It is interesting that Mrs Tachyon constantly repeats 'that's what you think'. Perhaps this is her way of revealing to other people that there is more to reality – such as the ability to travel through time – than what society thinks. Pratchett's depiction of Mrs Tachyon, highlighted by her speech, can be seen as a Cubist representation of time and space. In Cubist art, objects are broken up and re-assembled in an abstract form. This allows for the depiction of objects from more than a single point-of-view. The object is allowed to function within a greater context as a coherent sense of depth is removed (Cubism, 2011:n.p.). Similarly, in *Johnny and the Bomb,* Pratchett reveals the instability of time by illustrating a network of linear time and space that exist concurrently. As such, time is seen from a multitude of viewpoints and functions within a greater context.

Johnny and his friends must initially use the bags of time in order to travel through time. However, as the book progresses, Johnny is able to travel through time without the use of the bags. This is perhaps because of the gift he possesses as hero – the ability to see and understand beyond what others can. He begins to understand the fact that history cannot change, and any changes made in the past merely result in parallel branches of time and space being formed. Johnny realises that what has occurred in history cannot be altered or changed as it has already occurred:

> He blinked as the rain started to plaster his hair against his head. He could *feel* time stretching out around him. He could feel its slow movement as it carried forward all those gray bombs and those white doorsteps, pulling them together like bubbles being swirled around a whirlpool. They were all carried along by it. You couldn't break out of it because you were *part* of it. You couldn't steer a train.
>
> (*Bomb,* 199)

Changes made during travels to the past merely result in another branch of the space-time continuum being formed. Johnny thus understands, and more importantly accepts, the process and nature of space and time and is able to use it and move through it according to his will. The world literally opens up to him once he is able to detach himself from a constricting and binding linear view of time. Johnny thus begins to understand that time exists not just as an outer controlling and ordering force of the universe, but it also exists within each individual and can thus be manipulated. Johnny's expression of this realisation is perhaps most clear: 'Maybe Mrs Tachyon collected Time. Johnny felt in a way that he couldn't quite put into words that Time wasn't just something that was on clocks and calendars but lived in people's heads, too. And if that meant you had to think like this, no wonder she sounded mad' (*Bomb,* 144).

However, in *Johnny and the Bomb,* Pratchett uses a combination of circular and linear time which allows for the development of time in a variety of spaces (as opposed to inner space in the female chronotope). The combination also allows Johnny to undergo significant maturation. This inner growth or development can primarily be seen in the fact that only Johnny remembers being in the past, while his friends almost immediately forget (Kirsty remembers, but only for a short period). More importantly, however, he also understands why he is the only one who remembers. Johnny explains:

> It all settles down, he thought. That's what's so horrible about time travel. You come back to a different place. You come back to the place where you didn't go in the first place, and it's not *your* place. Because *here* was where no one died in Paradise Street. So here's where I didn't want to go back. So I didn't. So they didn't, either. When the newspaper picture was taken we were back there, but, now we're back here, we never went. So they don't remember because here there's nothing to remember. Here, we did something else. Hung on. Hung around. Here I'm remembering things that never happened.
>
> (*Bomb,* 256)

Because they have changed history, Johnny and his friends return to the present time, but to a different version of the present space. They have produced another 'trouser leg of time'[10] and have returned to that particular linear leg instead of the space from which they originally came. This means that although the changes they made in the past remain, the space to which they return is different. They cannot remember because their existence in the current present space means that they never went back to the past. In addition to this profound revelation, Johnny's maturation is evinced by his understanding of the way time works and his ability to see and feel the passage of time. This happens when he pulls Yo-less,

[10] The time through which Johnny and his friends travel remains constant, only the space differs. A unity of time and space still exists within this complex network of space, which Pratchett refers to as 'the trouser pants of time'.

Kirsty and Tom back through time after the failure of their previous attempt to save Paradise Street. The narrator explains what Johnny sees and feels:

> Johnny felt it again…the sense that he could reach out and go in directions not found on any map or compass but only on a clock. It poured up from inside him until he felt that it was leaking out of his fingers. He hadn't got the trolley or the bags but…maybe he could remember how it felt…Johnny had never seen the Northern Lights….That was how the town looked. It gleamed, as cold as starlight on a winter night.
>
> (*Bomb,* 211, 213)

Johnny can see time because he understands it. He understands it because of his ability to see beyond what his friends can, and he understands time because he is open to this understanding. His openness to the possibility of the impossible is made apparent in the fact that even before he truly understands the action of time, he is transported to the past in his vivid dreams and these begin to function as actual memories:

> "Er…" It had *felt* like memory, he told himself. "I remembered seeing it," said Johnny.
> "You remembered seeing it before you actually saw it?" said Kirsty
>
> (*Bomb,* 204)

Johnny dreams of the bombing of Paradise Street, but as the story progresses, we come to realise that these dreams are in fact real memories. Johnny remembers his adventures into the past, but they present themselves as dreams because Johnny's adventures into the past are yet to come. Once again, the complex network of time and space is evident.

Attebery (1992:55) argues that the 'impossible' in fantasy is often 'codified', and fantastical operations are based on 'natural laws'. These natural laws can be seen in the fact

that different branches of time exist. In addition, the use of magic is further bound by ethical limitations. 'One is responsible for the forces one unleashes' (Attebery, 1992:55). Johnny is aware of the ethical implications involved in time travel and Pratchett addresses these responsibilities in Johnny's determination to go back to the past and do what is right:

> "It's already happened, otherwise how come you know about it? You can't mess up history."
> "Why does everyone always talk like that?" he said. "It's *stupid.* You would really watch someone run over by a car because that's what was supposed to happen, would you? Everything we do changes the future, all the time. So we ought to do what's *right."*
>
> (*Bomb,* 125)

The message which Pratchett makes through Johnny's unfailing code of ethics addresses the idea of responsibility in general. Every individual has a responsibility to 'do what is right' or to act according to a set of moral values as his/her actions will affect the future and thus also many generations to come.

It would seem that Johnny's fascination seems to stem from his heroic ability to see beyond the immediate. He quickly realises that the event is not isolated in history, but is poignant and significant in that it still has an effect on the present. That this realisation comes slowly to Johnny can be seen in the following piece of narrative:

> He hadn't even known about it until he'd found the old newspapers in the library. It was – it was as if it hadn't *counted.* It had happened, but it wasn't a proper part of the war. And worse things had happened in a lot of other places. Nineteen people hardly mattered…The old men would go home from their allotments. The shops would shut. There wouldn't be many lights in any case, because of the blackout, but bit by bit the town would go to sleep.
>
> (*Bomb,* 111)

Johnny possesses the ability to see the interconnectivity of past and present, and more specifically, the importance of this particular event on his present. His grandfather is Tom, who in the story is the officer who helps Johnny and his friends ring the warning bell, saving many of the Paradise Street residents. This detail highlights the interconnectivity of past and present as Johnny's activities in the past lead him to meet his grandfather who helps him save the people of Paradise Street. However, had Johnny not travelled back in time, his grandfather would never have had the opportunity to save these people. Thus, the interconnectivity of time is directly linked to Johnny. Johnny has a direct link to the bombing of Paradise Street, because with the interconnectedness of time, he has already travelled back in time and experienced everything that he will experience. Pratchett shows that all events are tied to each other and all events thus have an impact on one another. All time is synchronous and so past events become important in shaping the future, but the present and future are also important in shaping the past, or at least our understanding of it.

The idea that time exists within each individual is further emphasised by the use of Wobbler. Wobbler is presented as a young boy in the previous two Johnny books, however, in *Johnny and the Bomb,* Wobbler appears simultaneously as an old man and a young boy. This again reveals the instability of time and emphasises Pratchett's idea that time can be manipulated. Johnny is also able to meet his grandfather as a young man when he goes back in time and so the chronology-based hierarchy is further destabilised. The most important point that Pratchett makes concerning the idea of time travel is that history is not a separate and isolated series of events that have no impact on the present and the future, but rather that history has a determining effect on the present and future. What we do in the present sets time and space off in a certain direction and determines the course it will follow into the future. What has occurred in the past has resulted in the present. Therefore, every action we take part

in has an effect on our future. Every action thus takes on a new meaning in terms of importance. With this, Pratchett highlights the idea of responsibility. We all have a responsibility to future generations to act conscientiously and sensibly in the present. As such, we are both powerful and powerless at the same time. We have the power to create the future, but we are powerless because the present has been created for us. William Faulkner (1960:I.iii) in *Requiem for a Nun* perhaps sums up this idea best: 'The past is never dead. It's not even past.'

Wobbler as Falstaff

In all three of Pratchett's Johnny Maxwell books, the most comic character by far is Wobbler Johnson. In fact, upon first glance, it would seem that Wobbler's main purpose in each book is to inject it with levity. However, Wobbler's function within the sphere of comedy, although vital for the structuring of plot as well as for Johnny's role as hero, is actually not as comic and innocent as initially expected. This is especially apparent in *Johnny and the Bomb* where Pratchett's treatment of Wobbler is more serious and poignant. Wobbler's role in all three books, and in *Johnny and the Bomb* particularly, extends far beyond the bounds of mere comedy.

In general, Wobbler Johnson is the embodiment of the materialistic and the carnivalesque. He is overweight (to which his name so elegantly alludes), greedy, lazy, slovenly, insensitive and, most of the time, cowardly. But these attributes extend beyond being merely droll. Essentially, he stands in complete opposition to the hero, Johnny, even though he is 'technically Johnny's best friend' (*Dead* 9). The two then form a pair reminiscent of the duo from Shakespeare's *Henry IV* (c. 1597 – 1599), with Johnny

resembling Hal and Wobbler resembling Falstaff. In a similar way to the Shakespearean pair, Pratchett's twosome represent distinct Apollonian and Dionysian characteristics. A further correlation of *Johnny and the Bomb,* to *Henry IV* (parts I and II) is that both parts are also about war. Johnny's character as hero has already been considered in the introduction to this dissertation, so let us now consider Wobbler.

To use Wobbler's own words in describing himself, he 'is fat' (*Dead* 84). In addition to this, however, he makes no pretense about his weight and one can even goes as far as saying that he takes pride in it. Take Pratchett's description of Wobbler running down Paradise Street in *Johnny and the Bomb*: 'Wobbler wheezed along the road. And he *did* wobble. It wasn't his fault he was fat, he'd always said, it was just his genetics. He had too many of them. He was trying to run but most of the energy was getting lost in the wobbling' (*Bomb,* 112). An earlier example of Pratchett's preoccupation with Wobbler's weight can be found in *Johnny and the Dead.* The following conversation (inside the boys' favourite burger joint) serves to show Wobbler's acceptance of his rather large physique:

> "Wonder if could get a job here?" said Wobbler.
> "No chance," said Bigmac. "The manager'd take one look at you and see where the profits would go."
> "You saying I'm fat?" said Wobbler.
> "Gravitationally challenged," said Yo-less, without looking up.
> "Enhanced," said Bigmac.
> Wobbler's lips moved as he tried these out.
> "I'd rather be fat," he said. "Can I finish up your onion rings?"
>
> (*Dead,* 84)

In a similar vein to Falstaff then, Wobbler's weight is an intrinsic part of his role in all three Johnny books. The most obvious function of his size is to allude to his gluttony and laziness. However, his weight performs a far more important role in steering the function of

his character.

Laroque (in Knowles, 1998:87) states that in *Henry IV,* Falstaff's stomach alludes to the carnivalesque in the way that his gluttony stands in direct opposition to and even rebels against the practices of Lent, such as self-control and denial. Carnivalesque characters or characters that are associated with the carnivalesque are thus made humorous by their physical features, which are often over-the-top. This is so as to highlight their exaggerated nature and also their resistance to what is accepted by society. The purpose of these characters, according to Greig (1969: 111) is ultimately to shock, so long as the character's distortion of manners and physicality does not cause him/her or the audience any harm. If being thin is acceptable, then the carnivalesque character will be fat. If having hair is acceptable, then the Lord of Misrule will be bald. In other words, these characters are 'deviations from the human ideals of personal beauty, grace of movement, and gentleness of manners' (Greig, 1969: 110). This is clearly reflected in *Johnny and the Bomb* by Wobbler's hefty physique as well as by his confidence in rumours (he believes the tales told about Mrs Tachyon – that she killed her husband and keeps his body in her shopping bags) and his cowardice (reflected in his fear of the dark alleyway in which Mrs Tachyon lies injured).

It is interesting that each of Johnny's friends speak for the marginalised in society. Kirsty, as discussed in detail in *Only You Can Save Mankind*, is female; Bigmac, also discussed in more detail in *Only You Can Save Mankind*, is poor and prone to delinquent behaviour; Wobbler is fat; Yo-less is black; Johnny is even less than ordinary; and all of them are children. Interestingly then, together, Wobbler, Johnny, Kirsty, Bigmac and Yo-less form a band of misfits reminiscent of the carnival. In many ways, they are not accepted

by society, and so, by banding together, they unconsciously fight back against society's marginalisation of them.

Laroque's idea is that weight becomes a kind of *Leitmotif* which is created by the continuous attacks of the fat against the thin. In a similar vein to Falstaff, Wobbler's weight alludes to the carnivalesque and in many ways also functions as a *Leitmotif* that runs throughout *Johnny and the Bomb* and the preceding two books. In *Henry IV,* this *Leitmotif* forms a comic mirroring of the real battles taking place in the play. Similarly, in *Johnny and the Bomb,* despite Wobbler's and Johnny's friendship, Wobbler is very quick to judge Johnny, which can also be seen as a reflection of the war which they are experiencing. The belly, according to Bakhtin (quoted in Knowles, 1998) is associated with gluttony and lasciviousness. It ultimately 'devours' and 'swallows up' and the implication of this is that there is no sense of discretion connected to this 'devouring', and so the belly becomes a way to critique and foil the normal functioning of society. Perhaps it is apt to say that these characteristics are rejected by society, and so those who succumb to these attributes must therefore also be rejected by society. For example, in *Henry IV,* Hal, along with the rest of society in the play, rejects Falstaff. This can be seen when Hal makes his speech upon accepting his father's crown (IV, ii, 122 – 133).

In *Johnny and the Bomb* Wobbler is never rejected outright, but a rejection of Wobbler is reflected in Johnny's denunciation of the attributes which Wobbler represents. Most importantly, Johnny fully accepts his heroic abilities to see further than the immediately recognisable and so moves beyond Wobbler's concern with untruths, materialism and the sensational. In addition, although Pratchett's treatment of Wobbler in *Johnny and the Bomb* is less harsh than Shakespeare's treatment of Falstaff, his weight still

acts a constant focus, which, in turn, reveals Pratchett's, and thus also society's, rejection of it.

Umberto Eco (quoted in Nelson, 1990:89) also states that part of comedy lies in the representation of a rule violator, an 'ignoble, and repulsive (animal-like) character'. Eco continues to say that readers experience a sense of superiority over the character and in this superiority, they laugh. They also welcome the brute-like character with all his/her physical and mental deformities as they are enabled to act against the 'repressive power of the rule' through him/her. Society is thus 'revenged' by the carnivalesque (the use of 'carnivalesque' here is derived from Bakhtin [quoted in Knowles, 1998:94]) .

And so, carnivalesque characters are often given physically unattractive attributes in order to make apparent the more debasing and degrading characteristics that constitute society itself, but that society chooses to ignore. To summarise, Laroque (cited in Knowles, 1998:94) says that bodily excesses, especially that of weight, are used to highlight the rebellion of the carnivalesque against order, law and the norms of society. The overweight and gluttonous therefore reign in a time of fasting and religious sacrifice.

Wobbler's weight, however, does not only function to highlight his gluttony and material concerns, but also to make him a character to whom readers can relate more easily. Essentially, material concerns and greed are values entrenched in today's society and so a character like Wobbler encompasses what readers know or at least have come into contact with. His gluttony is represented by his being overweight, and his lasciviousness is represented by his almost lustful interest in the television and computers. As Pratchett explains, Wobbler '…had a Nerd Pride badge and he messed around with computers. What

Wobbler wanted was to be a kid in milk-bottle-bottom glasses and a deformed anorak, who could write amazing software and be a millionaire by the time he was twenty…' (*Bomb,* 20). Wobbler is also 'technically Johnny's best friend' (*Dead* 9) and so he functions as the most important member of Johnny's clique. He serves as a foil for Johnny's character in order to highlight Johnny's perceptive, logical and far more discerning nature as well as his moral concerns. An example of Wobbler's sometimes questionable sense of morality can be seen in the fact that he has no problem with copying computer games illegally and distributing them among his friends. Pratchett describes a scene in which Wobbler, Johnny, Bigmac and Yo-less walk into their local computer store owned by Mr Patel: 'He [Mr Patel] always watched Wobbler very carefully, on the fairly accurate basis that Wobbler distributed more games than he did and didn't even charge anyone for them' (*Mankind,* 48).

Wobbler, however, also functions on a much larger scale in highlighting the concerns of the book, most importantly, maintaining a connection with the past. His synchronous existence as both young and old in two different times and spaces highlights the interconnectivity of time and the effect of the past events on the present and future. Wobbler does not initially seem to care about the past or important historical events and, as Pratchett explains, 'Wobbler had never bothered much with history. As far as he was concerned it was something that had happened to other people' (*Bomb,* 117). It is interesting then that Pratchett chooses to use Wobbler as the character who reveals the importance of history. To do this, Pratchett treats Wobbler far more seriously in *Johnny and the Bomb* than he does in the first two books. This is to highlight the serious nature of the message which Pratchett attempts to convey. That even such a humorous and comic character can be so poignantly affected by the realisation of the importance of time serves to emphasise Pratchett's point. Wobbler's uncaring attitude towards history is punished by

his being left behind. Pratchett thus tries to show that forgetting about the past, or neglecting to realise the importance of the past, is wrong and dangerous. However, this punishment, which can also be seen as a type of degradation, together with Wobbler's role as buffoon, also has a regenerative power (Knowles, 1998:5).

According to Knowles (1998:4), Bakhtin's theory of the carnival relies largely on its regenerative power. He sees the carnival acting '…not in accord with the division between life and death, but rather with the cyclical nature of life, where death and life meet and life is renewed. It subsumes death into the larger constant of regeneration becoming made manifest in the seasons and human gestation'. Knowles (1998:5) further explores this argument by quoting Bakhtin as saying, 'Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one'. Wobbler's punishment in being left behind in the past has a regenerative power in that it helps the readers as well as Wobbler and the rest of Johnny's friends to realise the importance of history.

By being set adrift in time and space, Wobbler is not hurled 'into the void of nonexistence' but rather tossed into the regenerative power of the lower echelons of the body, 'the zone in which conception and new birth take place'. Feinberg (1967:48) categorises fools into two groups. Firstly, there are the fools who are dunces and whose stupidity is specially created so as to make the audience laugh. In this way, they function in accordance with the burlesque. Secondly, there are characters who are thought of as fools but in whom the writer presents certain circumvented truths. In this way, they function satiristically. Vice characters (allegorical characters who represent certain faults or shortcomings such as gluttony, laziness, lustfulness and so on) such as Wobbler act out of the pure love of mischief (Frye in Corrigan, 1965:151) and are almost always benevolent.

Essentially, they are the *architectus* of the comedy and help the story reach a happy ending.

Despite the fact that Wobbler represents a distortion of normal societal values in terms of his weight and slovenliness, he is one of the most loveable characters in the series. This means that readers are likely to overlook his vices, choosing instead to see them with the detached sense of amusement of someone witnessing something they know to be invalid. Wobbler is also a child and so we soften our criticism of him. Like Wobbler, Falstaff is a humorous character at whom 'we laugh with and laugh at' (Laroque quoted in Knowles, 1998:94). However, both Falstaff and Wobbler put their significant others is touch with the common man, which is important for the inner development that takes place within both Hal and Johnny. They do this with their own brand of antics, mischief and philosophy. These carousers, Wobbler and Falstaff, as well as what they represent, remain useful even after the carousing has ended. Pratchett's more serious treatment of Wobbler therefore does not negate Wobbler as a vice character, as his Falstaffian role has already been established in the previous two books. Instead, although his carousing largely comes to an end, his effect on Johnny still continues. Wobbler is thus still useful as a vice character even when he becomes more serious.

Although Wobbler may not intentionally try to lead Johnny off the hero's path, there is a definite sense of this in *Johnny and the Bomb* although Wobbler's influence is inadvertent and far less selfish than Falstaff's. Perhaps one can use Blake's criticism of Milton and say that Wobbler is of 'the Devil's party without knowing it' (quoted in John Dover Wilson 1945:23). However, Wobbler's foibles and iconoclastic nature are necessary for Johnny's development in the sense that he must reject Wobbler's materialistic and selfish view of the world in order to transform into the true hero of the series. He must accept his

role as hero and, hence, act in a way different from what is expected of him by his friends. Essentially, he must reject their, especially Wobbler's, more oblivious sensibilities. Johnny's ability to recognise his own unique characteristics and heroic qualities is made far easier with a character like Wobbler around to put them under the spotlight.

According to Kenneth McLeish (1985:87), Shakespeare's Falstaff reaches beyond merely making the audience laugh: 'He is aware that life is a charade and is markedly responsible for his situation. He besets our hearts, yea deeper still, to our diaphragms. We are his. He has been too great a humoristic character to forfeit all good impressions within the length of one play'.

Similarly, Wobbler besets our hearts; and we very quickly become his audience. He too is aware that life is a charade, with his constant attempts to convince his friends that his life is something to be envious of. He repeatedly embellishes upon his seemingly trouble-free and roguish reputation, but his stories are perhaps too good to be true. A typical example of this can be seen in Wobbler's explanation of how Mrs Tachyon's husband supposedly died: '*I* heard she stuck his head in the oven' said Wobbler. 'Very messy' (*Bomb,* 32). Interesting to note is the link of this statement to the story of *Hansel and Gretel* in which the evil witch is killed by the children who shove her into an oven. In this sense, Wobbler likens Mrs Tachyon to a witch-like character and with this exaggeration, makes his story seem all the more fantastic.

His bravado and the care-free act are quickly undone, however, when he runs into any trouble. Countless examples can be seen in *Johnny and the Bomb,* but the following piece of narrative is perhaps the most memorable and demonstrative of Wobbler' s true nature: 'And

Wobbler would admit to anything if you got him frightened enough. All the great unsolved mysteries of the world – the Bermuda Triangle, the Marie Celeste, the Loch Ness Monster – could be sorted out in about half an hour if you leaned a bit on Wobbler' (*Bomb,* 40).

To add to Wobbler's shared qualities with Falstaff is the fact that Wobbler's deity is the television and media which links to Falstaff's function as a gossip and spreader of rumours. This can be seen in Wobbler's acceptance of and reliance on information obtained from this materialistic vat. Wobbler is not a religious boy, and explicitly mentions that he is 'and atheist' (*Dead*, 42). Instead, Wobbler's religious tendencies are derived from computer games and television programmes. This reliance highlights Wobbler's uncritical nature as can be seen in the following description: 'Wobbler had never bothered much with history. As far as he was concerned it was something that had happened to other people. He vaguely remembered a TV programme with some film shot back in the days when people were so poor that could only afford to be in black and white' (*Bomb,* 117).

Racism

As previously stated, Pratchett challenges various stereotypes in his earlier Johnny books by subverting labels and typecasts and exaggerating certain aspects of these. This has a comic effect, but it also serves to highlight the ridiculousness of these stereotypes as well as their redundancy, especially in contemporary society. In *Johnny and the Bomb,* Pratchett's primary target is racism. He attacks stereotypical beliefs about black children, specifically young, black males by characterising Yo-less as completely different from this stereotype. Before a specific discussion of Yo-less can be made, however, it is important to first consider how racism functions within children's literature in general.

Granstrom and Silvey in MacCann and Woodard (1977:97) discuss the idea of racism against the black American child in their essay, *A Call for Help: Exploring the Black Experience in Children's Books.* Their essay largely focuses on the black American child and their findings mostly address the construction of a black identity and the experiences of the black child in literature. Although their essay is based on the American child, we can extrapolate from these findings to black children in general. Thus, the findings are general enough to have some validity for the experiences of black children world-wide. In 1972, The New England Round Table of Children's Librarians presented a conference entitled, "The Black Experience in Children's Books: Who Needs It?" The conference included Albert V. Schwartz (Assistant Professor, Richmond College, C.U.N.Y), Natalie Savage Carlson, author; and Mildred Griffish, Project Director of City University Staff Development Project, Boston Public Schools. Mr Schwartz, referred to by Granstrom and Silvey, states that the 'black experience' is needed in children's literature but only if the experience is specifically related to the children themselves. However, even when stories have included black children, there seem to be four ways in which these children are largely represented. These, according to Carlson (cited in Granstrom and Silvey, 1977:98), include blacks as stereotypes, as caricatures, as individuals with race problems and as individuals with universal problems. Griffith adds to this argument by stating that the so-called black experience is needed in order for black children to establish better self-esteem and to accept better role-models. However, Hilliard (1995:58) states that black children are often 'misinformed about their own culture and are many times saturated with European and White American literature and culture'. In addition, Bishop (2012: 6), referring to Broderick (1973), states that children's books in which the black experience is presented are generally 'a means of imparting to White children what "the White establishment" wanted them to know about Black people'. However, according to Carlson (cited in Granstrom and Silvey, 1977:98), white children, on

the other hand, need the black experience to be incorporated into children's stories in order to develop more positive attitudes towards black children.

To add to this argument, I refer to Latimer (cited in MacCann and Woodard, 1977:107) who states that in children's books where white characters are the dominant, or more important characters, a segregated world is illustrated and so these books reveal the value placed on whiteness in today's society. As a result, black children are faced with the idea that they do not matter in society. In addition to this, Latimer (cited in MacCann and Woodard, 1977:108) explains that many black characters in the past have been characterised as functioning on the periphery and having little significance to the story. Black characters have thus seldom been shown as round characters with meaningful tasks. The tasks that these characters are often concerned with are 'jovial, inconsequential and deferring – but never too intelligent' (Latimer quoted in MacCann and Woodard, 1977:108).

Fortunately, however, the representation of black children in children's literature is beginning to change. More often than not, authors are increasingly including black and 'multi-ethnic' characters into their stories (Latimer cited in MacCann and Woodard, 1977:109). Although these may be viewed as 'token characters', a number of works aptly describe the black experience as well as illustrate their history and culture.

The inclusion of black characters in children's books, however, has often been influenced by previous perceptions of black culture which are most often negative and 'irrational' (Latimer cited in MacCann and Woodard, 1977:110). Thus, a number of books attempting to represent the black experience lack authenticity, and may strengthen racist attitudes, even through attempts to dispel these very attitudes. As Latimer (cited in MacCann

and Woodard, 1977:111) explains, when black characters are finally integrated into literature, they are presented based on conceptions the white society have of blacks, rather than presented as individuals. Black child readers thus need to distance themselves from any 'conscious or unconscious' racism and understand and appreciate the history and experience of black people from all over the world. The writer of stories who includes black characters thus has a responsibility to present black characters in equal relationships with white characters as well as 'performing a variety of roles, settings and occupations, experiencing the range of emotions and aspirations common to all people' (Latimer quoted in MacCann and Woodard, 1977:112).

In *Johnny and the Bomb,* although Yo-less is the only black character, Pratchett does not attempt to construct Yo-less as a black boy who represents all black experience. Rather, the presentation of Yo-less as the only black character in the book is important in representing the black child as an individual. In addition, Yo-less also does not act in accordance with any stereotypes. Instead, Pratchett inverts many of these stereotypes, making Yo-less an intelligent, law-abiding and conservative young boy. Pratchett overtly subverts these particular stereotypes by explicitly mentioning them and as such, makes them seem ridiculous.

This can be seen in the following description of Yo-less:

> Take Yo-less. When you looked at Yo-less you might think he had possibilities. He was black. Technically. But he never said "Yo", and the only person he ever called a mother was his mother. Yo-less said it was racial stereotyping to say all black kids acted like that but, however you looked at it, Yo-less had been born with a defective cool.
>
> (*Bomb,* 19)

Yo-less may be seen as the 'token black', but this underscores Pratchett's attempt to subvert many stereotypes at once. As has already been mentioned, Johnny's band of misfits is made up of five character types who each represent different marginalised groups in society. Having only one from each group then further highlights Pratchett's criticism of the fact that these groups have been placed in positions of liminal importance. As Latimer (quoted in MacCann and Woodard, 1977:112) explains, '…the dignity of the Black characters should be preserved. They should bring a sense of self-awareness in confronting a situation. This is especially true if the story intends to shed some light on the troublesome experiences of Black people'. Pratchett's use of Yo-less does exactly this. By presenting Yo-less as part of a band of misfits, a sense of self-awareness is available to the readers from the fact that Yo-less, along with Johnny, Kirsty, Bigmac and Wobbler, is so obviously representative of a group. Yo-less is well aware of the existence of racism from the very beginning of the Johnny series and alludes to the stigmas that surround him throughout. For example: 'Yo-less had explained about this sort of thing. He'd said that if one of his ancestors had joined Attila the Hun's huge horde of millions of barbarians and helped them raid Ancient Rome, people would've definitely remembered that one of them was black. And this was Yo-less, who collected brass bands, had a matchbox collection and was a known spod' (*Bomb,* 42). Another example is: 'Security guards were strolling towards them. There were five kids arguing around a trolley, Bigmac was among them and, as Yo-less would have pointed out, one of them was black. This sort of thing attracts attention' (*Bomb,* 93).

Yo-less is also aware of the rather comic existence of politically correct terms, which Pratchett exaggerates as in the following example: '"You're not allowed to call them dinosaurs anymore," said Yo-less. "It's speciesist. You have to call them pre-petroleum persons"' (*Bomb,* 95). The use of such politically correct terminology highlights an avoidance

of previously stereotypical terms but, as such, also prevents clear and open communication. The idea of 'pre-petroleum persons' is a vague and all-inclusive idea, which does not allow for clear referencing at all.

Yo-less is clearly conscious of this fact, but in *Johnny and the Bomb,* he becomes poignantly aware. This primarily occurs in a scene in which Yo-less is called a 'sambo', a highly racist term, by a shopkeeper on their first trip back to 1941:

> "Sambo," said Yo-less, when they were outside.
> "What?" said Kirsty. "Oh, that. Never mind about that. Give me that newspaper."
> "My grandad came here in 1952," said Yo-less, in the same plonking, hollow voice. "He said little kids thought his colour'd come off if he washed."
> 'Yes, well, I can see you're upset, but that's just how things were, it's all changed since then," said Kirsty, turning the pages.
>
> (*Bomb,* 109)

This incident severely affects Yo-less because, for the first time, he becomes fully aware of the extent to which those he loves were and still are affected by racism. When he is the target of racial stereotyping, he is able to ignore, and even joke about it. However, when those he loves are the target, he becomes angry. Yo-less's reaction to this incident clearly indicates his anger at being singled out because of his colour, but also his realisation of racism as entrenched in society. He even questions what his grandfather, as a young black man during this time, felt at being categorised in this way.

As such, Pratchett does indeed shed some light on the troublesome experiences of black people with his inclusion of overt racism when Johnny and his friends travel back to 1941. Pratchett does not, however, only use racism targeted at Yo-less to represent the black

experience as a whole, but rather uses Yo-less as a springboard from which to make the readers aware of the black experience extended over several centuries. Pratchett uses the incident in which Yo-less is called a 'sambo', as well as Yo-less's reaction to this racist term to draw attention to the fact that racial stereotyping has negatively affected generations of various cultures, and in particular, Yo-less's own family. The racial stereotyping of the past thus has a distinct influence on the present. A conversation between Kirsty and Yo-less highlights this fact:

> "I'm not stupid. I've read old books. We're back in golliwog history. Plucky niggers and hooray for the Empire. She called me *Sambo*."
> "Look," said Kirsty, still reading the newspaper. "This is the olden days. She didn't mean it…you know, nastily. It's just how she was brought up. You people can't expect us to rewrite history, you know."
> Johnny suddenly felt as though he'd stepped into a deep freeze. It was almost certainly the *you people*. Sambo had been an insult, but *you people* was worse, because it wasn't even personal
> He had never seen Yo-less so angry. It was a kind of rigid, brittle anger. How could someone as intelligent as Kirsty be so dumb? What she needed to do now was say something sensible.
>
> (*Bomb,* 110)

Kirsty's obliviousness to both the negative and lasting effects of racism serves to underscore Yo-less's realisation of the impact of racism on generations of black people. She uses the words, 'you people' which highlights the separation between Self and Other. Kirsty, as a white person, clearly sees herself as the Self and distances Yo-less and 'his kind' as the Other. This is the very essence of racial stereotyping. Black people are seen as the Other and so rejected by the Self – functioning outside of the so-called accepted norm. In addition, Kirsty's insensitivity fuels Yo-less's anger as it reveals her deep-seated acceptance of the racial attitudes to which Yo-less has been subjected. 'Sambo' is not something that can simply be ignored merely because it was a term used in the early twentieth century. Rather, it

must be remembered so as to fully realise the black experience, as well as to highlight its continued legacy in the present.

War

In *Johnny and the Bomb,* Pratchett makes concrete what he seems to suggest about war in the previous two Johnny books, which is that events of the past (specifically war) have an inevitable effect on the future. Pratchett begins *Johnny and the Bomb,* by orientating the readers as to the time and context in which the story begins. The details which Pratchett provides refer specifically to World War II, and the bombing of Paradise Street in Blackbury. Details such as: 'On the horizon, in the direction of Slate, the thin beams of searchlights tried to pry bombers out of the clouds' (*Bomb,* 10), as well as: 'A poster outside one shop urged people to Dig for Victory, as if it were some kind of turnip' (*Bomb,* 10).

Inherent in these details is Pratchett's usual criticism of war as a meaningless and inane institution. Pratchett underscores this criticism by describing the generally derelict state in which Blackbury finds itself due to social apathy and the commercialisation of society – indirect results of the war. For example:

> The High Street was what Blackbury District Council called a Pedestrian Precinct and Amenity Area, although no-one was quite sure what the amenities were, or even what an amenity *was*…or maybe it was the flowerbeds, which sprouted a regular crop of the hardy perennial Crisp Packet…A newspaper blew along the deserted pavement until it wrapped around the stalks in an ornamental flowerbed. The wind caught an empty lager can and bowled it across the pavement until it hit a drain.
>
> (*Bomb,* 15)

The focus of the book on Paradise Street is the result of Johnny's increasing interest in the bombing of the street which took place 55 years before. As part of a history project, Johnny collects all the information he can about Paradise Street, including newspaper clippings with pictures of the Street subsequent to its bombing. However, his research soon develops into more of an obsession as is reflected by the vivid daydreams he has of the bombing itself. This can be seen in the following: 'Paradise Street, thought Johnny. Paradise Street was on his mind a lot, these days. Especially at night….I wish I could go back to Paradise Street' (*Bomb,* 24).

In addition to this, Pratchett continues with his presentation of war as bloody and harsh (a continuation of the ideas presented in the previous Johnny books), for example: '"And one of them shot at me! With an actual gun! Soldiers aren't supposed to shoot people!" [said Bigmac]' (*Bomb,* 146). Bigmac, much as he does in *Only You Can Save Mankind,* does not initially realise that war is *real* and that *real* guns and bombs are used. War is not like the games he plays or as 'cool' as he imagines it to be. But Wobbler and Bigmac are soon privy to the real destruction and devastation that war causes:

> They were jumping behind the wall when the second and third bombs hit the pickle factory. They were landing on the grass as the bombs marched up the street and filled the air with a noise so loud it couldn't be heard and a light so white it came right through the eyelids, and then the roar picked up the ground and shook it like a blanket. That was the worst part, Wobbler said later. And it was hard to find the worst part because all the others were so bad. But the ground should be the ground, there, solid, dependably under you. It shouldn't drop away and then come back up and hit you so hard…And everywhere there was glass, crunching underfoot like permanent hail. It glittered on the walls, reflecting the fires in the ruins.
>
> (*Bomb,* 228)

Pratchett's primary criticism in *Johnny and the Bomb* is of war and this is made possible by giving readers a glimpse into the past. In other words, and as previously mentioned, Pratchett uses the idea of time travel to highlight his critique because going back in time reveals to Johnny and his friends the atrocities of war through the personal experience of it. In addition, Pratchett makes use of time travel to show how the past affects the future and thus how the present will affect our future.

~*Conclusion*~

'The fantastic can illuminate the real. It can show you the world you know in a way that makes you realise you've never looked at it'

(Neil Gaiman and Al Sarrantonio, 2010:3).

Throughout the Johnny Maxwell trilogy, Johnny, the seemingly ordinary boy, continues to reveal his extraordinariness. He is the hero of the story and with each new experience he undergoes and each adventure upon which he embarks, we, the readers, form a deeper bond with him. We experience what he experiences because he is the archetypal hero and thus part of the 'collective unconscious, the psychic residue of numberless experiences of the same kind, and thus part of the inherited response-pattern of the race' (Jung quoted in Gordon, 1968:ii). Johnny is not merely a symbolic figure to whom readers can relate, he *is* us.

Davis (1997:1) explains that the archetype can be explained as a 'precursor' to the conscious which exists in the unconscious as an 'expression of psychic happenings, but without basis in the physical world'. 'Unconscious energies' are given expression through art, literature, music and so on, and in this way, the unconscious becomes conscious (Davis, 1997:1). And so, the archetypal hero is within each of us, instead of being a symbolic representation. Heroes are a construction and they exist in all societies because 'they express a deep psychological aspect of human existence. They can be seen as a metaphor for the human search of self-knowledge. In other words, the hero shows us the path to our own consciousness through his actions' (Davis, 1997:2).

With this idea in mind, I once again refer to Bettelheim (1976:7) who explains that the repression of psychic energies or unconscious content, whatever they may be, can lead to disturbances within a child's personality or even his/her identity. The expression of unconscious content is therefore vital for healthy psychic development (as discussed in the introduction, literature is one way in which to give unconscious content an outlet). The hero thus speaks to child readers, since he/she embodies all child readers and child readers can speak through the hero (symbolically) to release any repressed psychic content. In the Johnny Maxwell trilogy then, the reader identifies with Johnny and his struggles, and so the ScreeWee Gunnery Officer becomes the playground bully, while United Amalgamated Consolidated Holdings becomes the overbearing parent and the bomb attack on Paradise Street becomes the abusive father (figuratively speaking). In all three books, however, Pratchett also deals with many issues in a more direct way (such as war, death, divorce, sexism and racism) and this suggests to children various symbolic ways in which they can deal with such problems. Exposing children to such harsh realities may seem unnecessary, but as Bettelheim (1976:7) explains, children must be exposed to harsh realities as these are certainties in life. However, with this exposure, children also need guidance in learning how to cope with such terrible certainties. This guidance can be found in books, specifically fairy tales and fantasy, which are the archetypal constructs that can assist children with achieving a sense of order.

The concept of bibliotherapy (a more contemporary take on Bettelheim) has a similar thesis. According to Crago (1999:181) books are highly effective therapeutic tools as they assist children (and adults) in dealing with emotional struggles. Firstly, if the narratives are either literally or figuratively comparable to one's own problems or general condition they have the potential to provide readers with a language in which they may begin to talk about

what has previously been unclear to them. In addition, texts can be a form of comfort in helping readers feel as though they are not alone in his/her struggles. In the Johnny books child readers are presented with a variety of characters, each with his/her own struggles. Pratchett is able to show child readers how these struggles can be dealt with even if they cannot be eradicated. As stated in the introduction, books can thus provide readers with insights into their problems, and even 'a measure of integration of previously disowned feelings' (Crago, 1999:187). Lastly, books can provide suggestions, metaphorical or literal, for ways to resolve readers' problems – 'suggestions which may bypass conscious resistance on the sufferer's part' (Crago, 1999:187). In Pratchett's own words, 'fantasy isn't just about wizards and silly wands. It's about seeing the world from new directions' (Pratchett, 2002).

And so, as in the epigraph to my introduction, I once again quote Chesterton (1910:130), whose words I believe provide the perfect ending to my argument: 'Fairy tales do not give a child his first idea of bogey. What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of the bogey. The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon'.

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