SUBVERSIONS: THE DISCWORLD NOVELS
OF TERRY PRATCHETT

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Abstract

‘Subversions: the Discworld novels of Terry Pratchett’ focuses on six of Terry Pratchett’s twenty-one Discworld novels, which are representative of two different subject areas of the series: witches and the city of Ankh-Morpork’s Watch. While taking a closely analytical approach to Witches Abroad, Lords and Ladies, Guards! Guards!, Men At Arms, Feet of Clay and Maskerade, it also makes some assessments of the Discworld novels as a whole. The field of criticism specifically to do with Terry Pratchett is currently a very limited one, but a range of secondary material is brought to bear on the subjects of fantasy, fairy tale, postmodernist fiction and fiction in general. There is particular reference made to the thought of Mikhail Bakhtin and to various critical interpretations.

The main concern is to develop a reading of Terry Pratchett that is informed by some of Bakhtin’s wide-ranging ideas. At its initial level, the argument combines Bakhtin’s emphasis on dialogue with Pratchett’s personal terminology, in claiming that the Discworld novels ‘dialogise the diodic’. The author of the Discworld novels coined the word ‘diodic’ as a child, to describe electrical connections which required a diode. Such connections were implicitly one-way; they only worked through the diode. In writing the Discworld novels he took relationships that would normally be thought of in terms which he considered to be diodic and made them work in two or more ways. This thesis contends that the Discworld novels subvert by way of the distorting lens of fantasy, parodically dialogising (or ‘bringing another voice to’) conventional viewpoints, in order to interrogate the idea that there can be a satisfactory unitary way of seeing.
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Note:
The Discworld novels which are referred to in the text are listed here in order of their dates of first publication (bibliographic details of these novels appear on pp.120-121, before the 'Works Cited' section). Parenthetical page references to the novels are differentiated according to the following notation system:

*The Light Fantastic* (1986) TLF
*Equal Rites* (1987) ER
*Guards! Guards!* (1989) GG
*Witches Abroad* (1991) WA
*Lords and Ladies* (1992) LL
*Men At Arms* (1993) MAA
*Interesting Times* (1994) IT
*Feet of Clay* (1996) FOC
Introduction

Below, or around, or indeed in the heart of this world there exist possibilities, perhaps inescapabilities, of experience which are on the one hand contiguous with childlike apprehension, and on the other cognisant of the terrors which, like the turtles of ancient mythology . . . support the thin fabric of the everyday upon their shoulders . . . there is always the possibility of the landslip which will abruptly precipitate us into the alternative world where our common bearings find themselves adrift on a newly redrawn map.¹

"This is the Discworld, which goes through space on the back of a giant turtle. Most worlds do, at some stage in their perception" (T 13).

The title of this study has become self-fulfilling in a way that it was not initially intended to be. Although it makes some general statements about the Discworld novels, it focuses on only six of them. Three of these, Witches Abroad, Lords and Ladies and Maskerade, were selected from the group referred to on the basis of their protagonists as the Witches novels. The other three, Guards! Guards!, Men At Arms and Feet of Clay, were chosen from the novels about the city of Ankh-Morpork's Watch²; there is only passing reference made to other Discworld books. Entitled ‘Subversions: the Discworld novels of Terry Pratchett’, this thesis embraces only six of the Discworld novels, novels that parody settled, pre-existent narratives and discourses.³ Their form of parody targets ways of seeing in general, undermining perceptions rather than directing a satirical attack against individuals. While
they subvert fairy tales, the processes of history and myth, opera, romance and
grand historical institutions such as monarchy and religion, the six Discworld
novels considered here remain contributions to that which they parody; the
genre of popular fantasy fiction. They do not distance themselves from comic
tradition, instead seeking to ironically reveal the origins and the arbitrariness of
any utterances they come into contact with which attempt to seem 'given',
whether this stance is taken on the basis of being ahistorical, uniacccentual, non­
ideological or objective.

John Clute writes that Terry Pratchett's characters "are creatures of
Comedy. Their ties to the world we know--the incipits that engender them from
the books of this world--are never closed." This statement applies equally to
Pratchett's books, for they too resist categorisation and finalisation and can also
be seen as open-ended 'creatures of Comedy'. The last words of each
individual book never give the sense of a door shutting upon further
developments. As the Disc continues on its travels through space on the back of
Great A'Tuin, the sky turtle, one is always left with an impression of an
unbordered, seemingly limitless frame of reference. It is impossible to make
any definitive statement about the Discworld novels as a whole, in any case.
For one thing, their diversity makes it difficult to generalise about them without
being sweepingly reductionist. For another, although I thought to avoid or at
least lessen this potential for inaccuracy by limiting myself almost exclusively to
the Watch and the Witches novels, the prolific Pratchett intends to enlarge each
of these groups in the not-so-unforeseeable future. Indeed, he has added Jingo
to the Watch novels since this project began; there are twenty-one Discworld
novels in print at time of writing, with still more additions planned. In choosing
to write about a constantly-evolving sequence of novels, I have lent my own
efforts an appropriate open-endedness.

The Discworld novels are indicative of a dynamic dialogue with a
subjective 'reality' that does not correspond in every way with what is normally
taken to be our own. Along with the golems of *Feet of Clay*, it may be better for us to be relieved of the need for an authoritative Word—it is certainly better for the argument put forward in these pages, because it would be remiss to pretend that it has access to one. It does, however, make use of a unique authorial expression, one which Terry Pratchett introduced in a personal interview. He explained that he coined the word 'diodic' as a child, to describe electrical connections which required a diode. Such connections were implicitly one-way; they only worked through the diode. In writing the Discworld novels he took relationships that would normally be thought of in terms which he considered to be diodic and made them work in two or more ways. Things which at first appear to be diodic often turn out otherwise in the Discworld context.

The proposition that I wish to make does not rely solely for its structure upon the word of the author of the Discworld novels. When the name of Russian intellectual Mikhail Bakhtin was mentioned, Terry Pratchett admitted not only that he had not read anything by or about him, but that he had never even heard the name before. It has nonetheless been rewarding to make connections between the Discworld novels and aspects of Bakhtin's broad critical thinking, for they have proved to have a great deal of common ground across which to speak to each other. Bakhtin's theories are based primarily on the importance of dialogue and the dialogic interactions that are involved in processes that might at first appear singular or unitary. As Michael Holquist observes, "dialogue always implies the simultaneous existence of manifold possibilities." The potential inherent in dialogue for elusive, many-sided signification can be seen in the context of a footnote from *Interesting Times*:

Inexperienced travellers might think that 'Aargh!' is universal, but in Betrobi it means 'highly enjoyable' and in Howondaland it means, variously, 'I would like to eat your foot', 'Your wife is a big hippo' and 'Hello, Thinks Mr Purple Cat'. One
particular tribe has a fearsome reputation for cruelty because prisoners appear, to them, to be shouting 'Quick! Extra boiling oil!' (IT 56).

Although first-time readers, inexperienced travellers to the Discworld, might be conditioned to think that a given thing could be universal, the pitfalls and prat(chett)falls of just such language work to dissuade them from this, by insistently suggesting that singularity is illusory and that there is instead a multiplicity inherent in all interactions. One could describe the Discworld novels as being 'dialogic' because of the reciprocity involved in their reception. They parodically exploit the narratives on which they are based, resist easy classification and use reader expectations of the fantasy genre to turn language into something that acts as a distorted mirror-image of itself. In Bakhtinian terms, the Discworld novels dialogise perceptions, interrogating unitary ways of seeing.

For Bakhtin, parody and dialogue are incidences of 'double-voiced words', or, 'artistic speech phenomena' which are 'two-ways directed': "both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward another's discourse, toward someone else's speech." My approach focuses on the double-voicedness of the Discworld novels, a condition which is hinted at by the protagonist of Equal Rites: "I mean every time something happens, something else has to happen too--I think,' said Esk uncertainly . . . 'Only in the . . . opposite direction'" (ER 21). Bakhtin sees every event as part of a dialogic interaction; Esk's discovery is that nothing can be seen to be singular or one-way. Rather than locating his novels in our relatively singular universe, Pratchett sets them in 'the multiverse', a measureless site for "lots of worlds, all nearly the same and all sort of occupying the same place but all separated by the thickness of a shadow, so that everything that could ever happen would have somewhere to happen in" (ER 145). The multiverse could well be described as "a vast congeries of contesting meanings, a heteroglossia so varied that no
single term capable of unifying its diversifying energies is possible.”¹⁰ In other words, the setting of the Discworld novels is a unique example of a heteroglossia, Bakhtin’s term for novelistic, double-voiced discourse.

Because of its parodic nature, Discworld is a double-voiced world, one which features both elements of our contemporary world and those of less recognisable others. Terry Pratchett repeatedly shows us that things which appear to be diodic can in fact be ‘two-ways directed’. This thesis not only directs Bakhtin’s use of the term ‘double-voiced word’ toward someone else’s discourse but literally combines it with another’s utterance: the Discworld novels, it is argued, ‘dialogise the diodic’. They bring variations, alternatives, reversibilities and opposites into association with everything that seems one-way and finalised. This analysis thus considers Bakhtin’s relatively established use of the term ‘double-voiced word’, which is well-suited to parody as a whole, and modifies it specifically for the novels of Terry Pratchett’s Discworld. In other words, it dialogises both Bakhtin and Pratchett by applying Other words to the discourse between their authorial terms.

The first chapter of my discourse on the Discworld novels, entitled ‘Witch Story?’, is designed to show some aspects of the way in which Terry Pratchett’s writing relates to, challenges and parodies other texts. Setting out to explore the subversions of narrative convention in Witches Abroad and Lords and Ladies, it discusses the parodic play of various contexts within the Discworld’s own fantasy context: fairy tale, story, myth and the various processes of history and historicising, both popular and official. The chapter investigates the status of the various truths offered by this range of narrative genres and the mechanisms by which they can become accepted. It establishes that the features that are generally seen as characteristic of fantasy in Witches Abroad and Lords and Ladies are shown, somewhat paradoxically for a genre which is thought to provide alternatives to the monotony of reality, as being restrictive and dehumanising. Rather than offering imaginative freedom, these
fantastic elements are depicted as delusory dangers that one should avoid over-identifying with. Indeed, throughout the two novels it is possible to discern resistance towards unequivocal adherence to any one point of view. Through its discussion of the roles of mirrors and memories (which are central to *Witches Abroad* and *Lords and Ladies* respectively) in constructing realities for the individual subject, 'Witch Story?' arrives at conclusions about the variable spaces occupied by narrative conventions in the Discworld.

The second chapter, 'Who holds the Watch tonight?', approaches three Watch novels, taking a somewhat different approach to the narratives that they subvert. The plots of *Guards! Guards!, Men At Arms* and *Feet of Clay* are centred around the city of Ankh-Morpork's dormant monarchy. Ankh-Morpork is an obvious site for the topsi-turvisness of the carnivalesque, which allows Terry Pratchett to make a broad range of satirical comments regarding cities and societies which may be before our very eyes when we look up from the pages of the Discworld novels. The Watch novels make widespread use of imagery involving different sorts of lenses, to indicate variance in the perspectives of their motley mélange of characters. 'Who holds the Watch tonight?' outlines the focus of the lens through which the Watch novels themselves view society, by examining the treatment of various narratives that seek to authenticate royalty, discussing certain images which can be seen to encapsulate thematic concerns and evaluating the role of the Watch in relation to the defining diversity of their city.

The third and final chapter, 'Finding Someone's Feet', centres its focus on *Maskerade*. As one of the Witches novels, *Maskerade* shares features with the two that are the subject of 'Witch Story?'. It is in the areas where it deviates from the earlier books that it is perhaps most interesting, probing into questions of identity and gender roles that were left relatively untouched in the others. Through its young protagonist, Agnes Nitt, one can see what it might really mean to be a witch. The borderlines of her developing selfhood and the peculiar
extent to which witches inhabit marginal spaces make it possible to draw conclusions about the status of women in Discworld society and, by close inference, in our own. Along with both of the preceding chapters, 'Finding Someone's Feet' also foregrounds problematics of vision; the maskings, unmaskings and remaskings that structure *Maskerade* reveal more than they hide of the constant, often internal dialogue with the other which, for Bakhtin, is the essence of the self.

To speak with the voices of Pratchett and Bakhtin, the Discworld novels dialogise the didotic, subversively interacting with conventional expectations to produce an open-ended, carnivalesque environment which questions, through its intrinsic nature, the validity of any idea which sets itself up as a single satisfactory way of seeing.
Notes

2 Hereafter referred to as 'the Watch novels'.
3 Parody is a matter of two statements: "The second utterance represents the first in order to discredit it, and so introduces a 'semantic direction' which subverts that of the original" [Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, eds., *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989) 66].
6 Terry Pratchett, personal interview, 2 July 1997.
7 Terry Pratchett, personal interview, 2 July 1997.
10 Holquist 24.
Witch Story?

or, the subversion of narrative convention in two Discworld novels: Witches Abroad and Lords and Ladies.

“‘Penna Pike’ is a very old song--parts of it suggest a language that has long since passed from human knowledge--and knowing it to be so old, we must believe it to be peculiarly true, so true that if ever any part of it was not true, that part has since become so.”

John Barnes, One For The Morning Glory (New York: TOR, 1996) 56.

Of all the parodic Discworld novels, Witches Abroad and Lords and Ladies are two of the most apt examples of Terry Pratchett’s attitude toward narrative conventions. The creator of Discworld takes cross-sections of genres and puts his own spin on them, targeting the assumptions present in their creation and reception. Rather than orbiting the path of any one discourse the Disc’s course rotates through them, in such a way as to compose a discourse upon discourses. Pratchett draws upon an uncommonly broad range of source material throughout his writing, but in Witches Abroad and Lords and Ladies it is quite evident that aspects of the process of textual generation form major focal points of his analysis. He enters into a dialogue with the reader, interrogating the diodic nature of many of the literary conventions which his novels feature in order to show that things do not necessarily follow set, predictable patterns. As Bakhtin puts it, “the process of parodying forces us to experience those sides of the object that are not otherwise included in a given genre or a given style.”¹ Pratchett’s parodic disturbance of the settled surface of commonly received truths is a two-sided process, which acts both to transgress and to authorise what is subverted.
Both *Witches Abroad* and *Lords and Ladies* work with the fairy- and folk-tale frameworks, but each novel has a subversive, iconoclastic agenda that aims to expose what is hidden in the (re)constructive processes and (ab)uses of fairy tale and myth. Pratchett’s main target of subversion in *Witches Abroad* is obviously the fairy-tale genre itself. While *Lords and Ladies* has a strong folk tale slant, it focuses on the processes of history. At a more basic level, it takes as its subject human attempts to come to terms with time. The cyclical recurrence of events which can be seen to occur in fairy tales and histories is shown in both novels as something to be resisted. In bringing the status of his fantasy world under threat from other orders of fantasy, Pratchett suggests that narrative conventions can be similarly seen to structure what we think of as our own reality. The ‘morals to the stories’ that these stories present may seem quite familiar to the postmodern reader: be critically aware of the subjectivity of all narrative and of the perilous power of fictions; the things that one perceives are often not what one expects them to be. Ultimately, however, Terry Pratchett questions the idea that there can be a single satisfactory or unitary way of seeing things. *Witches Abroad* and *Lords and Ladies* achieve this by defamiliarising, cross-questioning and subverting narrative tendencies, by confronting and renegotiating the values of words and by exhibiting reversibilities and multiplicities in what may at first have seemed to be singular and unidirectional; in other words, by dialogising the diodic.

Each of the novels begins by deploying and undermining a particularly clichéd phrase from conventional narrative tradition. Each of these subversions is in turn representative of the way that all of Pratchett’s books manipulate reader expectations of their respective subjects, casting doubts upon the likelihood of there being one satisfactory way of looking at things. *Witches Abroad* begins “This is the Discworld” (*WA* 7), but sets its own distinct scene through the repetition of the stock fairy-tale opening, ‘once upon a time’. This is without doubt the most effective of all literary conventions for announcing
that there is a story with a fantasy element to follow.\textsuperscript{4} It has the effect of distancing its readers or listeners from the level of the narrative, for in fairy tales, ‘once upon a time’ really means never, upon no time.\textsuperscript{5} Someone coming upon the phrase in contemporary Western society would have no trouble with what it represents. However, this novel is first and foremost a Discworld novel, so it is hard to say what perspective one could be being asked to look back upon a time from.

Pratchett’s dual frame of reference problematises context: fiction and non-fiction are deliberately blurred because “the Discworld exists right on the edge of reality” (WA 8). As Stanley Fish has suggested, “it is impossible even to think of a sentence independently of a context . . . we will automatically hear it in the context in which it has been most often encountered.”\textsuperscript{6} This contextual habit naturally means that we read ‘once upon a time’ metonymically, as a fairy-tale feature that necessarily signifies the fairy-tale zone. The human tendency to try to make developments fit into familiar patterns goes some of the way to explaining the attraction of metanarratives, which offer all-encompassing explanations. It also suggests how fairy tales, as traditional narrative constructions, are part of the movement towards automatisation of language identified by the Russian Formalists. If language is repeated in a given context, it comes to occupy that context by default, to the exclusion of alternative options. The Discworld novels, with their extraordinary capacity for metaphorical strangeness, work against this encroaching backdrop of linguistic comfort zone. Through startling cross-cultural juxtapositions, Pratchett de- and re-contextualises language, finding a distinctive place for his fictions.

Having positioned the Discworld ‘right on the edge of reality’, Witches Abroad goes on to depict it as being “right on the very edge of unreality” (WA 75). Perhaps one could say that it is ‘right’ on each edge not just because it is liminal, bordering closely on states of both reality and unreality, but because this is its correct place to be.\textsuperscript{7} The concept of ‘everyday reality’ is a human
construct in itself, the result of a fictionalising process whereby data are selected and metaphorically transformed to fit pre-existing categories. Fantasy can be expected to present variations in these data and categories, as it is generally thought to be anything but everyday, but Terry Pratchett's novels have an unusual potential even for their genre to surprise readers with glimpses of normalities: "to suddenly find a blank where these tendrils of the future should be has much the same effect on a witch as emerging from a cloud bank and seeing a team of sherpas looking down on him has on an airline pilot" (LL 89). The Disc puts things from our world through the subversive refracting lens of fantasy and at the same time reflects different orders of reality in ours.

What follows 'once upon a time' in Witches Abroad is not the action of a fairy tale but a short passage on the movement in twentieth-century thought away from certainties towards multiplicities. Such an abrupt change of focus certainly puts one's expectations of the fairy-tale genre on an unsteady footing, but Pratchett then returns to stories in order to discuss the reason for their power on the Discworld: the operation of the theory of narrative causality. This theory "means that a story, once started, takes a shape. It picks up all the vibrations of all the other workings of the story that have ever been. This is why history keeps on repeating all the time" (WA 8). In other words, both history and narrative causality work by repeating patterns until they are locked into place and cannot be altered. Narrative causality relates to the term 'genre memory', which Bakhtin uses to describe the way a genre is changed slightly over time and accumulates or 'remembers' each usage. In the Discworld 'genre memory' does not actually diversify over time with each addition, but becomes habituated and resistant to new alternatives. The theory of narrative causality suggests that one must struggle progressively harder to avoid the plots of stories; those that have been told since time immemorial become impossible to resist.
Stories that begin with 'Once upon a time' make a claim, at least on the surface, for their inclusion within a timeless category. Despite its apparent separation from the 'real world' of concrete facts and linear progressions, fantasy as a genre places a great deal of importance upon time. This has to do with the fact that "the literary convention we call story is our way of establishing imaginative control over time, and so is the fundamental vehicle for artistry within narrative discourse."\textsuperscript{10} By the time Witches Abroad repeats "Once upon a time" (WA 9) for the third time, in its conventional position at the start of what does appear to be a fairy tale narrative, the significance of stories has been subverted. They can no longer be seen as neutral vehicles: "People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way around" (WA 8).

Rather than being a means of establishing imaginative control over time, they may instead be insidiously establishing control over us.\textsuperscript{11} Stories in the Discworld context come across as stifling, predictable, formulaic phenomena, whose conventionality can determine the course of the lives of those who are unaware of or unable to resist their effects. By implication, stories have the power to affect the passage of events in our own time zone; their patterning is clearly not confined to the pages of printed texts.

The text of Lords and Ladies begins in rather unconventional fashion with the conventional phrase "Now read on . . ." (LL 7), which would normally be positioned after the stage had been set for a story to begin. Despite the device of its introductory Author's Note, which explains "I can't ignore the history of what has gone before" (LL 5) and makes some sort of claim to be situating the reader in relation to the timeframe in which the events of the text take place, Lords and Ladies' initial 'Now read on' seems to be intended to leave one wondering what it is that one is reading on from. The Author's Note introduces it as a sequel to Witches Abroad, as "the story of what happened when they came home", ending with the very same construction: "NOW READ ON . . ." (LL 6). Having set up another potential story, Pratchett once again
digresses and begins by asking questions about beginnings, which creates more unanswered questions. In effect, the very beginning of the novel dialogises the diodic idea that novels can have a beginning: “It’s always a case of Now Read On” (LL 7). This open-endedness is a facet of the thought of Bakhtin, for whom “there is never a first word nor a last word . . . Even meanings born in dialogues of the remote past will never be finally grasped once and for all, for they will always be renewed in later dialogue.”

History repeats itself on the Discworld thanks to the theory of narrative causality, but Lords and Ladies shows that it is also possible for histories to be changed in the past; for things that had once been true not to have ever happened. The novel presents time as a cyclically repetitive dance, somehow attuned to the circle of stones in Lancre called The Dancers. Although the past is still another country in the Discworld, it turns out that the barrier separating it from the present is a semi-permeable one. There is a process which could be thought of as seasonal ontological drift, which foregrounds the structures of different worlds at special points in the elastic material of time, causing them to approach closer states of being. The events of Lords and Ladies bring the past and present simultaneously into focus, resulting in a kind of double vision or split screen effect. The world of the text becomes quite unclear for both readers and characters, as if it were possible to lose the established form of the Discworld amidst the chaos of the multiverse.

Terry Pratchett’s multiverse is a space of parallel and possible universes, worlds of words with no one privileged Word, which diversifies and thus dialogises our own relatively diodic singular universe. The multiverse gives no sense of being a closed system: “The largest and most logical closed system is the universe, or the notion of the universal. Universities were created on that premise . . . As Linda Hutcheon has pointed out, the postmodern writer tends to disregard or distrust any claims to the universal.” Pratchett, a writer of the postmodern era who is by no means a typical postmodernist writer (if
there is such a person), not only tends to disregard or distrust all claims to the
universal, but extends his suspicion to universities themselves. In defence of
fantasy, he says “don’t call it ‘magical realism’, that’s just fantasy wearing a
collar and tie . . . [; they are] words used to mean ‘fantasy written by someone I
was at university with’.” Amongst the Discworld novels, *Lords and Ladies*
stands out as exhibiting the extent to which the multiverse can be identified with
postmodernist fiction. There is no underlying truth or reality to the worlds of
the multiverse. There is “only a flux of discourse in which fragments of
different, incompatible realities flicker into existence and out of existence again,
overwhelmed by the competing reality of language. Postmodernist fiction, in
short.” The multiverse is so diverse that no one point of view could
satisfactorily encompass it; indeed, the competing realities of the Discworld
novels constitute an interrogation of the idea that there could be a unitary way of
looking at things. Pratchett’s heteroglossia rarely gives the impression of
resolving loose ends; the word ‘probably’ is probably one of his most
commonly used words.

Archchancellor Ridcully, having rather reluctantly picked up slippery
aspects of contemporary theory in spite of himself, attempts to describe the
loose ends of the ‘Trousers of Time’: “One of you goes down one leg, one of
you goes down the other. And there’s all these continuuinuums all over the
place” (*LL* 225). His traditional view of reality has been disturbed by
newfangled notions about the multiverse, “which has far too many dimensions
for anyone to find their way” (*LL* 85). As with critical trends in our world,
these have moved away from the determinate towards diversity of experience,
because “ignorance became more interesting, especially big fascinating
ignorance about huge and important things like matter and creation” (*WA* 7).
Their newfangledness is highlighted by the overtly-stretched appearance of
‘continuinuuum’; what is original is the emphasis on the ever-increasing
continuous potentiality of dualities. One can locate neither reality or fantasy as a
dominant reference-point in the Discworld; both are subverted and shown to be unstable.

The destination to which the witches travel in *Witches Abroad* is one where fantasy rules; the balance has been tipped in its favour. Genua is introduced in a manner which subverts the comfortable assumptions that fairy tales are traditionally premised upon: "In Genua, stories came to life. In Genua, someone set out to make dreams come true. Remember some of your dreams?" (WA 129). Pratchett deliberately disturbs and alienates what is familiar and friendly in the fairy tale world, so that some of the most reassuring clichés of the genre have the potential to become worrying and harmful. There is a distinct potential for fallibility in the phrase 'set out to'. The idea that there could be a human agency behind the wish-fulfilment that one would take for granted as being a feature of the site of a fairytale throws doubt upon the desirability of such a place. A common theme to remember from fairy tales, on the subject of wish-fulfilment, is that having one's desires granted in the form of wishes has a tendency to work in unlooked-for and often unpleasant ways. In inviting the reader to remember their dreams, Pratchett contextually subverts the comfortable fairy tale status of the word without having to resort to the blatantly-pejorative 'nightmare'. The subconscious and its manifestations are never controlled by the individual dreamer, and Genua has become a frightening example of a place which has fallen under the spell of one.

Fairy tales typically rely on a sense of timelessness and placelessness, which leads one to wonder what Genua's status is as a fairy tale locale.²⁰ It seems viable to suggest that it is not genuine; that it is ingenious, deceptive and ultimately ingenuous.²¹ It has an obvious parallel in the Italian city of Genoa, and this association makes it a suitably exotic, distant destination for the majority of readers of *Witches Abroad*. The true nature of the place comes down to the fact that whoever is doing the naming has control over the narrative. Lily has interrupted the rulership of the Baron in order to set up a
fairy-tale wedding, complete with frog prince. Her story is a monologue, a one-sided account based on illusions which are intended to be accepted as reality. Morson and Emerson use the phrase 'semiotic totalitarianism' to cover for monologism, the assumption that everything has a singular meaning relating to the seamless whole. This term certainly has a ring to it when one considers rule by classic fairy tale. As the guiding genius of Genua, Lily has projected fairy tale imagery onto the Discworld to form a propositional world that, while it is not originally of her own design, is nonetheless driven by her innermost desires.

Lacan describes the formation of the individual as “symbolized in dreams by a fortress... its inner area or enclosure surrounded by marshes... where the subject flounders in quest of the lofty, remote inner castle whose form... symbolizes the id in a quite startling way.” This description carries across to Witches Abroad in a surprisingly helpful way. Genua itself represents the fortress of Lily’s dreams, a personal vision which comes to grief in the marshes that surround it. The fact that the marshes are the source of her eventual downfall is a reflection on her character; she admits “I only let the swamp woman survive because her hate was invigorating” (WA 239). Mrs Gogol makes the swamp her own, in effect taking part of Lily’s individuality away from her by planting a piece of mirror amongst voodoo objects: “We got to fight mirrors with mirrors.” She glared up through the trees to a slim white tower in the distance. “We’ve got to find her reflection” (WA 9). The hall of mirrors within that tower is the ‘lofty, remote inner castle’ which Lacan speaks of as symbolising the id. The form of this inner sanctum neatly encapsulates the escapist nature of Lily’s character, because although it is the place where her real reflection can be found, this image is itself located on a vanishing-point.

Lily’s world is an example of the antithesis to dialogue, polyphony and multiplicity; the metanarrative. She seeks a condition of absolute monologue, by using one way of looking at things and suppressing all deviation from her
approved code. Everything has to fit into her idea of how the story should go; it all has to add up, signify in terms of her terms. This dictatorial tendency to see things along the straight lines of diodic relationships has been noted in fairy tales: “There is no ‘if’ and no ‘perhaps’. The fairy tale portrays in a wider sense than is generally realized, a harmonious world.”27 By bringing the narrative conventions of the fairy tale world so obviously into contact with his open-ended fantasy world, Pratchett problematises this artificial harmony. Fairy tales may silence difference and otherness, but the Discworld dismisses certainty and singularity in favour of taking a critical stance on all types of narrative and on the strategies through which people order the way they look at things.

The action of the other witches in Witches Abroad is contrary to Lily’s artificial ordering; in effect they dialogise her diodic interpretation of how life should be lived by showing that there are always alternatives. They do this, appropriately, on the one night when people are permitted to misbehave. Genua is designed to produce obedient, repressed citizens, and so it fits into Frye’s definition of ‘kidnapped romance’, the use of fantasy for the purposes of creating mindless acceptance, which makes total political control possible.28 However, the city is not immune to the diversifying strains of carnival, which is a means for displaying otherness that might normally be repressed: “All year long the people of Genua were nice and quiet. But history has always allowed the downtrodden one night somewhere in any calendar to restore temporarily the balance of the world” (WA 171). The ‘carnival sense of the world’, valuing openness and inversions above all else, “points symbolically to the unstable and temporary nature of any hierarchy.”29 In a place where fairy tales are enforced, within a world as thoroughly carnivalised as the Discworld, this represents a chance to reverse the dominant culture and have things turn out altogether more prosaically and, above all, in an open-ended fashion.

Witches Abroad begins by interrogating the apparent innocence of the construction ‘once upon a time’ and showing that, due to the repetitive nature of
stories, its singularity of reference is illusory. It soon becomes clear that the novel is more concerned with endings than beginnings. The introduction of Granny Weatherwax's errant older sister ends with the ominous-sounding "Nothing stood in the way of what Lilith liked more than anything else. A happy ending" (WA 17). This preference, which on the face of it might seem perfectly natural, even praiseworthy, is made to sound like some sort of dastardly plot. Indeed it is, according to Granny anyway, precisely because the woman who was once Lily Weatherwax likes to plot out happy endings more than anything else. Granny's sister relies on the happy endings that she knows and likes, to the exclusion of all other alternatives. The significance of her having changed her original names has to do with this lack of genuine creativity: according to Assyrian mythology, the Lilith who precedes Eve is associated with barrenness.30 Jeremy Hawthorn asks the rhetorical question: "Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with . . . a coherence that permits us to see 'the end' in every beginning?".31 Of course not, but Lily acts as if it does; illusions are more attractive to her than normal perception, so she demands that other people should also welcome her story-shaped city. As she has put herself in the position of being the medium through which stories happen, she "wants the girl to marry the prince because that's what the story demands" (WA 170). Her life is determined by the requirements of narrative convention, to the extent that she internalises them, turning away from the world around her in order to turn it into a storyscape.

Granny Weatherwax is the full stop to Lily's runaway stories, but in such a way as to open up a wider range of possibilities. She "just knew that there were certain things that happened continually in human history, like threedimensional clichés. Stories." (WA 205) and, knowing this, tries to resist them. Lily's is the classic fairy tale approach, which takes for granted that we are all striving for the same happiness and that there are certain dreams and wishes that are beyond criticism, that are indeed irrefutable.32 As Max Lüthi
points out, the fairy tale is not concerned with individual destinies. The subversive style of the Discworld novels reveals the arbitrariness of any claim to commonality. *Witches Abroad* shows that stories “just want happy endings. They don’t give a damn who they’re for” (*WA* 248). Granny Weatherwax and her fellow witches clearly do. They show humanistic concern for people as people, as fully-voiced entities entitled to making their own mistakes. Rather than turning human beings into characters, as Lily does, they attempt to give them the dignity of living lives which they can call their own, where although all sorts of things can go wrong they can at least do so off the paths of pre-programmed stories.

As the story of a fairy godmother gone wrong, *Witches Abroad* is full of fairy tales that have produced grotesque spinoffs. The most awkward of all is the wolf who has been made into a character from the fairy tale ‘Little Red Riding Hood’. The wolf is a miserable figure caught between its original animal state and the magical one cast upon it by the demands of a story. Granny Weatherwax can tell that it is “Not capable of acting human, and not able to be a wolf” (*WA* 113). There is a painfully sympathetic scene, closed off by the conventional, “And that was the end of the big bad wolf” (*WA* 114). The animal’s discomfort in the unnatural role that has been forced upon it recalls Jorge Luis Borges’ minotaur, Asterion. Both are shown as victims as well as aggressors; victims of circumstance victimised by narrative conventions. Each welcomes death, the wolf’s last request for “Ann enndinggg?” (*WA* 113) coming both as a forceful indication of the wrongness of Lily’s use of magic and a mockery of the happy endings one expects from fairy tales.

The conventional closure provided by a happy ending is suggested in *Witches Abroad* at the point when both Lily and Mrs Gogol’s plans for the kingdom have been dismissed: “. . . the kingdom is restored. Happy days are here again. Happy ever after. Which means that life stops here. Stories want to end. They don’t care what happens next . . .” (*WA* 236). Of course, this
hint of the culmination of the novel’s events is a device for further disruption of
the fairy tale genre, with its tendency to answer the questions that seem most
important, ignore or downplay other factors and finish in a grand finale.
Witches Abroad continues, with any suggestion of a predictable plot outcome
banished in favour of an exploration of what might happen next. Life is shown
to go on beyond the boundaries of desire, past the point when wishes are
granted and dreams come true. This constitutes a distinct breaking of the
narrative framework of the fairy tale genre; just as a beginning is anticipated by
the timeless ‘once upon a time’, we are conditioned to expect fairy-tale closure
from the equally-customary ‘and they all lived happily ever after’. This
effectively blurs the boundaries dividing the world of story from the world of a
reader, because suddenly it becomes apparent that the world of an open-ended
text, far from being timeless, has in some ways become the world of the reader.
Granny Weatherwax alters the endings of multiple fairytale patterns that Lily has
set in motion, shifting all of them into an area somewhere between the world of
the reader and the world of story. This is the Discworld space, a zone which
refuses to be seen in any one way, a place where reality and unreality intermesh.

The Discworld environment is created by Pratchett’s singular use of
language; it is a very much a world dependent on word. Persistent asides, often
in the form of footnotes, provide both humorous comment and subversion of
the authority of the ‘main text’. Narrative devices take on unlooked-for
connotations on Discworld, a phenomenon which is perhaps nowhere more
apparent than with the character of the Archchancellor of Unseen University.
As those who come in contact with him discover, “Using a metaphor in front of
a man as unimaginative as Ridcully was like a red rag to a bu- was like putting
something very annoying in front of someone who was annoyed by it” (LL 55).
This is a remarkable way of drawing attention to what the sentence has to say:
the very syntax of the text changes in response to the tendencies of a fictional
character. Somehow, there is no point using a metaphor to describe Ridcully,
because it is anathema to his character. Rosemary Jackson argues that fantasy resists allegory and metaphor by taking metaphorical constructions literally, thus subverting reader expectations of conventional linguistic signification. Some language just does not get through to the consummately literalist Ridcully, at least not in the way that it was intended. A metaphor of (or parallel to) this problematising of communication is the mail system at Unseen University: “The post tended to be picked up from the University gates by anyone who happened to be passing, and then left lying on a shelf somewhere or used as a pipe lighter or a bookmark or, in the case of the Librarian, as bedding” (LL 49). Evidently, in this subversive fantasy environment one cannot expect to have one’s words or letters put to the uses one might have expected.

Lewis Carroll’s fantasy world demonstrates the power accessible through linguistic refraction. Fantasy is generated throughout Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by metaphors and other poetic devices being literalised into events or creatures. The Discworld is rife with such literalisations: Ponder Stibbons finds that “When you’re a cork in someone else’s stream of consciousness, all you can do is spin and bob in the eddies” (LL 110). The endearingly-peculiar consciousness of Unseen University’s Bursar provides a moment that is somehow undeniably Wonderlandian: “This is a lovely party,” said the Bursar to a chair, “I wish I was here” (LL 367). At the best of times, he seems only to be ‘half there’. In a (nonsensically-logical) way, the chair as it partakes of the ideal Platonic form of ‘chairness’ is only partly there, in the same sense that the party is part-way to the perfectly lovely party! In Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There, the sequel to Alice’s dreamed fantasy, considerations of language, space and time are completely arbitrary matters. This is certainly also the case in Lords and Ladies; the unschematised multiverse allows for different worlds of physical and temporal potential. The Discworld novels are not as overt an expedition
into a world of fantasy as Lewis Carroll’s, because there is no traveller from outside to make them so.43

Witches Abroad and Lords and Ladies dialogise the entrenched codes of fairy tale, myth and history, by bringing narrative expectations into contact with parodic subversions that are at once imitative and unmistakably other. Cristina Bacchilega sees this as a process of rejuvenations: “The parodic transformation of the traditional reactivates its appeal by providing new readings of it, thereby generating unexploited or forgotten possibilities from its repetition.”44 Witches Abroad sets up its parody through the ultra-repetitive theory of narrative causality, which of course only allows certain limited possibilities to be generated from conventionalised stories. The three witches create opportunities for alternatives to occur, outcomes that were accessible all along but went unexploited due to other paths being more well-trodden and thus easier to follow. The parodic movement in Lords and Ladies is, on the other hand, a return to features of institutionalised readings that have been forgotten and altered over time in the process of their repetition. There is nevertheless a feeling of newness in these readings, in the sense that the traditional is suddenly made otherwise, updated to a more dynamic level of narrative due to its immediacy of reference and relevance. Jack Zipes argues that myth involves “the loss of the historical quality of things; in it, things lose the memory that they were once made.”45 Lords and Ladies shows that all three of the ‘entrenched codes’ mentioned above have their own defence mechanisms for pretending that they are not being (and, in fact, that they have never been) creatively recounted by anyone. It dialogises the diodic idea that any one form of narrative or way of looking at things can provide some sort of satisfactory or unitary truth, parodying established motifs in such a way as to question and problematise the way that stories and their meanings are understood to operate.

An editor was reported as having given authors the following advice: “If you want to write a true story, write a novel because the truth, the precious
metal we seek, must be mined from a mountain of lies, legends, and missing clues. The truths to the narratives in *Lords and Ladies*, whether they pass themselves off as proven knowledge or imaginative fiction, seem to be similarly obscured, buried by the augmentations and debilitations of time. Jack Zipes remarks: “the folk tale developed a partiality for everything metallic and mineral and conceived of a world which was solid and imperishable.” There is no little truth to this folk tale trend in *Lords and Ladies*: iron turns out to be what is required to counteract the challenge mounted by the elves. However, nothing is truly imperishable in the Discworld; things composed of iron rust over time, especially when they have fallen into disuse to the extent that the original folk tales have. The precious metal of the truth about elves is initially concealed by the inaccuracy of human memory and superstition.

The problem with tales about elves on the Discworld is that, because they have become traditional, they are accorded a level of credence roughly equivalent to the folk tales of our own society. It follows that they have been monologised, made to conform to one popular interpretation, just as the institutionalisation of fairy tales in our literary tradition has meant that people forget some of the elements of their multiple versions. Nanny Ogg’s memory serves her where most other people’s fail. She realises “people didn’t seem to be able to remember what it was like with the elves around. Life was certainly more interesting then, but usually because it was shorter. And it was more colourful, if you liked the colour of blood” (L.L. 136). These reminiscences quite neatly illustrate a theme which is pivotal for *Lords and Ladies*: the extent to which words can be subverted and made to connote altogether different things in multiple contexts. People may be able to dimly recall that life was more ‘interesting’ and ‘colourful’ in a nostalgic sense, but because they do not personally remember it and have only one given version of events to go by, they have only a loose adjectival grasp of how it actually was.
Sometimes the truth is said to be stranger than fiction; this is certainly the case on the Discworld, where things that one might dismiss as fantasy can have a startling impact upon reality. Elves turn out to be creatures of fantasy, not in the sense that they do not exist, but in the sense that the details of their appearance are constructed from the fantasies of those who look upon them: "They hear what you think and in self-defence you think what they want."

Glamour" (LL 163). The truth about elves comes across as very strange to those who have only ever been party to glamorised narratives. King Verence, when told about them, replies "'I thought that sort of thing was, you know, ... folklore?'", to which Granny responds: "'... it doesn't mean it's not true! Maybe it gets a little muddled over the years, folks forget details ...'" (LL 163). As Christa Wolf put it, "'it's so much easier ... to invent the past than to remember it.'" The 'muddling' that 'folks' do with 'details' over the years is what Lords and Ladies is all about: it is only human to mix fact and fantasy and so the processing of history necessarily has a fictionalising component to it.

It is the 'muddling', the subjectivity associated with views of past events, that has mythologised the elves' projection of self-image. Zipes theorises myth as a matter of speech that has been stolen and restored. The elves steal a narrative when it is relatively new and under-developed and replace it with one of their own. In effect, they treat human speech in the same way as they are reputed to treat human children, substituting a changeling discourse for whatever truths they may have wanted to edit out. It is all too easy for humans to accept the deceitfulness of the elves, because of our tendency to ignore or forget the dark side to something attractive. J.R.R. Tolkien explains that "the trouble with the real folk of Faérie is that they do not always look like what they are; and they put on the pride and beauty that we would fain wear ourselves." Indeed, on the Discworld, "the truly beautiful can get away with just about anything." Beauty does not necessarily equal Truth, but the elves' appearance is literally their projection of truth; a mental image viewed as an objective reality.
With the help of their enchanting natures, the elves of *Lords and Ladies* warp meaning and dismember more than remembrance. Granny Weatherwax’s accusatory, “You make us want what we can’t have and what you give us is worth nothing and what you take is everything and all there is left for us is the cold hillside, and emptiness, and the laughter of the elves” (LL 342) is surely an echo of Keats’s ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’. Verse IX of Keats’s poem reads: “And there we slumber’d on the moss, / And there I dream’d, ah woe betide, / The latest dream I ever dream’d / On the cold hill side.” The cold hillside in question is the sterile, icy elfland, which offers humans only an enervated state of death-in-life. The cold hillside in question is the sterile, icy elfland, which offers humans only an 
enervated state of death-in-life. Lords and Ladies closes with human laughter and “from the empty hillside, only the silence of the elves” (LL 382), because the temptation that Keats’s knight succumbed to has been resisted. The ‘silence of the elves’ reverses the deathly tones at the end of ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’, when the poem’s speaker is trapped in the thrall of the faerie realm. This time around the cycle of worlds, the combination of Magrat, acting as the only remotely knightly figure of the novel, and the cold iron of the Discworld’s particular form of truth, have ensured that the elves’ unearthly intrusion upon the mortal world has been defeated.

The attempted usurpation of the Discworld by another fictional domain, the world of the elves, is the most obvious play of fantasy upon fantasy in *Lords and Ladies*. It becomes clear, however, that there are further worlds of narrative potential stacked within the novel, like the components of a Chinese Box. In the course of their bewitching arrival, the elves insert themselves into a story which is functioning at a quite different level from the folk tales that have prepared their reception: the production being put on by Jason Ogg and his fellow Lancre Morris Men. This is in itself of course very much a parody-within-a-parody, with the Morris Men playing parts which are eminently recognisable as the ‘rude mechanicals’ from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. This provides scope for further subversion, as can be seen in
Weaver the Thatcher's analysis of theatrical conventions: "'And who's going to play Exeunt Omnes?... He doesn’t have much to say, does he?'" (LL 108). It also provides Granny Weatherwax with her cue, as she knows from Witches Abroad that the manipulation of narratives within narratives can be counterproductive. She tells the elves: "'You meddled in a play,'... 'I believe you don’t realize what you’ve done. Plays and books... you’ve got to keep an eye on the buggers. They’ll turn on you. I mean to see that they do'" (LL 341). There is a sense that people who manipulate narrative conventions to their own ends are not looked upon kindly by the narrative conventions themselves.56 The elves’ intrusion blurred the frame between art and life in a similar way to Lily’s use of fairy tale, in a very different movement from the transgressiveness of carnival. Rather than displaying otherness, both of the fantasy manipulations of narrative convention enforce uniformity and passivity upon their fantasy Discworld surroundings.

Terry Pratchett has said that fantasy “speculates about the future, rewrites the past and reconsidersthe present.”57 The Discworld works along the lines of Newtonian mechanics, which conceive of time as a parameter; all processes are reversible and events could just as easily happen in the opposite direction.58 In Lords and Ladies it becomes evident that memory is equivalent to duration, in more ways than one. As Brian Attebery has indicated, “magic can make things already reported not have happened, changing reality retroactively....”59 Granny Weatherwax “knew there were such things as alternative futures, after all, that’s what the future meant. But she’d never heard of alternative pasts” (LL 147). This potentiality of altered memory has had Granny experiencing déjà vus that are not her own: “She was getting them for the first time, as it were--flashes of memory that couldn’t have existed” (LL 129). She is forced to change her thinking on distinctions in time between the past and the future, because the parasitic world of the elves threatens to change how her life has been.
The human imagination is normally thought to be free to travel in time, as mortals by definition exist in relation to it. Significantly, the people who pay a visit to Lancre in *Lords and Ladies* are at the same time imaged as travelling in their minds. Whilst thinking about the holidays of his youth, Ridcully "returned abruptly from the landscapes of memory" (*LL* 51), organised a physical return journey from Lancre and concluded: "'Mr Stibbons, if you could happen to find yourself in this universe for five minutes, go and arrange some tickets'" (*LL* 56). The thoughts of Ponder Stibbons are indeed concerned with other universes most of the time, time being the operative word at this point. It is no coincidence that the phrase 'Away with the fairies' describes someone who is not thought to be currently focussed on the real world. This state of timeless reverie is exactly the one inflicted upon Keats's knight in 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', and it is shared by the victims of the elves in *Lords and Ladies*.

As the world of the elves comes closer, both time and space become uncannily less familiar. One of the most effective ways to create an uncanny effect is to efface the distinction between imagination and reality, which is what happens when something that was regarded as imaginary appears in reality. The unicorn, supposedly an imaginary beast in the Discworld and an unwilling visitor to it, feels "This wasn't a proper land... time was passing. To a creature not born subject to time, it was a sensation not unakin to falling" (*LL* 126). The elves' world is a timeless, never-never-land zone which exists in the same way that 'once upon a time' does; never, upon no time. Although its landscape may suggest winter, there is no change within it; it is "a land of ice, not just a time of ice" (*LL* 13). The defamiliarisation for readers is clear; having identified with the Discworld as another world from our own, a lens on the edge of reality and unreality, we are then confronted with the prospect of a threat posed by another, even stranger world. This is a version of what Brian McHale terms 'ontological ostrasanie', the feeling of a representational discontinuity with life as we know it. Nanny Ogg explains, "there's things
like tides, only not with water, it's when worlds get closer together'n you can nearly step between 'em . . . ’ (LL 69), and it is in such a time that a strange world like the Discworld can become more familiar to its readership than ever.

The diverse ways that memory works in the Discworld encourage one to take a questioning attitude towards time as some sort of inflexible, inaccessible state. The theme of time is prepared for intensely in *Lords and Ladies*. Jason Ogg the blacksmith has no use for a clock (LL 18), and it is noted soon after that witches do not have much use for clocks either (LL 22). This is because the sort of rhythm that is of interest to those who know about it is much more immediate than the cyclic progression of the clock’s hands. It allows for the operation of ‘the bi-directional nature of Library-Space’, whereby “books inspire other books written in the future, and cite books written in the past . . . [so that] the contents of books as yet unwritten can be deduced from books now in existence” (LL 55). In other words, events can precede their causes in the Discworld; time is not necessarily thought of as being the absolute marker of intervals that we generally take it to be. Instead, it is something that can relate people to circumstances fluidly, according to a variety of measurement systems. All three witches in the Lancre coven are introduced in such a way as to relate their activities to matters of time. Granny Weatherwax decides it is “Time to think about the past . . . ” (LL 23). Nanny Ogg is at the same time shown treating her relations according to their place in the Ogg family tree: in other words, according to their temporal spacing. Then there is Magrat, the third witch, contemplating vague marital prospects. Her memory places her in time according to this preoccupation: “She’d been away eight months” (LL 25). Her first act: “She wiped the dust off her mirror and examined herself critically” (LL 25) finishes the buildup of references to history’s processes by clearing away what has had time to accumulate while the three of them were away in *Witches Abroad*. It also provides an important reflection on the thematic role of mirrors and the different functions that they can play with relation to the self.
It is critical that Magrat should examine herself critically. She does not have many serious illusions about her appearance—and in any case a mirror image is never fully adequate, being always bilaterally reversed. Mirrors and their representation are central for fantasy, as sites for the creation of other selves. When the Queen of the elves looks in a mirror at a later stage and Granny Weatherwax asks her, "'What is it you see?'", her reply is "'Whatever I want to see'" (LL 338). As noted previously, the elves use fantasy to create fantasised appearances in others' minds; their Queen's attitude to mirrors shows that she is also self-delusory. Granny's sister, having created a new name and by inference a new image for herself, "'smiled at herself in the double mirror" (WA 178). The Lily-who-is-now-Lilith sees her self in two mirrors, with a two-facedness that continues into infinite regression within them. Lily's (ab)use of narrative conventions is a mise-en-abyme, applying just as much to the reader of Witches Abroad as it does to the witches who come face-to-face with it and are thus the main readers in the novel. Infinite regress haunts the narrative worlds of fairy tale and history on the Discworld, as they both move in cyclic patterns which will continue to duplicate the same images forever unless something is done about them. According to Jack Zipes, duplicates reinforce "deeply entrenched modes of thinking, conceiving, believing that provide our lives with structure." What Lily sees when she looks in her mirrors is an image of images replicating toward infinite regress, at increasing removes from the original. Her power is in her ability to mimic; she copies the conventional so that people do not and in fact cannot create for themselves.

Lily lives her life (and those of others) according to formula and, in trying to avoid the outside world, she becomes what Bakhtin calls a 'pretender'. Morson and Emerson note that "Those who live as pretenders frequently do so by living, in effect, as if they were characters in a novel." Lily clearly is a character in a novel, but she lives her life as if she is part of a story—-not necessarily an actor in one, but the means through which it happens. Pretenders
identify with mirror images in the same way that Lily does, ignoring their falsity. In a mirror one cannot be a real other; "Responding to my own face in a mirror--by ... pretending to be a second consciousness--I can only play the role of an 'indeterminate potential other' ... a fraudulent soul-slave without a place of its own, without a name and without a role."69 Lily has created a placeless, faceless role at the heart of stories for herself, one which has come to create and control her selves--as the start of Witches Abroad foreshadowed, stories often subject people rather than it being the other way around.

Granny Weatherwax offers the means by which her sister's subjectivity could be defined in terms of the way her image appears to others, as opposed to being defined by the way she appears to herself in the mirror. She is Lily's external finalising other, without whom, Bakhtin argued, one cannot know one's image in the world.70 Gilbert and Gubar's imaging of the Queen in the Snow White story shows her to be a similar type to Lily: "a plotter, a plot-maker, a schemer, a witch, an artist, an impersonator ... and self-absorbed as all artists traditionally are."71 This description could almost equally apply to Lily's sister, except for the distinction that Granny acts not so much the part of a plot-maker as that of a plot-finisher, using hard-headed practicality to bring flights of fancy down to earth.

Granny Weatherwax's 'headology' is a particularly subjective kind of magic. Its psychological nature comes from the fact that she understands that the word 'magic' is a human construct. However much it may seem to be explained away by words, headology never quite fits into the terms of the 'sumaturel expliqué', whereby anything that appears supernatural in a work of literature is explained rationally at the end.72 Granny dialogises the diodic expectations of what constitutes magic; sometimes it is no more than extremely knowing common sense, but it cannot be looked at as a whole satisfactorily on these terms, because it often escapes them. Mrs Gogol, the voodoo witch of Witches Abroad, subjects people to her form of magic in the form of dolls,
threatening “This is my kind of mirror, Mistress Weatherwax. I can make it be you” (WA 231). Granny uses Mrs Gogol’s belief in this against her, so that a doll takes Granny’s burnt arm rather than the real owner. She concludes “That’s headology,’ . . . ‘It’s the only thing that matters’” (WA 232). Lily’s magic is not so easily dealt with; Granny’s headology has to come head-to-head with her at the heart of who she has become.

In the scene when they come face-to-face through a broken mirror their resemblance becomes overpoweringly symbolic, to the extent even that Lily does not at first recognise her sister as Other. The breaking of the mirror symbolises Granny’s assertion of reality yet paradoxically relativises reality; if Lily had indeed been in control of the story then the narrative framework would still be hers and breaking her mirror might instead have caused her sister to disappear. Granny is her living mirror image, so she can be seen to reverse the original, revealing a different side to Lily. Lacan explains that the “moment in which the mirror-stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the image of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy . . . the dialectic that will henceforth link the I to socially elaborated situations.”73 Lily has been resisting the Lacanian symbolic order, in trying to live in an imaginary mirror stage that involves only facing yourself. She sees the images in her mirrors as herself rather than Other, thus failing to make the crucial distinction that Lacan views as denoting infant from conscious subject.

There is not much of a difference between the two of them as far as appearances go,74 but, in forcing her to notice it, Granny brings her own attention to external details into confrontation with Lily’s focus on herself. Lily’s narcissism aligns her with the pre-ideological, in that she is rejecting society and choosing private reflection.75 This self-mirroring situation puts her in a vicious circle, which eventually claims her irrevocably for the realms of pure fantasy, in a reversal of the subject’s cultural formation. After breaking the circle of mirror images, Granny reaches into the mirror, trying to excavate the
real self buried beneath the copy selves, but it is too late—her sister’s self is
determinedly self-determined. Her disappearance from the world of the visible
into the mirror-world remains something of a mystery. The state that she finds
herself (or what is left of her self) in is one of the manifestations of the law of
excluded middles in the Discworld novels; a situation which is paradoxically
neither one thing nor the other, but perhaps both. When she asks if she is dead,
Death replies: "THE ANSWER TO THAT . . . IS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN
NO AND YES" (WA 245). She is consigned to a seemingly endless nightmare
within a mirror that does not act as a lens onto anything but itself, searching for
the self that she lost somewhere in the gap between reality and fairy tale. Her
story ceases to be told, but the never-ending story of life outside mirrors
continues beyond the pages of the open-ended Discworld novels.

When Granny Weatherwax looks into a mirror she faces outwards, to a
reality that is unmodified by language for her to the extent that it is a mimetic
reflection of the world. She is not self-reflexive in the slightest and so she
comes across as the most ‘real’ of all the Discworld characters. She is,
however, a site for self-reflection, for meetings with the internal Other, because
she makes people look inside themselves: "Looking into Granny’s eyes was like
looking into a mirror. What you saw looking back at you was yourself, and
there was no hiding-place" (M 179). By contrast, Lily has become so estranged
from reality than she does not even die in defeat for certain but instead is
absorbed into her mirror images.76

There is an obvious parallel to Lily in the Lady of Shallot. Each solitary
woman experiences reality only through mirrors; each is an artist who creates
substance from reflection. They both work through mimesis, but art can only
be the illusion of a mirror; “language necessarily mediates ‘showing’ through a
‘telling’, which cannot be innocent, because . . . a narrator exists only in the
first person.”77 This becomes overtly clear in a comparison of their methods:
the Lady of Shallot weaved a tapestry from what she saw reflected in her
mirror, while Lily Weatherwax liked seeing what she wanted to see to such an extent that she "held a mirror up to Life, and chopped all the bits off Life that didn’t fit..." (WA 65). When the mirror cracks for the Lady of Shallot it is because she has turned from it to experience reality first-hand. This is of course her undoing and she dies singing her final song: "doomed to escape only through the self-annihilating madness of romantic love... her last work of art is her own dead body floating downstream in a boat."78 The cracking of one of her mirrors also spells doom for Lily, but the mirror is cracked for her by her sister. In smashing Lily’s fairytale, Granny exposes its conventional construction, iconoclastically resisting its happy ending and showing the artificiality of the direction Lily has chosen. She is not turning towards reality; reality turns upon Lily for what she did to it. Her mirror transition is in the opposite direction from the Lady of Shallot’s: the mirror got cracked because Lily would not look away from it.

Lily uses mirrors and stories in a self-reflexive way and then retreats into a complete denial of reality and a semi-death of images, refusing to leave for the mortal world. As an archetypal fantasist79, her fate mirrors those discussed by Chesterton and Barrie, who suggest that "the fantasist either develops a monomania that subjects others to itself... or a madness that is rejected by others and whose private path leads to death: by definition to suicide."80 When it becomes clear that she can no longer rule through her multimania of self-images, Lily’s mirror-obsession claims her for total escapism, an escapism from everywhere that leads nowhere.81 After all, to be trapped in a mirror "is to be driven inward, obsessively studying self-images as if seeking a viable self."82 Her transition parallels the movement of Lewis Carroll’s Alice through the looking glass, except for the fact that Lily is alone with her selves in the paraxial realm behind the mirror.83 A paraxial area is one in which "object and image seem to collide, but in fact neither object nor reconstituted image genuinely reside there: nothing does."84 Paraxis is an
interesting notion in respect of dialogue, as it is a space behind the visible, behind the image. When Bakhtin talks about dialogic interaction, he uses the image of the space behind the back of one’s own head, a space which is only in the field of vision of the Other. A mirror image would not normally show this area; the Other acts as one’s lens to the paraxial. As Pratchett situates the Discworld both on the edge of reality and unreality, the Disc can be seen to represent the lens that lies between the object and the illusory paraxial.

The sisters Weatherwax clash because they are two sides of the same coin; although one is an arch-fantasist and the other an arch-realist, their relationship shows that they actually share many features. Each is sure of her own goodness, as opposed to the other’s being bad. Lily says “I’m the good one. I can’t lose. I’m the godmother. You’re the wicked witch...” (WA 243), because her stance is an uncritical one, one which accepts narrative convention unequivocally. In fact, Granny Weatherwax does seem well-suited to being a traditional witch; her reply “If I’d been as bad as you, I’d have been a whole lot worse” (WA 243), shows she feels that she would have made a much better job of it than her sister did. However, the fact of the matter is that their positions are relative. In essence, “their mutual conflict demonstrates the incommensurability and incompatibility of different ideas of the good.”

Confrontations in the Discworld novels are not between good and evil, but between different ways of looking at things. Granny and Lily cannot normally be differentiated by external appearance but their struggle demonstrates the disparity between their views of the world around them. Lily has lost her ability to relate to the real world, thanks to her abdication of responsibility to everything but the demands of the story. Her endlessly decentred image is one of utter relativism; she no longer has an adherence to any moral code whatsoever. By contrast, Granny Weatherwax sees that the black and white of the classic fairy tale’s morality does not apply to the Discworld, where doing something bad is not bad in itself unless you had something bad in mind.
For one so strong minded, she is surprisingly good at evaluating different ways of looking at things. One of Bakhtin’s most fundamental assertions is that identity is dialogical, because of its structural reliance on continual interactions of various sorts. Thus neither Lily or Granny’s positions are quite reducible to one way of seeing. The snake sisters that serve Lily are not evil, but one or the other of the sisters Weatherwax is, according to the other. Lily attempts to use the ‘I’ that others have constructed over years of narrative stereotyping against her opponent; the fairy godmother against the bitter, spiteful, envious crone would be no contest in a traditional fairy tale. However, this is a different sort of fairy tale and the people involved are not flat archetypes, to be easily assigned to absolute moral positions.

Terry Pratchett has stated that “The morality of fantasy . . . is, by and large, the strict morality of the fairy tale.”87 However, his fantasy novels are a subversive far cry from The Classic Fairy Tales’ analysis that “The characters in the [fairy tale] stories are . . . either altogether good or altogether bad and there is no evolution of character.”88 When the novice witch Diamanda makes trouble in Lords and Ladies it is clear that she is simply an overambitious young woman rather than a force for evil. It is no coincidence that the contest which she has with Granny, which is initially focussed on looking at the sun, comes down to which way one looks at things in terms of social responsibility and how well one understands the ways people think. The adversaries of the Witches novels’ ‘good’ witch characters are certainly thwarted in ways that show just how wrong they were, but the Discworld lacks the fairy tale genre’s heavy degree of reliance on confrontations between good and evil. After dealing with different sorts of witches in Witches Abroad Granny comes to the realisation that “Good and bad is tricky . . . P’raps what matters is which way you face” (WA 251).

Magrat plays the parts of different sorts of witches, and indeed different sorts of people altogether, in the course of Witches Abroad and Lords and
Ladies. Granny understands that Magrat "thinks you can lead your life as if fairy stories work and folk songs are really true" (LL 49). There are vast worlds of possibility open to someone with such a naive acceptance of fiction. Jack Zipes tells us that folk tales "projected the magic possibility in an assortment of imaginative ways so that anyone could become a knight in shining armor or a lovely princess."89 This is in fact what happens in Witches Abroad; the youngest of the witches, empowered by her faith in stories in a variety of ways, struggles with the nagging voice of her common sense in order to fulfil multiple roles, all of which are different from the position of power that Lily makes for herself through the exploitation of narrative conventions. Magrat goes from witch to fairy godmother to fairy to ball! Boosted with magically-enhanced self-confidence, she becomes every inch a lovely princess, whose main function, "Being attractive to men" (LL 199), displaces the story-ordained role of her surrogate goddaughter.90 Her sudden, brief stint as a passive focal point of masculine desire provides an ironic view of fairy tale culture's iconic representations of women. By resituating a characterisation that is familiar to fairy tale, Pratchett is both able to subvert it and "disrupt any passive consumption of such images."91 In the sudden transformation of a thoroughly-individualised protagonist into an object of the male gaze, he shows just how restrictive the classic fairy tales' expectations of women's behaviour really are. After the three witches free a sleeping princess from her enchanted sleep Magrat is heard to say: "I wonder if we did the right thing? I'm sure it was a job for a handsome prince" (WA 103). What she comes to understand in the two novels is that gendered and hierarchical roles are not prescriptive unless one lets them go unchallenged. By defying such narrow conventions of behaviour, she can be whoever she wants to be.

In the course of Lords and Ladies Magrat is constantly reminded of the provisionality of identity. Nothing seems fixed in linear time in the novel, but her own status is especially in turmoil. She returns from the overseas
experience of *Witches Abroad* to find that her standing has moved with the times. She has become a Queen-in-waiting, with everything apparently arranged so that there is virtually nothing for her to do. From the range of roles that she adopted on her travels, she is thus narrowed down to just the one. However, this singularity is illusory; her existence may be determined by her imminent marriage, but both this and her subsequent queenship are under direct threat of being pre-empted by the Queen of the Elves. To reflect the conditional nature of her position in time, she is addressed in a wide variety of ways in her interim capacity. Magrat is variously termed “your going-to-be-majesty” (LL 36), “your pre-majesty” (LL 58) and “your soon-going-to-be-majesty” (LL 59), all of which anticipate the elves’ assertion of rulership by hinting that her Queenship is not quite a closed issue. Mr Brooks the beekeeper’s “‘Can’t have more’n one queen in a hive’” (LL 127) turns out to apply to kingdoms as well.

Queen Ynci the Short-Tempered, one of the founders of the kingdom and a Boadicea-like figure with a warlike figure to match, provides Magrat with the inspiration she requires in order to play an active, indeed vigorously competitive part in proceedings. This warrior-woman turns out to have been a fabrication, the details about whom King Lully I, “in the best traditions of the keen ethnic historian, inferred from revealed self-evident wisdom [Footnote: ‘Made it up.’] and extrapolated from associated sources. [Footnote: ‘Had read a lot of stuff that other people had made up, too.’]” (LL 263). The next stage from discovering that King Lully made up Queen Ynci is perhaps wondering who might have made up King Lully. Pratchett, along with the New Historicists, “rejects the idea of ‘History’ as a directly accessible, unitary past, and substitutes for it the conception of ‘histories’, an ongoing series of human constructions, each representing the past at particular moments for particular present purposes.” He parodically reveals the way that text relates to contexts, uncovering the vested interests behind his targeted narratives.
King Lully's rather imaginative romantic example confirms that "As a symbolic structure, the historical narrative does not reproduce the event it describes; it tells us in what direction to think about the events."\(^95\) Despite having no basis in empirical fact, it is the example of Queen Ynci that transforms Magrat into the closest anyone gets to being a knight in shining armour in any of the Witches novels. Before her marriage, she re-dons 'her' winged helmet to provide a moment of awfully-strained parodic allusion, in which the significance of the name by which she is referred to almost goes unnoticed: "'Go ahead,' said the Queen of Lancre softly, 'bake my quiche'" \((L	ext{L}, 363).\) Her role-to-be speaks through her, even while echoing and parodying Dirty Harry's "Go ahead, make my day." Obviously, the Queen of Lancre does not have to have ascended the throne to merit the title; nor, as would be the case in any traditional fairy tale, does she have to have married anyone. By the time Magrat is officially crowned Queen, she has already acted the part, amongst others, on a number of occasions.

When Magrat is riding out to meet the elves, enraged by the communications that she finds have been going on behind her back, one can do some 'over-reading' in order to prove the point that one can have one's words and one's character put to uses one might not have expected. She thinks: "I'm out of my mind", and decides "It was that bloody letter" \((L	ext{L}, 286).\) Granny's letter was not intended to have this effect, but as 'the letter' literally constructs the subject in a world of words, it takes Magrat out of her self. The letters of the alphabet travel the Discworld, interacting dialogically with its inhabitants and forming an environment that is perceptibly composed of narratives.\(^96\) Magrat knew that

Songs and ballads and stories and poems were full of stories about one person single-handedly taking on and defeating a vast number of enemies.
Only now was it dawning on her that the trouble was that they were songs and ballads and stories and poems because they dealt with things that were, not to put too fine a point on it, untrue. She couldn’t, now she had time to think about it, ever remember an example from history (LL 335).

The underlying irony of this meditation is that Magrat, despite her growing doubts about narrative support for her actions, still has faith in history as a source of factual truth. Her inspiration from history, as has been pointed out previously, is a literary creation. It has been categorised differently from the songs, ballads, stories and poems, precisely because it is part of an official story. If this subversion of narrative convention could be said to have a moral, it is that conventions and traditions, while they may be comforting, are also illusory; there is no safe level to which one can look for meaning. The diversity of discourse implied by ‘multiverse’ reflects the very real importance of semantics in the history--myth--folktale--story blend of Pratchett’s fantasy/reality world.97

An understanding of reality as clearly bordered and delimited is crucial for traditional generic approaches to fantasy, as it provides a signpost beyond which is situated the Other, a place which expeditions into fiction can depart from. Indeed, this thinking leads to the concept that such excursions are for the purpose of bringing back truths to the real world. According to Iona and Peter Opie, the magic of fairy tales can be seen to lie in people and creatures being shown to be what they really are.98 Witches Abroad claims that it is about “what it really means to be a fairy godmother” (WA 10). In stressing the word ‘really’, Pratchett prepares ‘fairy godmother’ for subversion, suggesting that the fairy tale version of the role has been inaccurate. It is not normally expected to mean anything other than a benevolent magical older woman. What it ‘really’ turns out to mean is a fairy-tale version of Mario Puzo’s Godfather; someone who not only orders others’ lives but orders the taking of others’ lives. Thus a
familiar type is taken from its context in the narrative convention of fairy tale and put into the Discworld context, where fact and fiction have interchangeable weightings. Terry Pratchett uses traditional fairy tale convention, in this case the practice of revealing the true natures of things, against its own genre. Many features of *Witches Abroad* are not what they seem, but the conventions are what is really shown up, by the attention paid to their effects upon people.

Fairies, themselves the stuff of fairy tale by definition, are shown to be a particularly flexible narrative convention. When faced with an obdurate Red Riding Hood type, the three witches resort to introducing themselves as fairies. The overwhelming success of this temporary recharacterisation shows that people can be whoever they say they are as long as they are convincing enough. Once the introductions have been offered, Magrat has "a look at Fairy Daisy" (WA 106) rather than at Granny Weatherwax, her alter ego. Then Nanny Ogg's speech comes from the mouth of her fairy form, Fairy Hedgehog, there is a paragraph break and the next words come from Nanny Ogg on her own behalf. Slippage between set character and created character is a startlingly amusing way of suggesting one of the novel's moral points: that while people can be made different by narrative, self-characterisation is much less harmful than having someone subject others to roles as part of a larger story. Pratchett's particular way of saying startles us into particular ways of seeing.

Fantasy is about things being different and in fairy tale this difference often takes the form of wish-fulfilment. *Lords and Ladies* shows a world of desire that is in fact undesirable: "You make us want what we can't have" (LL 342). *Witches Abroad* shows a way of treating people and their desires that is also unattractive. Lily thinks, in her adherence to narrative conventionality, that there is a single satisfactory means to general happiness, accessible through the workings of the classic fairy tale. The travelling witches, having shown themselves to be good at impersonating fairies and guests to the ball, take a final curtain-call as the alternatives to the manipulations that have structured Genua
and the life of its prospective princess: "'We're her godmothers,' said Granny . . . 'We're the kind that gives people what they know they really need, not what we think they ought to want'" (WA 229). Both the Queen of the elves and Lily Weatherwax want things to repeat themselves, in terms of history and of stories respectively. The three witches stand for alternatives; as Brian McHale has observed: "History repeats itself only because we are unaware of the alternate possibility for each historic event . . . Knowing, we can ensure that history does not repeat itself; that the alternate possibility is the one that occurs for the first time."99 Their behaviour does not fit their opponents' expectations, in the same way that feminist studies does not fit into the expectations of conventional academia: it "is a threat because it makes visible what is not supposed to exist—therefore, what does not really exist, according to this kind of magical thinking."100 While Granny Weatherwax's headology is strictly focussed on what is really real, Lily and the elves construct realities, seeing perception as subject to approval through their own forms of magical thinking.

In the Discworld novels, worlds struggle for supremacy and things that were thought to be 'only fairy tales' come into being. *Witches Abroad* and *Lords and Ladies* draw attention to the very workings of literature: the structuring of texts and of fictional worlds. Both novels fit Jack Zipes' description of postmodern revisionist fairy tales, in refusing to reassemble the stories that they break down into a new whole: "The end goal of the postmodernist fairy tale is not closure but openness . . . not the establishment of a new norm but the questioning of all norms."101 According to Zipes, the main purpose of the postmodern fairy tale is "to hold a cracked mirror up to the old fairy tale and reality at the same time."102 The narrator in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, writing about Pakistan, states: "'I am forced to reflect that world in fragments of broken mirrors . . . I must reconcile myself to the inevitability of the missing bits.'"103 The Discworld novels do not support the implausibility of pretending that there are no cracks or missing bits in the mirrors. Lily's
mirrorworld is an attempt to reflect an artificial wholeness, but the three witches defeat both her and the glamorously inhuman(e) world of the elves, due to their superior critical grasps of the fragmentary realities of the multiverse.

Tolkien talks about the seamless Web of Story, of which all stories for him are fragments.104 Pratchett, on the other hand, takes care to show not only that there are seams but that they can be unpicked or mined if one does not always accept that things are as they seem. His view of narrative conventions and the conventionalising of narratives is a critical one—that both can be seen as processes which reflect what is wrong with discourses on society. Witches Abroad’s multi-mirrored worlds of story and Lords and Ladies’ multi-storied worlds of memory are parodic representations of the fairy tale genre and the processes of history. They question the legitimacy and histories of authorised versions of reality, shedding a critical light on their subject matter which diffuses through the lens of Pratchett’s Discworld to illuminate our own. Their active subversion of narrative convention and dialogisation of the diodic creates an environment which challenges all settled, one-way viewpoints, suggesting that narrative derives its authority from expectations rather than from any reality it might represent. However, subversiveness works in a dualistic way; “By reminding us of the arbitrariness of . . . narrative conventions, fantasy reminds us of how useful they are . . . in formulating our own imaginative understanding of our existence in time, which can only be comprehended through narrative.”105 Terry Pratchett’s style shows that meaning is both contextual and signifies differently to different consciousnesses; that, as everything comes to us mediated through the variable matrix of language, there is nothing with a status that is beyond doubt, no view or frame of reference that merits being taken unequivocally as a satisfactory way of looking at things.
Notes


2 Fantasy often operates in a rather paradoxical way, by removing us from our present situation in order to engage us with it. [Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994) 119].

3 J.R.R. Tolkien has this to say on the subject: “As for the beginnings of fairy-stories: one can scarcely improve on the formula Once upon a time. It has an immediate effect... It produces at a stroke the sense of a great uncharted world of time.” [J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics*, Ed. Christopher Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984) 161].

4 In Irène Bessière’s opinion, “fairy tales, with their ‘once upon a time’, are candidly unreal; theirs is an autonomous universe cut off from the real world.” [Nancy H. Traill, *Possible Worlds of the Fantastic: The Rise of The Paranormal in Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 6].


7 The location of the Discworld is described in terms akin to the new-found space in Jeff Noon’s *Automated Alice*: “Nureality is a recent discovery of mine,” answered the Professor. “A place where things can live halfway between reality and unreality.” [Jeff Noon, *Automated Alice* (London: Doubleday, 1996) 187]. Terry Pratchett could be said to have made a similar discovery: his Discworld is a place of discovery, where things which may have seemed one-way or diodic cannot be seen satisfactorily in singular terms.

8 Morson Emerson, eds, *Rethinking Bakhtin* 89.

9 Italo Calvino, in his essay ‘Myth in the Narrative’ (1975), expresses a view that works in accordance with narrative causality. He says that story, not meaning, is primary: “The first storytellers combined and recombined simple actions and familiar actors until their own internal logic asserted itself... In Calvino’s view, meaning in literature is not the result of dutiful recording of perceived reality, but of letting narrative formula shape natural phenomena, lending order and value to experience.” [Attebery 50].

10 Attebery 53.

11 This state of affairs recalls David Punter’s description of the structuring mythic focus behind Russell Hoban’s *The Medusa Frequency*: “the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice is considered not as past event, but as repeating pattern which underlies and conditions everyday experience.” [Punter 155].

12 The Discworld novels are not intended to answer the questions that they provoke, as the first sentence of *Equal Rites* makes self-consciously explicit: “This is a story about magic and where it goes and perhaps more importantly where it comes from and why, although it doesn’t pretend to answer all or any of these questions” (ER 7).

13 Lois Gordon affirms this: “There is always an a priori frame for every myth, as there is for every ensuing chapter in human history, a grammar or structure upon which one builds, even though such structures inevitably both constrain as well as construct.” [Lois Gordon, *Robert Coover: The Universal Fictionmaking Process*, Crosscurrents/ Modern Critiques/ New Series (Carbondale and Evansville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983) 47].

14 Holquist 39.

15 The Agatean Empire is the Discworld’s ultimate closed society, walled off both physically and mentally so that, for its inhabitants, “One on side there is the Empire, which in the Agatean language is a word identical with universe. On the other side is—nothing. After all, the universe is everything there is” (IT 115). The underlying suggestion is that ‘universe’ is an effective limiting concept; the narrower a society’s culture, the less they have to compare it with.


18 McHale 234.
The possibility of original creativity. As long as she controls the images in her mirrors and the categories of animal and human, Lily can reign unchallenged.

20. Fairytale stories would not be so believable if the place where they occurred was named. (Iona and Peter Opie, The Classic Fairy Tales (London: OUP, 1974) 15).

21. A combination of ‘In’ and ‘Genua’. In other words, to live in Genua, a city structured around art, is to lead a paradoxically artless life. This is because Lily has removed the possibility of original creativity. As long as she controls the images in her mirrors and the corresponding manifestations of fairy tale imagery, she can reign unchallenged. She can “deprive the audience of viewing the production and manipulation ... [so that they] can no longer envision a fairy tale for themselves.” (Zipes, Fairy Tale as Myth 84).

22. The Duc reverses the fairy tale character type as he is of course a frog disguised as a prince. This is one of many morphic blurrings that occur in Witches Abroad, dialogising conventional expectations by complicating the traditional functions of the categories of animal and human.


24. As Brian McHale writes, “Characters inside fictional worlds are also capable of sustaining propositional attitudes and projecting possible worlds. Eco calls these possible-worlds-within-possible-worlds subworlds; Pavel prefers the term narrative domains.” (McHale 34). Given the plagiaristic component of Lily’s Genua, the latter term seems more appropriate.


26. A metanarrative is “a story big enough and meaningful enough to pull together philosophy and research and politics and art, relate them to one another, and—above all—give them a unifying sense of direction.” (Walter Truett Anderson, ed., The Fontana Postmodernism Reader (London: Fontana Press, 1996) 4).


30. The original Lilith, “from whom sterility has been supposed to derive ... refuses a passive maternal role and is cast into hell.” (Rosemary Jackson, Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1981) 149). Lily’s changing of names is an assertion of individuality in the face of societal restriction; as Linda Hutcheon suggests: “Perhaps women have been more aware of naming in relation to reference because they have traditionally been designated by paternal and spousal surnames.” (Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction, (New York and London: Routledge, 1988) 151). Granny and Nanny obviously have older-woman, maternal forenames, but they use these to their own advantage rather than being passively tied to them. Indeed, at several points in the Witches novels they can be seen to make temporary changes to their names.


33. Luthi 24.

34. This pattern of behaviour also fits the ‘big bad wolf’ of Matthew Bright’s film Freeway, which Hans Petrovic states “could best be described as a darkly comic excursion into deranged pathology.” (Hans Petrovic, ‘Red Riding Hood vs Big Bad Wolf,’ The Press. [Christchurch] 31 Jan, 1998: 41). Bob Wolverton is first and foremost a sociopath, preying upon people that he hates for the feelings of difference that they create within him.


36. Donald Barthelme’s Snow White also overtly refuses to fulfil reader expectations of what a fairy tale narrative ought to do. His Snow White thinks “There is something wrong with ... the very world itself, for not being able to supply a prince. For not being able to at least be civilized enough to supply the correct ending to the story.” (Donald Barthelme, Snow White (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968) 152).
The interplay between noted text and the note itself often heightens the effect of comic wordplay: "the Bursar, a noted neurovore [footnote: He lived on his nerves.]" (LL 45). There lies herein a pun on the nature of reading, in that one finds out what the invented word 'neurovore' means by the mechanism of a footnote: the Bursar is truly a noted neurovore.

The Librarian is an orangutan; "it had been an accident among the potent and magical books of the University library that had as it were bounced the Librarian's genotype down the evolutionary tree and back up a different branch, with the significant difference that now he could hang on to it upside down with his feet" (LL 53).

Interesting Times gives a fuller analysis: "The Bursar was not technically insane. He had passed through the rapids of insanity some time previously, and was now sculling around in some peaceful pool on the other side" (IT 26).

"The recurrent language of escape and return, of journeys through time and space and memory and dream... is a reminder of how emphatically the fantastic mode belongs to the literature of travel." [Robert Crossley, "Pure and Applied Fantasy, or From Faerie to Utopia," in The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art, ed. Roger C. Schlobin (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982) 183].


Zipes, Fairy Tale as Myth 117.


One need only look as far as the mass-mediated Disneyland cartoon industry to see the codification of what a story is and should be: its fairy tale versions "suggest in every manner and form that Disney-like utopias are ones which we should all strive to construct in reality." [Jack Zipes, Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk & Fairy Tales (New York: Methuen, 1984) 105]. In Witches Abroad, when Lily rhetorically asks "'You've got to put on your red-hot shoes and dance the night away?'" (WA 238), her question, which alludes to suppressed fairy tale features, can ultimately be heard as addressed to those elements of fairy stories edited out of modern productions such as Disney's.

As Modern Literary Theory: A Reader points out, language "is a system of difference where any one term has meaning only by virtue of its differential place within that system." [Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, eds. Modern Literary Theory: A Reader, third ed. (London: Arnold, 1996) 8]. For a fuller example of this in Lords and Ladies, see the list of adjectives referring to elves (LL 169), accompanied by their subverted meanings.


Zipes, Fairy Tale as Myth 7.

Tolkien 113.


Barbara Fass notes "The point is that La Belle Dame sans Merci and the land in which she dwells are not creative. What they supply instead is perpetual bliss, and bliss, when it is its own end, inevitably palls." [Barbara Fass, La Belle Dame sans Merci & the Aesthetics of Romanticism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974) 35].

Lords and Ladies reverses the situation depicted in Raymond E. Feist's Faerie Tale, in which "The Queen of faerie and her realm become endangered... because an agreement between the guardians of faerie power has been broken by one of its members." [Zipes, Fairy Tale as Myth 153]. Instead the Discworld is in danger from faerie power, because the world of the elves has been called through the Dancers, which were supposed to be guardians for humankind.

Kendall Walton observes that "jumping on the stage or otherwise interfering with the performance is inappropriate, a violation of the conventions of the theater." [Kendall Walton,
Its potential for reversibility places the Discworld at a distance from Bakhtin's optimal view of experience. For a critical thinker under Stalinism, reversibility equated to a loss of freedom, because a totalitarian regime could reforge the past towards its own ends. As Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson indicate, "It may seem paradoxical that freedom should be associated with the irreversibility of time, but upon reflection it becomes clear that only such a view can grant real importance to a unique event at a particular moment. And if unique events do not have such importance, if they are wholly predictable from prior or future states of the system, then freedom is an illusion and genuine historicity disappears." [Morson and Emerson, *Prospects* 48-49]. The elves' distortion of time does not threaten to turn back the clock to an earlier period, but to glamorise history with their illusions, changing prior states while time's back is turned!

59 Attebery 65.


61 Vladimir Nabokov in *Ada* generates a parallel world whose inhabitants can envisage a world parallel to their own, a parallel world of a parallel world like the land of the elves in *Lords and Ladies*. His world of Demonia or Antiterra is described, in terms which recall the refracting lens that is the Discworld, as "a distortive glass of our distorted globe" [McHale 68].

62 McHale 59.

63 *The Colour of Magic*, the first novel set on the Discworld, has a good example of the multiple systems of measurement available to its denizens: "Plants on the disc, while including the categories commonly known as *annuals*, which were sown this year to come up later this year, *biennials*, sown this year to grow next year, and *perennials*, sown this year to grow until further notice, also included a few rare *re-annuals* which, because of an unusual four-dimensional twist in their genes, could be planted this year to come up *last year*"[COM 189].

64 As Philip K. Dick writes, the image in a mirror is not reliant upon "a telescope or lens system, which does not reverse, not through anything but seeing [a] face reflected back . . . reversed--passed through infinity . . . And that reflection that returns to you: it is you, it is your face, but it isn't." [Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1977) 169].

65 Jeff Noon's *Automated Alice* dramatises the problem with infinite regression: "This is really all too much!" she reflected to herself, reflected to herself, reflected to herself, reflected to herself, reflected to herself, reflected to herself (ad infinitum). 'I shall never find my true self in this room of mirrors.'" [Noon 130].

66 McHale 124.


68 Morson and Emerson, *Prospects* 181.

69 Morson and Emerson, *Prospects* 181.

70 Morson and Emerson, *Prospects* 181.


73 Lacan 5.

74 *The Discworld Companion* points out that Lily "looks younger than her younger sister. Moralists would say that this was because sin is easier than virtue, but moralists always say this sort of thing and some sin is quite difficult and requires specialized equipment." [Pratchett and Briggs 440-441].

75 Hunter 102.

76 A close example of this entrance into a paraxial fantasy is Valery Brussof's *The Mirror*, in which "a woman loses her identity when she is literally replaced by her mirror image and she herself steps through into the area behind the mirror." [Jackson 44].

77 Bacchilega 34.
Lily operates in a startlingly similar fashion to Dr Hoffman in Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr Hoffman*, with the major difference that his fantasy projections invade reality, while hers provide alternate fantasy: "Since mirrors offer alternatives, the mirrors had all turned into fissures or crannies in the hitherto hard-edge world of here and now and through these fissures came slithering sideways all manner of amorphous spooks. And these spooks were Dr Hoffman's guerillas, his soldiers in disguise who, though absolutely unreal, nevertheless, were." [Angela Carter, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr Hoffman* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972) 12].

Hunter 42-43.

81 Lily's is an example of "the oldest and deepest desire, the Great Escape: the Escape from Death." [Tolkien 153].

82 Gilbert and Gubar 202.

83 Robert Coover provides an excellent image of the paraxial, viewed from a train: "the accelerating landscape, framed by the train window, gradually receding into a kind of distant panoramic backdrop for one's own dreams and memories, projected onto the strange blurry space in between, which is more or less where the window is, but is not the window itself, a rather peculiar space perhaps, somehow there and not there at the same time ..." [Robert Coover, *A Night At The Movies: Or, You Must Remember This* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987) 147].

84 Jackson 19.


86 It has been suggested that "Lily is probably a good example of a Discworld 'wicked witch'...the criterion here being less what it is that you do and far more what you had in mind when you did it." [Pratchett and Briggs 250].

87 Pratchett, 'Let There Be Dragons' 28.

88 Opie, Iona and Peter 15.

89 Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 8.

90 Ella Saturday, whose full name, 'Eberella', associates her in our mind with Cinderella as well as making her sound like she should only be opened outdoors.

91 Hutcheon, *Politics* 152.

92 In the light of the subverted status of research on the Discworld, Brian Attebery's point is a particularly apt one: "Since the time of Cervantes, literary mapmakers have been redrawing the boundaries of narrative. Whereas once upon a time...storytelling was divided into things that were true--history--and things that weren't--romance--now the division comes at quite another point." [Attebery x].

93 King Lully is like the historians in *I, the Supreme*, who are said to be interested not in "recounting the facts, but [in] recounting that they are recounting them." [Hutcheon, *Politics* 48].

94 Hawthorn 48.

95 Hutcheon, *Poetics* 154.

96 As Brian McHale observes, "In a sense, of course, the words of the text continuum always determine the reconstructed world of the text, for it is on the basis of the text's verbal signs that we reconstruct its world. But this determination of world by word is normally kept in the background..." [McHale 156] Pratchett foregrounds the determination of world by word, inserting subversive passages that prevent one from conceiving of the Discworld as independent of his use of language: "But Granny had spent a lifetime bending recalcitrant creatures to her bidding and, while Esk was a surprisingly strong opponent, it was obvious that she would give in before the end of the paragraph" (ER 66).

97 Interestingly, when Granny Weatherwax 'borrows' animal minds and has out-of-body experiences, the note of explanation that she leaves in her cottage reads: "I ATE'NT DEAD." (LL 357). Letters clearly do not have to be strictly correct in order to signify across the boundaries of conventional meaning.

98 Opie, Iona and Peter 11.

99 McHale 92.
101 Zipes, Fairy Tale as Myth 157-158.
102 Zipes, Fairy Tale as Myth 159.
103 Hutcheon, Politics 77.
104 Tolkien 161. A fragment of Tolkien’s own celebrated fantasy stories appears in the parodically-subversive Discworld of Witches Abroad, but the “small grey creature, vaguely froglike” who is an unmistakable Gollum type only has time to say “ullo, . . . It’ss my birthday.” (WA 52), before it is dealt with summarily by Granny Weatherwax.
105 Attebery 67.
Who holds the Watch tonight?
or, looking through monarchy at Ankh-Morporkian society
in three Discworld novels that feature the city’s Watch:

*Guards! Guards!, Men At Arms and Feet of Clay.*

HAMLET: Some must watch while some must sleep:

> Thus runs the world away,


The city is a device for measuring time.

Of all of the Discworld novels, those that feature Ankh-Morpork’s
Watch place the most emphasis on the operation of society as a whole. They
apply the satirical lens of Discworld optics to the city of Ankh-Morpork, using
the Watch as a microcosm of society to focus attention on the ways in which
people see. The events of each of the novels are set in motion by a perceived
need to resurrect the long-dead monarchy of Ankh-Morpork. Those who think
the city needs a king view monarchy as a monological means of resolution,
using it to superimpose their idea of kingship upon society. The absolutist
nature of this kind of approach either ignores or devalues some of the
Discworld’s inhabitants. In contrast, the high-resolution picture of society that
the Watch develop is an inclusive and adaptable one, always in the process of
being shaped. The Watch novels subvert perceptions of monarchy and, in
doing so, indicate the narrowness of anyone who ignores the essential diversity,
divisiveness and complexity of society.
Points of view are more at issue than what is actually to be seen in the Watch novels, as they often emphasise the fact that what constitutes evidence is itself a matter of perspective. Bakhtin's usage of the term 'carnival' becomes particularly appropriate when discussing the Watch novels, as it refers to a way of seeing rather than a state of affairs. Andrew Butler has suggested that "The Discworld . . . is a carnival space, operating always within the carnival time of the collapse or reversal of hierarchies." Carnival tradition involves a utopian faith in the prospect of overcoming fear and authority which Bakhtin saw as being dialogically at odds with official truth. His major work on the topic, *Rabelais and his World*, focussed on the writings of sixteenth-century monk François Rabelais. Bakhtin proposed that "Behind each victim of abuse and blows Rabelais sees the king, the former king . . . subject[ed] to mockery and punishment as individual incarnations of the dying truth and authority of prevailing thought, law, and virtues." Similarly, the Watch 'see through' the side effects of the outdated monarchical system, turning hierarchical privileging on its head in order to come to terms with their city's complexities. Pratchett's satirical lens is focussed on society, through monarchy in particular, in order to dialogise what seems diodic; the Watch novels question whether one can look at things satisfactorily in a single, unitary way.

Michael Holquist, in comparing the views of Bakhtin and Einstein, wrote: "Both resort to what might be called a 'philosophical optics', a conceptual means for seeing processes invisible to any other lens. More particularly, both resort to experiments with *seeing* in order to meditate on the necessity of the other." He might just as well have been speaking of Terry Pratchett and Bakhtin, for a comparison of their approaches proves fruitful in this area. The concluding section of *Guards! Guards!* begins: "Let the eye of attention pull back . . . This is the Disc, world and mirror of worlds . . ." (GG 317), suggesting the otherness of the reader, examining the Discworld in both optical and satirical terms. The 'eye of attention', by no means a new image for
reading, is invited to withdraw from the lens constituted by the Disc, so that one can see how the mirroring effect is achieved.\textsuperscript{4} It is as if the reader, immersed in fantasy while reading, sees the satirical content only on withdrawing from the novel. The optical imagery of the Discworld novels provides a way of seeing things that would certainly look different in any other lens.

The setting of the Discworld novels is designed to promote its own unreality, but at the same time to draw satirical parallels with our contemporary world. As Terry Pratchett himself puts it: "There are wizards and witches and dragons and all the paraphernalia of fairy stories, but they act in a curiously twentieth century way. So I deliberately chose a ridiculous background perhaps in order to highlight the characters."\textsuperscript{5} Pratchett's characters are often depicted as looking at their realities through their own sort of lens. Admittedly, every conscious being looks at their version of reality through the mediation of their intrinsically subjective consciousness. Post-structuralism stresses that the complexity of the signifier-signified relationship does not lend itself to universally straightforward transfers of meaning. The arbitrary nature of the sign makes it very difficult to argue against the statement that what one sees depends on language and the ways in which one looks. However, the subjective processing of perceptions is not normally foregrounded to the extent that it is in the Discworld novels. Pratchett uses it thematically, especially in the Watch novels, to suggest a great deal about how people think. The reflexive Discworld novels look at themselves, examining the relationship between real and fictional worlds. They suggest new ways of looking, by asserting the primacy of language in the relationship between consciousness and 'reality'.\textsuperscript{6} The various lenses through which Pratchett's characters look represent an explicit linguistic focus for, or influence upon their perceptions.

The Watch themselves are by definition employed in the act of perception. Just as postmodernism is said to look through reality to show its fictionality, the Watch can be said to look through monarchy to reveal its
constructedness. They bring a critical eye to how others perceive Ankh-Morpork. Twentieth-century readers have considered the Discworld’s main city to represent a fantasy London; Terry Pratchett’s own opinion gives a sense of its conception: “Discworld novels are often labelled ‘fantasy’, though a . . . more accurate description might be ‘parallel reality’. Take the city of Ankh-Morpork. Unlike the traditional fantasy landscapes, this is a working city, complete with slaughterhouses and sewers.” The Discworld, for all its fantastic cosmological setting as a flat planet borne by mythical creatures, does correspond with reality in that it imaginatively blends ways in which our world was once thought to be. Ankh-Morpork is another version of Janet Frame’s Mirror City, “where civilizations live their lives under the light of the imagination instead of the sun.” The Watch have an ongoing relationship with the running of Pratchett’s satirical mirror-city, one that is structured both by the ways in which Ankh-Morpork is seen and the ways in which they themselves are changed by their experiences.

The Watch first come into view in the form of drunken Captain Vimes of the (then) Night Watch. He provides the first of many perceptions of Ankh-Morpork that are to follow in the Watch novels, opining “The city wasa, wasa, wasa wossname. Thing. Woman” (GG 7). His temporary loss for words is not only due to alcohol, but also to his consuming love-hate relationship with the city. It displaces other considerations from his mind, so he objectifies women as a group in order to fit them neatly into his view of things. His analysis reverberates towards the end of Guards! Guards! when Vimes, thinking about his feelings for his bride-to-be, Sybil Ramkin, decides “the woman was a city” (GG 314). Now it is the new complexity of his relationship with her that speaks through him. Vimes is clearly a changed man, but there are still further developments in his attitudes to come in the other Watch novels. The reciprocity of his relationships with both Ankh-Morpork and Sybil mean that he is changed even as he changes his perception of them. By changing the
order of woman and city in his life Vimes is able to look at them without having had to enter an alcoholic haze. Such perceptions, that seemed limited to one-way diodic connection, turn out, in the Discworld, to be a matter of dialogic interactions which work in two or more ways. The reversibility of Vimes' views is an example of the dialogised diodic that directs the Discworld lens.

There are images of perception by means of lenses throughout the world of the Watch novels. It is a well-worn cliché that a drunk sees through the bottom of a bottle. When Vimes is drunk the world is "all twisted up and wrong, like distorted glass, only came back into focus if you looked at it through bottom of bottle" (GG 25). From his drunken point of view, he needs the flat lens of glass at the base of his bottle in order to see the world properly. Drunken vision has resonances, not only for the rest of the Watch novels, but for the Discworld's lens of satire in general. Corporal Nobbs, also when inebriated, gave "a glassy stare and tried unsuccessfully to focus" (FOC 124). His lack of success seems to be because he tried to use his drunken eyes as a lens to look at the distortions of the world: "When you saw it through the bottom of a glass, it all came back into focus" (FOC 122). This is a very apt image for the re-orientation process that one must make when looking at the Discworld. Because Discworld representation is flat, it offers a view of life not unlike a cross-section. In other words, the optics of Discworld satire is a matter of looking through the bottom of a glass lens in a microscope, one which can provide a variety of views due to its adjustable focal point and the amount of light brought to bear on the subject. The distortions of fantasy can show how things which might be considered satisfactory when looked at with the naked eye are in actuality 'all twisted up and wrong' and need to be seen in a different light. It is only by noting the way in which the city works that the Watch are able to uphold what they stand for in relation to it.

*Men At Arms* looks through monarchy at Ankh-Morporkian society by using an image of perception that in its very design is emblematic of how the
Watch function. Carrot buys a watch as a gift for the retiring Captain Vimes, but the obvious pun in this is not its most significant feature. In accordance with the theme of perception, it is the investigation of the watch that delineates the inner Watch: “‘The important bit,’ said Cuddy, taking an eyeglass from somewhere in his beard and examining the watch carefully, ‘is a little rocking thingummy that stops the wheels from going too fast’” (MAA 243). If one takes the watch to be Ankh-Morporkian society, then the Watch are this vital component. Their ultimate responsibility is to make sure that the wheels do not fall off Ankh-Morpork in times of crisis. The image of the city-as-mechanism recurs in Feet of Clay, in such a way as to make one think again about how the wheels turn. The Guilds system “worked like a machine. That was fine except for the occasional people who got crushed in the wheels” (FOC 107).

Increasingly, the Watch find themselves looking out for the little people, those who go unseen in the machinations of society.

The first appearance made by Lance-Constable Cuddy, literally one of the littler people in society due to being a dwarf, stands for the way that Discworld vision looks at society, in combining what might be thought of as the real in the distorting glass of satire with what is considered to be fantasy. His voice precedes his physical appearance, because his diminutive figure is out of sight behind Sergeant Colon’s stomach (MAA 24-25). As he himself puts it, Pratchett’s characters are predominantly defined by their dialogue: “Character does not lie in two pages of dense depiction, but in modes of speech, the things people say and do not say.” When he does come into view it is “the upturned face of Lance-Constable Cuddy, with its helpful intelligent expression and one glass eye” (MAA 25) that Colon sees. His face is looked down on by Colon as a flat, disclike shape, one which comes equipped with two different types of lens: an eye and a glass eye. As mentioned previously, he also has an eyeglass somewhere in his beard. Because he has more lenses than most other Ankh-
Morporkian characters, Cuddy is well-equipped to keep watch not only on what they are doing but on the ways in which they are seeing.

In *Men At Arms*, Captain Vimes looks at his reflection in his shaving mirror and gets a nasty surprise when both of them are shattered by a shot from behind (*MAA* 153). The consequences of this can be seen in *Feet of Clay*, with lens imagery used to indicate the way in which the Watch are to employ Discworld vision. Vimes, having become Commander of the City Watch, uses an atypical shaving mirror: “It was slightly convex, so that it reflected more of the room than a flat mirror would do, and it gave a very good view of the outbuildings and the gardens beyond the window” (*FOC* 12). Vimes’ mirror now enables him to spot assassination attempts going on behind his back. As Commander of the dynamic City Watch he has to see things coming; even when looking at his own face he keeps an eye on the world. This kind of perception recalls Bakhtin’s analogy that, in a conversation with someone else, one’s field of vision includes them but does not incorporate the back of one’s own head. Individual human beings are by nature blindspotted to some extent, without the aid of a dialogic relationship. Vimes’ shaving mirror is a recognition of his limitations and an attempt to correct deficiencies in his field of view. This perspective, engaging with the world outside in the hyper-observant way that it does, is at a far remove from the drunken lens of his earlier self.

The Watch novels see a dramatic shift in the role of their central characters. The Night Watch are initially a redundant group who take only superficial notice of what is going on in their city; almost without exception, their reaction to criminal activity is to run away from it. The City Watch become a force not only for observation but for investigation. To Vimes’ way of thinking, there were “Just a handful of them in the Watch, staying out of trouble. And then Carrot had arrived, and suddenly . . . they didn’t skulk around keeping out of trouble, they went *looking* for trouble, and they found it everywhere they looked” (*FOC* 106). The ever-changing lenses that the Watch
work with parallel the textual structuring of the Discworld novels. Pratchett’s satire works through textual changes: ever-present, often subversive footnotes; short new paragraphs of an undercutting nature; (parenthetical) statements which qualify what has preceded them. These techniques suggest that the text is open to change, while the footnotes in particular hold out the hope, often illusory, that things can and will be explained. If the main body of the text can be said to be a building, the ‘asides’ in the text and footnotes give ‘a very good view of the outbuildings and the gardens beyond the window’. That is to say, readers are afforded a glimpse into the world that they have been shown at first glance by the passage of the narrative, a glimpse that plays with the mediation of the Discworld lens by subverting any claim it might have to openness.

The most straightforwardly monological kind of lens vision in the Watch novels is that adopted by Edward d’Eath, committed monarchist in Men At Arms. This stems from his belief that monarchy is not only appropriate to Ankh-Morpork, but the only right state of affairs. He begins the novel as a dispossessed young aristocrat whose position, in that he feels the wrong man to be in power, is rather like Hamlet’s. Hamlet-like, he rails at history: “It was never meant to be like this” (MAA 9). The modern Discworld is ‘all twisted up and wrong’ to his eyes, as it is for the drunken Vimes. With this in mind, Edward “looked across the river to the brooding bulk of the Palace, and his anger screwed itself up and became a lens” (MAA 9). Vimes’ corrective lens is the bottom of a bottle; Edward’s is his sense of grievance. Hamlet-like, he sees what he takes to be a portentous figure, but in Edward’s case it is not a ghost but Corporal Carrot who represents “the face of the past strolling by” (MAA 11). Edward’s Hamlet likeness disappears as his own particular form of madness takes its course. Rather than holding watch for a sign of things to come, he becomes that which holds the attention of the Watch: a side-effect of monarchy.
Instead of seeing by the subversively satirical, open-ended lens of the Discworld, Edward focuses on monarchy and is left only with his anger. In effect, his ‘seeing red’ leads him to view the world through red-tinted glasses. His particular form of tunnel vision leads him to the gonne, which takes away what remains of his ability to make rational decisions. His behaviour, having diverged from that of Hamlet, identifies him more with another famed fictional character: Don Quixote. In the first part of *Quixote* “the hero embraces a frame of interpretation fit only for medieval romance and applies it to the actual world of the novel.” Edward’s romantic totalising acceptance of a medieval-style absolute monarchy makes him a hero only to his own way of seeing; the real world of the novel is no longer within his perception. According to Bakhtin, “A person has no sovereign internal territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another.” Once he has the gonne, Edward no longer has the ability to look inside himself with any kind of recognition of otherness. In this condition, he could be said to have sovereign internal territory, because his inner self is completely ruled by monarchy. Rather than changing the world around him, his angry king-inspired vision of society has lead him only inwards. The implied narrator of *Men At Arms* explains that “Individuals aren’t naturally paid-up members of the human race, except biologically” (*MAA* 11). Born human, Edward rather paradoxically loses his individuality and independence through isolating himself from social contact. He superimposes a pattern upon society that is neither appropriate nor flexible and in doing so abdicates any potential for a useful role in the dynamic, modern world of Ankh-Morpork.

There is one important factor that distinguishes Edward’s view from those of the other characters who want Ankh-Morpork to have a king. His motives have very little to do with personal profit. As a member of a noble family, he would certainly stand to gain from this change in the state of affairs. However, he wants to overthrow Ankh-Morpork’s post-monarchy and re-install
a glorious reign for its own sake. None of the other would-be kingmakers share Edward's belief in stories of idealised sovereigns. Nevertheless, they do rely to a certain extent on popular acceptance of these narratives. To facilitate this, the pro-monarchists attempt to tell their own truths, taking advantage of and modifying various rumours and fables about kingship. It is typically contrary, equivocal Ankh-Morpork thinking not to accept someone's version of events, but at the same time to give mass acceptance to the anonymity of what 'they' say.12

Ankh-Morpork public life is an expression of the carnivalesque: "A lot of people and the smell of sausages meant a performance of the street theatre that was life in Ankh-Morpork" (FOC 203). The inclusive, populist nature of this sort of performance is the essence of carnival; any viewers are necessarily participant-observers. The 'feast of fools' "is not a spectacle, it is not a play put on to amuse an audience: it is an event which all partake in."13 There are very few rules in such a situation, which is characterised by the overruling of the rigid norms that structure society.14 Carnival "usually involves mockery of all serious, 'closed' attitudes about the world, and it also celebrates 'discrowning', that is, inverting top and bottom in any given structure. Discrowning points to the unstable and temporary nature of any hierarchy."15 Bakhtin sees the function of carnival as being "to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted."16

Monarchy is definitely a truth of the establishment, something that claims ongoing authority for itself. As such, it is decrowned by the carnival tradition, which expresses a way of seeing which is dialogically at odds with official truth; a folk culture belief in a time when all fear and authority are defeated.17 Monarchy also invites parody's historicising exposure of the conditions which produced its claims of unconditionality.18 As a consummate parodist, Terry Pratchett reveals the 'irony of origins' of the discourses that he
targets, showing how things relate to the compromising and conditionalising contexts of their utterance. A variety of characters attempt to exploit the transhistorical self-justificatory aegis of narratives about monarchy in the Watch novels. What invariably happens to these would-be authors is that they are themselves subverted, often finding that the stories do more of their own telling than they had expected.

Lupine Wonse plays on perceptions of kingship when manoeuvring his puppet monarch into place in *Guards! Guards!*. It is reported that his candidate for king "'made a big speech about how he was going to kill the dragon, overthrow the usurpers and right all wrongs. Everyone cheered!'" (*GG* 155). This reception is obviously reliant on popular belief about dragon-slaying. It is also based in an opposition which reveals the nature of the power-structure at work. "Kingship is only legitimated by producing its subaltern 'others' as primal monsters... For what is a Knight or Hero without a monster, to justify the order which he defends against it?" Pratchett demonstrates that there was no genuine need for a king by having Wonse bring a monster along just for the purposes of setting one up. By extension, the Patrician is made to seem a tyrannical oppressor in both *Guards! Guards!* and *Men At Arms* in order to vindicate the plotters' sweeping changes. Replacing him with a king seems a simple, natural, irresistible process to a public who know their folk tales.

Cut-me-own-Throat Dibbler, Ankh-Morpork's archetypal entrepreneurial hawker, speaks with the carnivalesque tones of the public sphere. He puts the generally-accepted view in *Guards! Guards!*: "'When a stranger comes into the city under the thrall of a dragon and challenges it with a glittering sword, wecell, there's only one outcome, ain't there? It's probably destiny'" (*GG* 157). The diodic overtones of this statement set the scene for subversion. As one can and should expect in the Discworld, there will probably be a variety of possible outcomes. It is very unlikely that someone adopting a tone of knowing certainty, especially a speaker foolish enough to bring
‘destiny’ into the dialogue, is going to turn out to be right when all is said and
done. ‘Destiny’ in the Discworld novels is always made to seem a facile
solution, a diodic one-way nullifier of potential rather than an irresistible force
for societal good. Metanarratives of this order can be adapted to one’s own
terms; Witches Abroad shows that above all the power of narrative causality
must be resisted. Bakhtin sums up the position of characters bound by such
constraints: “Outside his destiny, the epic and tragic hero is nothing; he is,
therefore, a function of the plot fate assigns him; he
cannot become the hero of
another destiny or
another plot.”21 Destiny is a story that has been told so many
times that it actually does have the power to affect events, but the extent of its
power depends upon whether people identify with it or work against it.

Edward d’Eath sees himself as the finger of Destiny (MAA 22),
beckoning the rightful king-in-waiting to claim his throne. Discussions of the
path to kingship in Men At Arms are informed throughout by the Arthurian
story of the sword-in-a-stone. However, this legend is constantly accompanied
by a version that subverts the sequence of events that are normally thought to
constitute it. This process parallels Bakhtin’s thoughts on the ongoing
indeterminacy of words: “In using a word, speakers may intone the word so as
to question the values present in its aura and the presuppositions of its earlier
usage. In other words, the word may be ‘reaccented’.”22 The first discussion
of sword-pulling is dismissed by Lord Rust as ‘just a legend’ and he goes on to
ask “‘What’s so hard about pulling a sword out of a stone? The real work’s
already been done. You ought to make yourself useful and find the man who
put the sword in the stone in the first place, eh?’” (MAA 20-21). He has
evidently reaccented the words pertaining to the legend, parodically questioning
what would normally be taken for granted. When the Watch discuss the same
story they place the same emphasis on the projected previous handler of the
sword. Sergeant Colon says “‘Nah, catch me being respectful to some bloke
just because he pulled a sword out of a stone . . . Mind you . . . someone who
could shove a sword into a stone . . . a man like that, now, he’s a king’” (MAA 242). These debasing treatments of a story which has its place in the annals of high chivalry refuse to accept the magic of myth, instead presenting unanswerable queries. Thus the Ankh-Morpork Question continues to be asked: is there a suitable heir to the throne in the city?

Carrot is probably the long-lost legitimate heir to the city’s throne, although the usual signs do not necessarily correspond to their usual meaning in the Discworld. He is certainly identified as Ankh-Morpork’s king-to-be by those who want him to play that part in Men At Arms. His actions in refusing Dr Cruces’ offer of a crown actually demonstrate his fabled right to it. When he stabs his sword through Cruces and into a granite pillar before removing it, Carrot sees right through Cruces’ scorn for the legends surrounding monarchy and out the other side. He has the ability not only to see others’ points of view, but to think of things from their perspective. This is well-illustrated in the proceedings with the clowns ‘faces’ in Men At Arms. From a clown’s point of view, it would be unthinkable to wear someone else’s makeup, because it is their personal face. Carrot realises that, more than just the badge of the wearer, a clown’s makeup is an implicit part of their identity. Even though he himself says “‘That’s all sword-in-a-stone nonsense. Kings don’t come out of nowhere, waving a sword and putting everything right.’” (MAA 372-373), Carrot understands that stories always have power and meaning to someone. He addresses the sword-in-a-stone claims with Dr Cruces’ tones, the important difference being that he looks all the way through the charade of monarchy at the views of those behind it.

When the Patrician asks him if the city perhaps does need a king, Carrot replies “‘Like a fish needs a . . . er . . . a thing that doesn’t work underwater, sir’” (MAA 373). Carrot’s words search for an image which, while it may be familiar to twentieth-century readers, escapes the grasp of direct signification. Because it leaves the conventional punch line unsaid, Carrot’s reply
encapsulates the position of monarchy in the Watch novels. Not only is it as useless as a proverbial bicycle to a fish, but it is patently out of keeping with the stage of development that the city is at. It is no coincidence that Leonard of Quirm, the Discworld’s Da Vinci, has invented something he calls “‘the-turning-the-wheel-with-pedals-and-another-wheel-machine’” (MAA 75). It is beyond the capacity of the Discworld’s contemporary language to put a name to the ‘thing that doesn’t work underwater’, a fact which is emphasised by the skeletal syntactical construction of Leonard’s attempt to hold words and things together. The bicycle may not quite have a place in the Discworld, but its incongruity is due to the fact that it is ahead of its time, whereas monarchy is behind the times. Well before he is asked about the appropriateness of monarchy, Carrot says “‘we shouldn’t let ancient history blind us to the realities of a multi-ethnic society in the Century of the Fruitbat’” (FOC 43-44). This statement at once parodies the language of contemporary ‘political correctness’ and makes a joke on the very era that the fantasy Discworld is going through. It is no wonder that people are getting blinded from realities by history when the current period of history is associated with a bat! When Carrot refuses the crown it is because he sees that it is a part of ancient history, a short-sighted way of seeing that is no longer in the current interests of Ankh-Morpork.

*Feet of Clay* also involves a refusal to accept the crown of Ankh-Morpork, although the offer comes under very different circumstances. Corporal Nobbs, having won the role of the king in a carnival play, points out that “Everyone wanted to play him” (FOC 69). He realises that play-acting a king’s character is quite different from playing at the real thing. Therefore, when the crown is offered to him by people who have lined him up as their puppet king, Nobbs flatly refuses to accept it. Playing king as an amateur theatrical is a carnivalesque parodic inversion of his normal social situation, one which he welcomes as a transformation of hierarchies. On the other hand, the high-society overture is something which he is all too familiar with: “one of the
most basic lessons he’d learnt was that men with red faces and plummy voices never ever gave cushy numbers to the likes of Nobby” (FOC 245). Having thus subverted the possibility of a rags-to-riches story, Pratchett goes on sum up the attitude that prevents ‘Nobby’ from becoming nobility: “When the call came for Corporal Nobbs, it would not find him wanting. It would not find him at all” (FOC 246). The literalisation of the phrase ‘find him wanting’ turns a cliché into a joke, renewing language in much the same way that carnival renews society, by rejuvenating the settled surface through the liberating power of laughter. The very fact that a commoner would turn down a chance to be king comes as an unsettling surprise to those who intrigued to have a stake in him. The act of refusing a crown challenges the time-honoured conventions by which young heroes become monarchs through their worthy efforts.

Of the three Watch novels, Feet of Clay depicts the most insidious monarchist challenge to Ankh-Morpork, which is perhaps the case because it is also in many ways the most realistic. The people that back the bid for power largely remain anonymous, even after their attempt is thwarted. They are alarmingly reminiscent of the secretive powerbroking groups which inspire conspiracy theorists today: “They were men who felt that The Time Had Come. Regimes can survive barbarian hordes, crazed terrorists and hooded secret societies, but they’re in real trouble when prosperous and anonymous men sit around a big table and think thoughts like that” (FOC 99-100). The monarchist challenge in Guards! Guards! was from a hooded secret society; in Men At Arms it came from the Discworld equivalent of crazed terrorists. The pro-monarchists of Feet of Clay have quite different criteria altogether, as can be seen in their dismissal of Carrot in favour of Corporal Nobbs as a candidate for kingship. They are not interested in questions of who might have a rightful claim to the throne. As Dragon King of Arms rightly knows, “People kept on talking about the true king of Ankh-Morpork, but history taught a cruel lesson. It said- often in words of blood- that the true king was the one who got
crowned” (FOC 45). He and his fellow conspirators just want to take someone they can control and adjust history so as to make him into the individual who should have been king all along.

The narratives that the Watch have to deal with in *Feet of Clay* are no longer popular accounts of monarchy but records of the city’s history. Although all past events are potential historical ‘facts’, the ones that actually become fact are those that are chosen to be narrated. The official nature of historical chronicles means that they are almost always seen as fact rather than myth, precisely because those in power have wanted them to be so known. As the chief herald in Ankh-Morpork, the vampiric Dragon King of Arms has the capability to alter the narration of power and thereby affect power itself. His introduction to Vimes highlights his sinister relationship to the social hierarchy of Ankh-Morpork: “‘Dragon King of Arms,’ said the man. ‘King of Arms?’ said Vimes. ‘Merely a title,’ said the voice” (FOC 34). Dragon sees ‘king’ as both merely a title, to be used as he desires-- and a person, also to be used. His titular office of ‘King of Arms’, like all the heraldic wordplay that goes on in the book, advertises the fact that he can literally ‘rule over’ the city’s nobility. He can overrule, overwrite and rule out family trees, affecting history with ease; “Often a few strokes of the pen would do the trick” (FOC 45). What is at stake is details of lineage, but far more crucial than these are words themselves. The words that are put in the heads of golems to make them operate in a certain way are a metaphor for the power that language can have over people. It is a power that, in subjecting them to others, causes them to abdicate responsibility for their actions, in effect surrendering their part in the narration of their own story. *Feet of Clay* is not alone amongst the Discworld novels in highlighting the way lives can be literally authorised by someone in control of words.

Any distinction between non-fiction and fiction is blurred on the Discworld. Because the Discworld novels “focus on the process of event becoming fact, they draw attention to the dubiousness of the positivist,
empiricist hierarchy implied in the binary opposing of the real to the fictive,... by suggesting that the non-fictional is as constructed and as narratively known as is fiction."24 What is clear is that questions of factuality depend not upon the subject under narration but upon the interactive dialogue between the narrator and those who are receiving the narration. The Watch themselves give credence strictly according to the self-appointed status of the speaking suspect: "You disbelieved people only when they said they were innocent. Only guilty people were trustworthy. Anything else struck at the whole basis of policing" (FOC 115). This is a particularly barbed satirical point, for none could deny that it does indeed sum up the process used to establish the truth of events in police procedure. Its comic effect comes in the restatement of terms, so that 'guilty' and 'trustworthy' are brought into uneasy juxtaposition. Pratchett invests words with unexpected connotations in order to foreground ways in which they are really used.

The Watch novels bring new words to bear on a range of narratives about kings. The discourse of royalty can be seen to be dialogised by the parodic Discworld vision: "It is, after all, precisely in the light of another potential language or style that a given straightforward style is parodied, travestied, ridiculed."25 Closed, straightforward, grand historical narratives like Ankh-Morpork's old monarchy are situated firmly in what Bakhtin terms 'the epic past'. This "is called the 'absolute past' for good reason: it is both monochronic and valorized (hierarchical); it lacks any relativity, that is, any gradual, purely temporal progressions that might connect it with the present."26 The sense of time that governs the epic past is at a tangent to the multiplicity of the Discworld: the multiverse is so open to potential that absolutely anything can happen in it. Ankh-Morpork is at the same time a post-monarchy fantasy city and a postmodernist fiction, which imitates "the pluralistic and anarchistic ontological landscape of advanced industrial cities."27 The plotters of the Watch novels, despite their different approaches, all attempt to turn back the clock to a
stage in the 'absolute past' that knew no connections with their complicated, developing modern city.

Lupine Wonse wants to use the narrative of king-as-dragonslayer to eventually claim power for himself, having set his puppet monarch up as the next oppressive monster to be overthrown. However, his subjected dragon becomes kingslayer and then king, turning summoner into subject. Although she behaves with the draconian cruelty that is second nature to a noble dragon, Ankh-Morpork’s temporary ruler is appalled by the way people use words. Communicating telepathically with Wonse, she dialogises the dishonesty of what humans do in the guise of euphemism: “we never burned and tortured and ripped one another apart and called it morality” (GG 228). A dragon’s-eye-view humanity is disturbingly close-to-home, suggesting that the ways in which people treat other people are in fact the real monstrosity.

Edward and Dr Cruces seek, through shooting people, to make Carrot an offer he cannot refuse. The compelling evidence that they have of his ancestry is supposed to make him follow in the footsteps of the Arthurian sword-in-a-stone myth. The humble Carrot, working below his station like the young Arthur, is intended to step naively into the shoes of legend and accept the rightfulness of his claim. In turning down the crown he not only rejects the mad yet typically human vision of ‘succession-by-murder’, but kills Cruces and goes on to smash the gonne that was the facilitating instrument of the whole plan. He cannot completely sidestep the power of myth, because his sword does happen to pass in and out of solid stone in the course of his refusal. Although these actions do seem to confirm kingliness, Carrot is not about to let that force him into becoming king.

The myth that Feet of Clay plays with is the myth of kingship itself; the idea that a monarch is in some way a different, superior being who exists by god-given entitlement and who will right wrongs and solve problems. These ideas of kingship are also present in the earlier Watch novels, but they are
particularly subverted by the persistent stress on the theme of construction in *Feet of Clay*. If killing a monster or pulling a sword out of a stone are suspect ways of validating a claim to the throne, what is it that really makes a king? Dragon King of Arms plots in the shadows, re-plots the official history of the city's family trees and poisons the Patrician with candlelight at the same time. His cunning kingmaking proves his undoing, because he does not expect that his own words, in the form of cryptically obscure puns, will return to their author in an incriminating way.

Dragon King of Arms is a compulsive punster; he plays with letters. In defeating his threat, the Watch are put into the position of Edgar Allan Poe's Parisian police in 'The Purloined Letter'. The stolen letter in Poe's story is in full view, with only vestigial disguise. Nevertheless it defeats the most careful, painstaking attempts of the police to find it. Poe's hero, Dupin, is asked how he managed to see through the thief's deceptively-clever strategem. He draws the analogy of a guessing game played by children, from which it is apparent to the listener that the key was "an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent." After the Watch have tried all the police methods they can think of, Vimes strikes upon the key by applying the herald's riddling idea of ingenuity: "Something we don't see, thought Vimes. Something invisible. No, it wouldn't have to be invisible. Something we don't see because it's always there. Something that strikes in the night . . ." (FOC 220). The answer to what has been used to poison the Patrician is light, encoded in the coat of arms that Dragon had shown to Vimes when they first met. When Vimes realises just how much he has been kept in the dark, he says "'We don't look at the light because the light is what we look with'" (FOC 234). Jacques Lacan speaks of the purloined letter as occupying just such an indeterminable space: "There it is, but it isn't there, it only has its own value in relation to everything it threatens. . . ." The light was always there, in clear view like the purloined letter, but concealed in a kind of presence-absence. Vimes, having got on the
right wavelength, re-riddles Carrot with his breakthrough: "'You can't see it. That's how you can tell it's there. If it wasn't there you'd soon see it! . . . Only you wouldn't! See?" (FOC 221). The solution lies not in the traditional methods of empirical clue-gathering, but in an innovatively-simple approach. One always perceives in the light of something and this calls for an investigation of ways of seeing rather than what is to be seen.

*Men At Arms* provides an interesting image of what the Russian Formalist critics referred to as the automatisation of perception. According to Victor Shklovsky, the overautomatisation of an object that results from repeated association with it "permits the greatest economy of perceptive effort." As a mysterious figure climbs the Tower of Art, which happens to be the tallest and oldest building in the city, the reader is informed: "People hardly ever looked at the Tower of Art, because it was always there. It was just a thing. People hardly ever look at familiar things" (MAA 300). This indication that the Tower is overlooked is perhaps the most effective way of encouraging people to take a second look at it. On one level (of which it has many), the Tower is a clear example of habituated perception and the obfuscation that it causes, a phenomenon that the Watch have to be on the lookout for. On another, it can be seen as a reference to the fictionality of the city itself: the Tower of Art was the first building in Ankh-Morpork, because it has been built up from the start with Art. On yet another, the level that Edward d'Eath would have seen it at, the Tower represents the city's past. It is topped by the figure of a morpork, which keeps watch over the city as a heraldic emblem of its monarchy. Both the Tower and the institution which it symbolises have become part of the background by the time of the Watch novels, but the carnivalesque city of Ankh-Morpork defamiliarises them for those who care to take a closer look: "what else is carnival, one could argue, if not the 'making strange' of hegemonic genres, ideologies and symbols?" Its mode of presentation draws attention to the artifice of the text, dehabituating automatised perception by
suggesting that the very thing which overlooks the city is itself overlooked.

Ironically, the Tower of Art needs someone to watch what happening on it at this point: enter the Watch.

The ability of the Watch to bring perceptions of Ankh-Morpork into view is thoroughly associated with the theme of light. They look at crime but keep their city in perspective, lighting up things that appear fixed or given in order to show that this is not the case. Carrot, in his concern with semantics, makes a crucial point about how they work: "That's why it's called evidence. It means 'that which is seen'" (MAA 281). His arrival has set off an enlightenment in Ankh-Morpork, in that he brings a new sort of light to the city: "His face glowed in the light of a torch on the street corner, but it had some inner glow of its own" (MAA 100). Because of his insistence on things being seen, Carrot's star is a bit too bright for the factions that struggle for power within the city. The Guilds and nobles do not welcome openness, because "every ideological formation gains its apparent plausibility only by suppressing elements within it that would, if they were ever brought to light, subvert its claims to coherence."32 The Watch, influenced by Carrot, threaten to bring just such subversive elements to light.

The availability of light in Ankh-Morpork, both literal and metaphorical, is class-determined. Some citizens do not have their own, meaning that they cannot see for themselves what is going on around them. An image of the city by night gives a view of this: "The Patrician's Palace was a darker shape in the dusk, with one lighted window high up. It was the centre of a well-lit area, which got darker and darker as the view widened and began to take in those parts of the city where you didn't light a candle because that was wasting good food" (MAA 106). Ideally, the law should apply equally across the city, but this has not been the case. The biased, outdated approach to law enforcement is typified by Captain Quirke of the Day Watch, whose "'Got to think in terms of the whole city'" (MAA 229) actually equates to "'some things are important,
some ain’t’” (MAA 230). His officious prioritising is in accordance with the
plotters of the novels, because it means that he works only in the interests of
those considered important. His is a situated perspective, one which aims at
finalising perception and is therefore backed by a belief that it cannot be
corrected, or even altered in any way, by others’ viewpoints. Quirke is one
of those whom Bakhtin terms ‘pretenders’ on the grounds that they are “living
lives that are ‘ritualized’ or ‘represented’ . . . Bakhtin most likely has in mind
political or religious officials who so identify with their role that they lose any
responsible orientation to it.” Working purely as the representative of those in
power, Quirke treats the rest of society solely as suspects, whose arrest ‘solves’
whatever problem might be at hand. Vimes, on the other hand, considers that
the people who live in the less fortunate parts of the city need the helping hand
rather than the long arm of the law. This is abundantly clear when he picks up
“Twurp’s Peerage or, as he personally thought of it, the guide to the criminal
classes. You wouldn’t find slum dwellers in these pages, but you would find
their landlords” (FOC 71). According to Vimes, what the Watch stand for is
inextricably connected with what he will not stand for: “‘the law should be there
to balance things up a bit’” (FOC 269). Directed by his sense of injustice and
Carrot’s indefatigable goodness, the Watch start seeing through discrimination
in Ankh-Morporkian society in order to counter it with criminalisation.

Carrot’s egalitarian thinking and interest in semantics defines the
territory to which the Watch are responsible: “‘We’re the City Watch,’ . . .
‘That doesn’t mean just that part of the city who happens to be over four feet tall
and made of flesh’” (MAA 98). In a city like Ankh-Morpork, though, it is
impossible not to notice the vast contrasts between the multitude of species that
make up the populace. People make the mistake of thinking that they are
something special: “‘I mean, dwarfs is practically people, in my book. Just
shorter humans, almost. But trolls . . . weeeell . . . they’re not the same as us,
right?’” (MAA 202). The correct answer to this question, as provided by the
Watch, is: wrong; they may be of a different species, but they are the same as us. In Terry Pratchett’s books, one shouldn’t judge on the grounds of species; this is tantamount to racism in our world. ‘Normality’ is in the eye of the beholder, so the Watch find it an even less useful concept than monarchy for dealing with the day-to-day affairs of the city. This is not to say that members of the Watch suddenly cease to distinguish people on the grounds of species. However, when Cheery Littlebottom joins up, she is told “‘if troll officers call you a gritsucker they’re out, and if you call them rocks you’re out’” (FOC 23). Not being discriminated against by the Watch is disconcerting for the new recruit (FOC 25). By normal Ankh-Morpork standards, they are behaving in a rather indiscriminate way, in not using her species as evidence to incriminate her of anything. Along the same vein, Angua puts in a good word for the ‘differently alive’: “‘You know, you get told a lot of bad things about the undead, but you never hear about the marvellous work they do in the community’” (FOC 87). Just as there is a right and a wrong way of going about law enforcement, there are right and wrong ways of dealing with societal differences.

Ankh-Morpork’s finest exhibit many of the conventional, clichéd characteristics of police forces throughout literature. Their distinctive identity comes not from direct divergence from what preceded them, but from Pratchett’s comedic dialogic playing with stereotypes. He includes many of the features and procedures one might conventionally expect, but exposes them to hilarious parodic distortion. When Carrot reads a prisoner his rights, beginning ‘You have the right to remain silent’ and continuing with “‘You have the right not to injure yourself falling down the steps on the way to the cells.’” (GG 190), this amounts to a travesty of the police drama genre. The satirising of real life issues such as police brutality, as opposed to the lampooning of actual real-life individuals, calls not for an objective picture of the situation but an exaggerated or caricatured one, which has the effect of simultaneously
focussing readers on actuality and providing an escape from it. Along with the general mode of carnival, the specific techniques of travestying and parody “are radically dialogic in that they involve sporting with what is given and re-making it, resisting mere transference and celebrating the power of transformation.”36 The Watch change throughout their experiences, but while their characterisation is a matter of resisting the complete transference of archetypes and transforming them instead, it is also influenced by the ever-present threat of their becoming what they are not.

When Captain Vimes comes face-to-face with the crazed monarchist vision of Dr Cruces, the temptation of the gonne in his hands almost overrides the badge that identifies him as a Watchman. It is a classic ethical dilemma for an officer of the law, but Vimes is on the point of retirement-- in removing his badge he brings out what it is that makes the Watch tick. If one reads the sentence, “When he spun it once or twice, like a coin, the copper caught the light” (MAA 357), with the help of Carrot’s erudition, multiple possibilities of perception present themselves. Vimes had thought the Watch were called coppers because they carried copper badges, but, as Carrot informed him “it comes from the old word cappere, to capture” (MAA 185). The light is caught by the copper badge, because the dual function of the Watch is to both capture things and bring them to the light of perception. The light is not imprisoned, as it is only while the badge spins on its edge that it is prismatic, refracting colours so that Vimes cannot quite see things in black and white. Vimes’ badge at this point symbolises both the work of the coppers in the Watch and the way that the Discworld novels function. Like a coin, the Discworld has two sides, and like Bakhtin’s dialogic principle, it resists monological ways of seeing. Thus it is that when he prepares to murder Cruces, Vimes’ struggle is with a different way of looking at things. Fortunately, he is too suspicious of one-sidedness to identify with the gonne and fire at (its) will. As he comes to realise, “the gonne gave you power from outside. You didn’t use it, it used you” (MAA 362). It
was because of their tendency to see things in terms of their monological monarchical focus that Edward d’Eath and Dr Cruces were easy prey to the possibilities of power that the gonne offered. The critical light of the Watch shines on anything that puts itself forward as an ‘easy solution’, acting as a mediating, dialogising force between people and absolutisms. The gonne is able to take people over because it offers a single, welcome solution to problems: shoot them.

Monarchy is shown to propose a similar cure-all, at least to those who cannot see the likely consequences. Reflecting on Ankh-Morpork, Corporal Nobbs observes: “We got kings all over the place except on that golden throne in the Palace. I’ll tell you . . . there wouldn’t be all this trouble around the place if we had a king” (MAA 241). The idea of a king on Ankh-Morpork’s throne is seen as some sort of panacea, but the Watch novels suggest that there would be all sorts of different trouble if there were one. They do this by showing that monarchy, like every ideological sign, is two-faced. Bakhtin proposes that the inner dialectical quality of the sign only comes into view in times of social crisis: the Watch novels, each presenting a different sort of challenge to Ankh-Morpork’s ruler, are set in social crisis. Under ordinary conditions, the Patrician prevents outright opposition to his leadership by conservatively ensuring ‘that tomorrow is much the same as today’. However, the ultra-reactionary tendency in society attempts to make sure that today is much the same as yesterday was; “to stabilize the preceding factor in the dialectical flux of the social generative process, so accentuating yesterday’s truth as to make it appear today’s.”

Monarchy is without a doubt ‘yesterday’s truth’ as far as Ankh-Morpork is concerned. The Patrician himself indicates just how true this statement is, in a scene in which the golden throne is shown to be filled with decay. When he says to Carrot, “Take a look behind the throne” (MAA 374), the Patrician invites the sort of investigation that suits Bakhtin’s plane of comic
representation. It is a plane in which 'uncrowning', the removal of epic distance, is rife: "In this plane (the plane of laughter) one can disrespectfully walk around whole objects; therefore, the back and rear portion of an object (and also its innards, not normally accessible for viewing) assume a special importance." Carrot walks around the throne and gets a view that is not normally permitted, one which reveals the all-consuming extent of the rot. The state of this symbol of the Head of State constitutes an example of the carnival grotesque. It is as if the throne embodies the mummified corpse of an ancestor of the city that Ankh-Morpork has become.

The institution of monarchy is removed from a privileged position in the Watch novels—indeed, the throne is in such a familiar zone of contact that Carrot is able to prod its back with his sword. Bakhtin notes that "In carnival ... the new mode of man's relation to man is elaborated. One of the essential aspects of this relation is the 'unmasking' and disclosing of the unvarnished truth under the veil of false claims and arbitrary ranks." In the carnival atmosphere of Ankh-Morpork, one of the vital components of the picture that the Watch develop is indeed the revelation of the unvarnished nature of the city's outdated monarchy. This can be seen as a process that is at work throughout the novels, rather than just at the point when Carrot is shown the physically-derelict condition of the throne itself. Under the various veils of the false claims that are made in the name of kingship, the Watch do not necessarily find the truth, but they do find out about the importance of the way in which one looks at society. Their 'looking into' monarchy-inspired crimes underlines the inadequacy of kingship to meet the current, changing needs of Ankh-Morpork.

'King' is shown to be an arbitrary rank, something that in itself means nothing. Before Carrot has even left his adoptive home to seek his fortune in the Watch, Varneshi discusses Ankh-Morpork with the king of the dwarfs, saying "I don't think they have a king there,' ... 'just' some man who tells them what to do.' The king of the dwarfs took this calmly. This seemed to be
about ninety-seven per cent of the definition of kingship, as far as he was concerned" (GG 30). This would seem to suggest that the city is a dictatorship, but: "The Patrician disliked the word ‘dictator’ . . . He never told anyone what to do. He didn’t have to, that was the wonderful part. A large part of his life consisted of arranging matters so that this state of affairs continued" (GG 85).

Since his election to power he has mainly been concerned with maintaining that state of affairs, a process which mirrors the behaviour of politicians in many of today’s democracies. These examples show that there is a great deal of slippage between the two levels of the sign making up ‘king’. One can be king in all but name, which is the case for both the Patrician and for Carrot, whose regal charisma means that he is always respected and, more importantly, liked. One can also be king in name only, as was the unfortunate unnamed young man who briefly warmed the throne before being incinerated by his dragon successor in Guards! Guards! Despite the variance in what ‘king’ stands for, the fact remains that people cling to ranking systems. In what is for him an uncharacteristically egalitarian frame of mind, Sergeant Colon states "all this business about kings and lords, it’s against basic human dignity. We’re all born equal. It makes me sick”, which is immediately qualified by the following exchange: "Never heard you talk like this before, Frederick," said Nobby. ‘It’s Sergeant Colon to you, Nobby.’ ‘Sorry, Sergeant’ (GG 180). Once again, this is evidence that ways of seeing determine what one sees in the Discworld. Ranks may be arbitrary and ultimately meaningless, but the Sergeant and the Corporal show that they nonetheless form a framework for social perceptions.

Empirical perception is not the only way of seeing that the Watch are involved with. Indeed, Captain Vimes’ mistrust of clues leads him to say: “I’ve never believed in that stuff--footprints in the flower bed, tell-tale buttons, stuff like that” (MAA 348). Clues are already in view; the Watch need to cast light upon that which is not seen. The truth, or at least what can be made of it, is
often in fact demonstrably not 'out there'. This subverts a cliché of detective drama, one of the multitude to be found in the Watch novels. In Feet of Clay the truth is in fact 'in there'. It is contained most obviously in the words in the heads of golems, but it is not a very difficult step to make to see that there are also truths to be found in the heads of the anonymous powerful men who approved of Dragon King At Arms and also, of course, in the heads of the pro-monarchists in the other Watch novels. The Watch novels, as works of the postmodernist era, do not attempt to tell the truth as much as to question whose truth gets told. Since Ankh-Morpork is a society, meaning is constructed socially, and there is not just one way of looking at things.

The objects of our normal everyday perception undeniably have the potential to be seen in multiple ways; signs have divergent significations for different people. Lance-constable Angua is (un)living proof of the value of having more than one perspective on things. Angua is not only a different sort of person from the norm, but she dialogises the very idea of there being such a thing as a 'normal person': "To be Undead, to be simultaneously human and animal . . . is to explode crucial binarisms that lie at the foundations of human identity." She is neither dead nor alive in the conventional senses, neither human nor animal in the conventional senses either. Her access to different worlds of being, with their own particular stimuli, acts as a lens metaphor for Discworld vision: "Through werewolf eyes the world was different . . . every human being was a four-dimensional kaleidoscopic symphony . . . nasal vision meant seeing through time as well as space" (FOC 50). There may be no such thing as a normal human being, but to her eyes, every human is distinctive--this proves very useful for the Watch.

Angua's sensory awareness is only part of the new perspective that she brings to the Watch. She also adds her voice to their self-definition, from her unique position among their number. Not only their first werewolf, she is also their first woman. This latter fact is actually an incidental result of the equal
employment opportunities policy introduced at the start of *Men At Arms*. She was to be employed as the token undead member of the Watch, representing the group in society that Vimes, who seems to dislike everyone equally, takes the most offence at. The New Age spirit means that Sergeant Colon says "'Ain’t no dwarfs or trolls or humans in the Watch, see... Just Watchmen, see?'" (MAA 302), despite being ‘passively speciesist’. Angua subverts, refines and dialogises this statement: "'There’s no men and women in the Watch, just a bunch of lads!'" (FOC 134). Once an awareness of gendered identity comes into consideration, the majority of the Watch get rather uncomfortable. When their female members start behaving like lads, they find it awkward to pigeonhole them as neatly as they did before.

The increasing changes in the makeup of the Watch include: the trend for more of them to start wearing makeup! Angua has to talk Carrot out of his inbuilt suspicion of Cheery Littlebottom’s newly-discovered femininity. On being informed of his fellow dwarf’s gender, he says: "'Female? He _told_ you he was female?' 'She,' Angua corrected. ‘This is Ankh-Morpork, you know. We’ve got extra pronouns here’" (FOC 186). In such a way, she firmly enters into dialogue with the rest of the Watch, seeking to alter their perception. They still have some distance to go towards gender non-specific language, as Carrot’s addressing Cheery as ‘Corporal Miss Littlebottom’ (FOC 287) shows.

Nevertheless, the Watch are a increasingly representative body of society, instituting equality in the eyes of the Law and achieving more positive recognition of the different groups that make up Ankh-Morpork. The holistic acceptance of society in *Men At Arms* culminates in Vimes asking for undead, his last area of prejudice, to be sworn in. As Carrot says, "'They’re all citizens.'" (MAA 377), a policy that has its furthest extension in the recruitment of Dorfl the golem in *Feet of Clay*.

Of all the vessels for life that make up Ankh-Morpork’s citizenry, golems seem to be the most different from humans. This is because they are
man-made, operating like computer programs according to what is written inside their heads. They seem completely Other, with automaton-like personalities and no capacity for original creation. The last words of Father Tubelcek support this idea. As a golem places a rolled-up piece of writing in his mouth, the priest mumbles "We don’t work like that, ... We ... make ... our ... own ... w ..." (FOC 10). At the risk of putting words in a dying man’s mouth, it seems safe to say that the word he was trying to say was ‘words’. However, it becomes increasingly evident in *Feet of Clay* that humans often do operate according to the words that have been put in their heads. As priests would be well aware, there is a wealth of metaphor in the Bible that is underpinned by the statement, In the beginning was the Word. Golems have a great deal more in common with people than people have cared to consider.

The thing that perhaps identifies golems most closely with the other denizens of Ankh-Morpork is that they too feel the need to look at things in terms of monarchy. So it is that the Watch thwart not three but four attempts to create a king. The golems’ attempt ends in pathetic, tragic failure, because like many real historical precedents, their king is mad. The reason for this does succeed brilliantly in showing what is wrong with kings. Just like humans, the golems have projected all the hopes they can think of onto their king. This proves to be an overinvestment because, just as human kings are still human, the golem king is ‘clay of their clay’; made from a mixture of their bodies. Carrot recognises the urge that Vimes is so opposed to: “‘the big trouble ... is that everyone wants someone to read their minds for them and then make the world work properly. Even golems, perhaps’” (FOC 184). This especially applies to golems, because it is literally possible to read their minds and change the way they work.

When Vimes confronts Dragon King of Arms with his suspicions, he talks his way through the general monarchist mentality: “‘who wants a king?
Well, nearly everyone. It's built in. Kings make it better'" (FOC 268). The idea that the need for a king could be 'built in' in order to 'make it better' draws a close parallel between humans and golems. It highlights the fact that social roles determined by class relations are made, not given, are culturally produced rather than naturally mandated. The king is a figurehead, a fabrication of class relations. As in a carnival, people play roles offered to them by the situation at hand; any sense of permanence or ultimate justification for their positions is illusory. Vimes sees people as behaving like golems, in accordance with words put in their heads: "It was as if even the most intelligent person had this little blank spot in their heads where someone had written: 'Kings. What a good idea.' Whoever had created humanity had left in a major design flaw. It was its tendency to bend at the knees" (FOC 67).

The Watch novels, focussing in particular on monarchy, address the question of how one should behave in society. They also ask: what qualifies someone as a member of human society? Rather than making for definite answers, the various ways in which the Watch novels look through monarchy at society ask yet more questions. The subversive, carnivalesque, satirical views that they provide of Ankh-Morpork undercut hierarchical assumptions, as "a class of people cannot produce themselves as a ruling class without setting themselves off against certain others. Their hegemony entails possession of the key cultural terms determining what are the right and wrong ways to be a human being." The Discworld novels all suggest that valuing others' lives is a commendable guiding principle for societal conduct, but the Watch novels take this to a more specific level. This is because they deal with people who have allowed their ideas of how society should be to override basic human concerns. When Dr Cruces says, "'The city needs a king!'" (MAA 359), he speaks on behalf of all those who work towards that end in the Watch novels. Carrot replies, "'It does not need murderers'" (MAA 359), which is the bottom line according to the Watch. It is Carrot who brings the Watch to the realisation of
what their job means: "It's murder,' he said. 'We're watchmen. We can't just ... watch!"" (FOC 254).

Carrot's example shows that one should, above all, behave responsibly. In the course of the Watch novels, the progressively-increasing diversity of protagonists conditions the reader to see that Carrot's unequivocal respect for life has a overriding simplicity and truth to it. The Watch have a responsibility towards the lives of all members of society equally, except for those who forfeit their humanity by treating those who are different from them as less than human. The Discworld can be seen to propound a 'postmodern humanism', one which offers "universalism without the uniformity ... [making it] possible for us to comprehend and value each other without requiring that we be the same."47 Carrot interrogates monarchy on the grounds of its handling of others: "'You can't treat people like puppet dolls'" (MAA 373). Those who look at the world with a lens focussed solely on kings seem bound to do just that: Lupine Wonse tried to play the puppeteer in Guards! Guards!, Edward and Dr Cmces expected Ankh-Morpork to dance to their tune in Men At Arms and the powerbrokers in Feet of Clay thought to pull Corporal Nobbs' strings. Vimes puts Dragon King of Arms in a similarly-reprehensible category for his controlling of Ankh-Morpork's bloodlines: "'I don't like to see people treated like cattle'" (FOC 267). The Commander of the Watch realises that the discovery and bringing to light of the way Dragon has been behaving does not mean the end of him; "Vetinari will let him go, he reflected. Because this is politics. Because he's part of the way the city works" (FOC 272-273). Virtually invisible for the entire novel, the herald has meaning, like the purloined letter, in relation to what he threatens. Ultimately he is the dragon threat that has been present throughout the Watch novels and which will continue to be so. The Watch have a working relationship with the city of Ankh-Morpork, but there are nevertheless unmistakable threats to society that
will not go away in the end, that are part of the tensions and differences that must be taken into account in the Century of the Fruitbat.

Monarchy is subverted and shown to be an inadequate and outdated lens through which to view society. The various voices that speak to this end in the text effectively dialogise perceptions of kingship, exposing them as human constructions and preventing them from appearing one-sided. Whenever possible, the importance of life is the unwritten rule governing the way in which the Watch see their city. With this broadly humanistic concern, they cannot possibly look at Ankh-Morporkian society in a closed, single-voiced way. The Watch novels suggest that a critical approach to society, one which takes diversity into account and privileges the lives of its members, is to be preferred to any monological system of order.
Notes

3 Holquist 20.
4 Lewis Carroll’s Through the Looking Glass is the most obvious example, but the device of a lens or mirror image is by no means new to fantasy fiction; “many Victorian writers used it to introduce an indeterminate area where distortions of ‘normal’ perceptions become the norm.” [Jackson 44].
11 Morson and Emerson, Prospects 51.
12 See EOC 74, MAA 248.
13 Butler 59.
14 “The suspension of all hierarchical precedence during carnival time was of particular significance . . . all were considered equal during carnival.” [Morris 199].
15 Morson and Emerson, Prospects 43.
17 Morris 207.
18 Morson and Emerson, eds., Rethinking Bakhtin 78.
19 Morson and Emerson, eds., Rethinking Bakhtin 78.
21 Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination 36.
22 Morson and Emerson, Prospects 139.
23 Hutcheon, Politics 75. Michael Boyd points out that “History can refer to either the deed done or the account of the deed. It is a peculiarity of the term, however, that the account of the event takes a special priority over the event itself” [Boyd 66].
24 Hutcheon, Politics 76.
25 Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination 60.
26 Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination 15.
27 McHale 38.
29 Lacan 198.
30 Anderson 18.
31 Shepherd 35.
32 Fish 102.
33 Shepherd 262.
34 Morson and Emerson, Prospects 181-182.
37 Morris 55.
38 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 23.
39 Bakhtin, *Rabelais x*.
40 Hutcheon, *Poetics* 123.
42 Pratchett *The Pratchett Portfolio*.
44 "The king moved uncertainly, with little jerks and twitches that in a human would suggest madness." (FOC 257).
45 Holquist 89.
Finding Someone's Feet
questions of identity and gender
in *Maskerade*, or:
what it really means to be a witch.

Gender differences of male and of female are subverted and generic
distinctions between animal, vegetable and mineral are blurred in
fantasy's attempt to 'turn over' normal perceptions and undermine
'realistic' ways of seeing... The subject's relation to the
phenomenal world is made problematical and the text foregrounds
the impossibility of definitive interpretation of vision: everything
becomes equivocal, blurred, 'double', out of focus.
Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen

If *Witches Abroad* is a story about what it really means to be a fairy
godmother, *Maskerade* is a story about what it really means to be a witch. The
'real' is always in question in fantasy and the Discworld novels suggest that it is
a matter of resistance; of not allowing typical, incurious perceptions to take over
one's thinking.¹ *Maskerade* is itself typical of the Discworld novels, in that it
juxtaposes conflicting ways of seeing things in order to make critical
observations about what might otherwise be taken for granted. In other words,
it dialogises the diodic, bringing parodic elements to bear on the conventional
and representing things that might have appeared to be one way as actually
having two or more ways of operating. It reflects some of the concerns of the
other 'Witches' novels, in that Granny Weatherwax has yet another clash with
the forces of fiction.² However, it goes into areas that the others merely touch
upon, asking questions of gender and identity that the others do not. *Maskerade*’s carnival open-endedness dialogises the way of seeing that pervades Ankh-Morpork’s Opera House, interrogating the idea that life could be reduced to terms of binary opposition, or seen as irreversible or one way.

*Maskerade* is an unmasking of theatre’s relationship with life off the stage, an attempt to subvert normal perceptions while foregrounding the problematics surrounding definitive interpretation of vision. It fits all of the criteria contained in Rosemary Jackson’s statement about fantasy literature. Traditional gender distinctions and the borders between different categories of identity are repeatedly at issue. Agnes Nitt, the young protagonist of the novel, matures towards womanhood as a character who has been profoundly marginalised. She eventually defies and overturns societal expectations, finding a place in the peripheral yet powerful position of witchcraft.

The Discworld novels give an overriding impression that things have been set up to happen in a certain way unless someone does something remarkable about them.3 *Witches Abroad*, in which the characters resist a fairy-tale happy ending, is the most obvious example of this. *Maskerade* provides a similar example of resistance to the constraints of literary convention when Granny Weatherwax thinks to herself “It was the slippery slope. Next thing it’d be cackling and gibbering and luring children into the oven. And it wasn’t as if she even liked children” (M 29). There are several important emphases in her statement, which are revelatory of the novel’s thematic concerns. The focus of *Maskerade* is personal development and especially, the expression of character. Michael Holquist suggests that “Intonation is a material expression of the shaping role the other plays in the speech production of any individual self.”4 In trying to avoid becoming someone who is characterised by ‘cackling and gibbering’, Granny is a close parallel with Agnes Nitt, who “could feel a future trying to land on her. She’d caught herself saying ‘poot’ and ‘dang!’ when she wanted to swear, and using pink writing paper . . . Next thing she knew she’d
be making shortbread and apple pies as good as her mother's, and then there'd be no hope for her" (M 40). Both women recognise the restrictive linguistic dangers of becoming stereotypes and, in order to alter the speech production of their individual selves, they have to do something out of the ordinary in response.

Maskerade stages yet another battle in the witches' war of resistance to the patterning of literary convention. For this particular round of the ongoing struggle the battleground is an operatic one, with an opponent quite different from those that they had previously faced. As André explains, "This isn't real life, this is opera. It doesn't matter what the words mean. It's the feeling that matters" (M 136). In the environment of the Opera House, emotion and its expression are all that are seen to matter, while reality is over-informed by fantasies. Maskerade is not just a clash between fantasies and realities but can be seen to be "dramatizing the confrontation, turning the resistance of normality against the paranormal into an agonistic struggle." This confrontation can be seen on an epistemological level in a passage which shows, for all its apparent lack of struggle, that it does matter what the words mean: "It wasn't exactly a secret. When the room had been divided a space had been left between the walls. At the far end it opened on to a staircase, a perfectly ordinary staircase . . . It wasn't secret--it had merely been forgotten" (M 230). Terry Pratchett thus answers the question, 'when is a secret passage not a secret passage?' by recontextualising it in a prosaic consciousness. He dialogises 'secret', a word which fits into the Opera House's zone of connotations, showing that one can resist a dominant code of meaning. The one-way diodic operation of the operatic frame of reference is denied in the initial sentence of the phrase, a sentence which problematises access to certainty and in doing so suggests that the adjectival 'perfectly ordinary' is in itself not quite a full description either.

What you see is not necessarily what you get in the Discworld; in its particular twist on the concept of 'hidden' things Maskerade brings another
inter-Pratchett-novel theme to bear. As with Dragon King of Arms’ heraldic plot designs in *Feet of Clay*, it becomes apparent that the most effective way of hiding something is, rather paradoxically, to keep it in full view. Agnes, in deciding that Walter Plinge is the Opera Ghost, concludes: “It was so *obvious*. The Ghost didn’t require any mysterious nonexistent caves when all he needed to do was hide where everyone could see him” (M 252). This has the effect of dialogising ‘hidden’ as something that cannot be seen. Agnes in the Opera House parallels Alice in Wonderland; she is a practical, commonsense protagonist in a space typified by the nonsensical. Because she can see through the romantic superficial trappings of the Opera House, she thinks that her vision is without blind spots.

Rosemary Jackson points out that “An emphasis on invisibility points to one of the central thematic concerns of the fantastic: problems of vision. In a culture which equates the ‘real’ with the ‘visible’... the un-real is that which is in-visible.” Problems of vision permeate the Discworld novels; Agnes’ problem is she cannot see more than one side to a problem. A crucial part of her development comes in the recognition that seeing, no matter how clear it is, should not always equate with believing. The conclusions that she arrives at from her own reasoning are marked by their level of certainty; “It all fitted... In a way he was invisible, because he was always there” (M 262) is followed by: “No-one could’ve moved that fast... Some of the girls *did* say the Ghost could almost seem to be in two places at once... Walter Plinge wasn’t the Ghost, then. There was no sense in trying to find some excitable explanation to prove wrong right” (M 267). The binary opposition in her evaluation of evidence allows for no further possibilities: he is ‘always there’ in a general sense but not in a literal one, so he cannot be the Ghost. There may be no sense in trying to find ‘some excitable explanation to prove wrong right’, but in the Discworld there is always a chance to prove that what seems diodic in fact works in multiple ways.
Granny Weatherwax is able to show Agnes just where her lens focus is inadequate, which is in the irrational side of the mirror, the area of the invisible. She herself partakes of invisibility, although "As Agnes said, later: it wasn't as though she'd been invisible. She'd simply become part of the scenery until she put herself forward again; she was there, but not there" (M 327). This description is couched in terms alien to the absolutes of Agnes' typical vocabulary, precisely because Granny does not fit into conventional conceptions of presence. Because she cannot always be seen does not mean that she is not there. Similarly, Walter Plinge is part of the scenery, occasionally putting himself forward 'out of character' as the Ghost. His variant of invisibility is something that Agnes has to learn about: "To see this invisible . . . requires something quite different from a sharp or attentive eye, it takes an educated eye, a revised, renewed way of looking, itself produced by the effect of a 'change of terrain' reflected back upon the act of seeing." Granny Weatherwax reflects this 'change of terrain' onto Agnes in order to educate her out of the view of diodic truth inherent in the statement "'I knew he was the Ghost,' . . . 'But then I saw he couldn't be'" (M 314). Granny's reply, "'Believed the evidence of your own eyes, did you? In a place like this?'" (M 314), stresses that what you see depends not only on where you are, but also on the way(s) in which you think.

The Discworld novels enact the postmodern switch: "If I hadn't believed it, I never would have seen it." In Dracula, Van Helsing asks "Do you not think that there are things which you cannot understand, and yet which are; that some people see things that others cannot?" The witches see things that others cannot, because they know whether or not to believe their own eyes. With Agnes' own 'ghosting', most people believe their eyes and think that Christine, the visible singer, is doing the singing. However, Granny Weatherwax can see that it is otherwise, partly because she is prepared to admit more than one presence to a single role. Things do not necessarily add up on one's expected
level of understanding; there can be a third alternative to the polarity of true and false. This is, in essence, Bakhtin’s point about existence; it is never a singular or one-way phenomenon, but rather an interaction involving numerous participants. Both Bakhtin’s dialogism and Terry Pratchett’s Discworld imply “a fundamental rejection of the ‘either-or’ logic of the Aristotelian tradition in favour of a richly multiple reconceptualization of the nature of truth itself.”

Pratchett also questions the ‘cosmic jigsaw puzzle’ of the Platonic ideal, whereby “all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only, the rest being necessarily errors . . . [and] the true answers, when found, must necessarily be compatible with each other and form a single whole.” Granny Weatherwax, because she is open to the Discworld’s dualistic, dialogic double-sidedness, identifies the crux of the Opera Ghost mystery: “‘Good grief! You can recognise him because he’s got a mask on? You can recognise him because you don’t know who he is? Life isn’t neat! Whoever said there’s only one Ghost?’” (M 331). Her way of thinking goes past Agnes’ stumbling block with the ‘excluded middle’: for her, either Walter Plinge is definitely the Ghost or he definitely is not. Whoever said that there could be only one way of looking at things? By asking just such questions, Terry Pratchett’s Discworld novels interrogate the possibility of there ever being a single satisfactory or unitary way of looking at things.

There are two Opera Ghost masks in Maskerade, which, having taken its name from a pun on ‘mask’, is accordingly structured around the dual potentiality of the word. As Granny Weatherwax well knows, “‘There’s a kind of magic in masks. Masks conceal one face, but they reveal another’” (M 353). The Opera House is a site of both revealed and concealed body images; what is shown onstage is stage dress and the audience who are shown this are themselves in opera clothes, which are (especially in Granny Weatherwax’s case) literally ‘just for show’—temporary identities put on for the duration of the show. The masking that goes on in the novel typically shows another side to
the masker, usually from some lack or perceived inadequacy on their part. Henry Slugg feels that his name is too prosaic for the stage and creates the identity of Enrico Basilica for himself. Agnes uses Perdita as her fantasy ideal, someone who can transgress the boundaries within which she is expected to act. Salzella, who appears to be the only sane figure in the Opera House, turns out to be the most wildly melodramatic, self-consciously situating himself in the role of villain: "'By now,' he said, 'someone should have said: 'But why, Salzella?' Honestly, do I have to do everything around here?''" (M 350).

Maskerade's characters thus exhibit the 'flip side' nature of their personality, a phrase which is perhaps most apt with regard to Granny Weatherwax, who "was firmly against fiction. Life was hard enough without lies floating around and changing the way people thought. And because the theatre was fiction made flesh, she hated the theatre most of all. But that was it--hate was exactly the word. Hate is a force of attraction. Hate is just love with its back turned" (M 114-115). Her depth of feeling for the theatre masks her feelings about it, exemplifying the way in which the novel dialogises the diodic one-way nature of surface appearances. Because there are two or more sides to everything in the Discworld, masks can signal the potential for further maskings or for an about-face; love may just be hate with its back turned.

Multiple-sidedness and constant reversibility are ordering principles in the subversive Discworld. What it is to be an old woman, a foreigner or someone with a 'wonderful personality' are brought under the lens of the Opera House's theatricality. Each and every conscious subject is an actor to some extent, their identity constituted by the expectations of, and dialogue with others. Maskerade removes the masks of personal identity in more ways than one, showing not only that it is illusory to expect people to have only one side to their characters but also that the very act of 'unmasking' can create further masks. Zvi Jagendorf argues in The Happy End of Comedy that
Unmasking is the theatre’s simplest image of recognition and most radical image of change. This is usually a change from illusion to reality. So in those rare comedies in which the final movement goes in the opposite direction and allows the illusion to continue there will be a new masking... an ironic solution is sealed by the device of a new mask.12

Maskerade is one of these rare comedies, which unmasks yet also achieves a remasking that allows the illusion to continue to a certain extent. Agnes unmasked the plot that is going on beneath the surface of the opera, stopping the show in the process (M 344). As it is all-important for some that the show must go on, there remains an ongoing theatricality to proceedings. Salzella dies in a stage-fight that is both mock and real, physically unmasking himself (M 356) and achieving a consummately operatic end in the throes of his complaint about "the way that in opera everyone takes such a long!!!!!!... time!!!!!!... to!!!!!... argh... argh... argh... argh..." (M 358).

Walter Plinge, the other actor to take the part of the Opera Ghost13, is remasked as himself in the finalising movements of the onstage comedy in Maskerade. Granny Weatherwax brings her headology to bear, offering "... a new mask for you, Walter Plinge. A magic one. It's just like your old one, d'you see, only you wear it under your skin and you don't have to take it off and no one but you will ever need to know it's there" (M 354). Walter’s mask represents his lens on the world, a matter of belief rather than anything concrete: "He nodded, slowly, and raised his hands to his face. And Agnes was sure that he'd somehow come into focus. Almost certainly nothing had happened that could be measured with any kind of instrument, any more than you could weigh an idea or sell good fortune by the yard" (M 355). This moment sees the revision of the tendency of fantasy, identified by Rosemary Jackson, to make everything "blurred, 'double', out of focus."14 Nevertheless, the text still foregrounds the impossibility of definitive interpretation of vision, because the
‘new’ Walter’s relation to the world is anything but ‘realistic’ or ‘normal’. It is an awareness rather than anything that can be quantified, a change to his way of seeing everything which begins with the way he sees himself. Such is the power of headology:

"though there may be some superficial similarities between a psychiatrist and a headologist, there is a huge practical difference. A psychiatrist, dealing with a man who fears he is being followed by a large and terrible monster, will endeavour to convince him that monsters don’t exist. Granny Weatherwax would simply give him a chair to stand on and a very heavy stick."

Walter Plinge is not, however, the only character to have Granny Weatherwax to thank for finding someone else’s feet in Maskerade.

Maskerade is one amongst a number of Discworld novels which focus on a particular young person’s growth in self-awareness. John Clute, in 1989, noted “Each of the last six . . . [Discworld] novels tells the story of an adolescent boy or girl who must achieve some goal, usually that of gaining proper employment in one or other of the countries spread across the disc . . . [and] none of the young characters whose rites of passage shape the last six books ever leave their book of origin.” Maskerade, Agnes Nitt’s search for employment, was not published until 1995, by which time some of the young characters that Clute referred to had returned in other books. Significantly also, it does not mark Agnes’ first appearance. She masqueraded as Perdita, one of a coven of wannabe girl witches in Lords and Ladies. Maskerade is her adolescent attempt to avoid becoming a witch; she tries opera but finds that “when witchcraft calls you there’s no point in hanging up.” Growing up for Agnes is a matter of sorting out what to believe. Coming to terms with fanciful ways of seeing undermines her confidence in her natural aptitude for seeing
things just as they are in the empirical world, which underlines the Discworld’s
subversive empowerment of imaginative projections.

Agnes’ rites of passage not only parallel those undergone by the
protagonist in many other Discworld novels, but structure the novel itself. As
Andrew Butler notes, “Many of Pratchett’s Discworld novels feature a young
protagonist . . . who comes to maturity and wisdom during the course of the
novel. This is itself a genre of novel, the Bildungsroman . . . [which is the] single genre, described by Bakhtin, in which the hero alters. . . .” Bakhtin
divides the Bildungsroman into five subgenres, in the last of which the
hero(ine) “emerges along with the world and . . . reflects the historical
emergence of the world itself . . . [he/she] is no longer within an epoch, but on
the border between two epochs, as the transition point from one to the other.”

Maskerade, with its dramatisation of the boundaries of character-development,
is perhaps the best example in all the Discworld novels of this sort of
Bildungsroman. Through Agnes it has a focus which is appropriately liminal
yet resists the gender bias of the above statement. Maskerade finds her
personally on the verge of womanhood, but not necessarily in transition to the
point which is societally expected of her, and situates itself similarly at the
convergence of two quite different ways of looking at the still-evolving world.

The Discworld novels are of course set in the Century of the Fruitbat, a
time which in terms of our world sees a transition almost directly from the
medieval to the twentieth-century way of things. The rise of capitalism
appears to be having similar effects to those identified in our society: a
combination of the perceived need for ‘progress’ at all costs coupled with a
nostalgia for the past. Walter Benjamin has observed that “Images of the new
intermingled with the old are wishful fantasies, and in them the collective seeks
both to preserve and to transfigure . . . deficiencies in the social system of
production. . . .” Seldom Bucket, the new owner of Ankh-Morpork’s Opera
House, is a self-made man. His New Rightist drive for profit, and confidence
in his own ability to make money, combine in his intention to drag opera into the present: "'What you artistic types don't realize is this is the Century of the Fruitbat,' said Bucket. 'Opera is a production, not just a lot of songs'" (M 30). Dr Undershaft, the least materialistic of all the 'artistic types' in Maskerade, is a character who seems to be living in the past--he needs his memories of opera's past glories in order to focus on the present. Salzella comments that "'He's as blind as a bat without those glasses'" (M 157), which is especially true of Dr Undershaft because he is in the Century of the Fruitbat. Just so, the epoch is transformed by Agnes' personal transformation, for, having found her own feet in this era of problematised vision she does something that had never been done in all the days of the good Doctor's memories: she stops the show.

Agnes comes of age and puts her foot down over yet another matter of vision; her recognition of the illogicality and unfairness of the importance that the vast majority of people place upon appearances. She already knew that appearances were a means of assessing others, but found "that when it comes to choosing between, on the one hand, someone with talent, good hair and a wonderful personality and, on the other, someone who merely looks stunning, the world doesn't hesitate either." Maskerade investigates people's inner characters and the relationships that they conduct with their outer selves. In the case of Agnes, her inner character is literally a character in the story, a reaction to societal pressures which borders on schizophrenia. "'Perdita' is the thin person who is supposed to be trying to get out of every fat person, although in Agnes's case Perdita makes no attempt to leave and merely stays inside and dreams ridiculous daydreams." The influential nature of Perdita's existence demonstrates Bakhtin's idea that "'self' is dialogic, a relation." She is much more than a metaphor for the person Agnes dreams she might herself be, transforming 'self' into selves in a literalisation of multiple personalities.

Although she is a creature of fantasy and could be dismissed as a part of a fantasy environment, Perdita is a potent force for the subversion of the
conventional. She is a product of wish-fulfilment and, as Rosemary Jackson points out, "A desire for 'something else', something other than the real, has annihilating effects upon realistic fictional structures." The traditional perception that is most deeply undermined by her presence is that of the singularity of character: she splits Agnes' perception and in turn bifurcates our view of what would normally be described as the central protagonist of the novel. Once more, Jackson provides the link to fantasy as a genre: "The many partial, dual, multiple and dismembered selves scattered throughout literary fantasies violate the most cherished of all human unities: the unity of character." Clearly, Perdita has the effect of dialogising the issue of characterisation; her voice comes not from an individual consciousness but from a perspective of otherness, showing that any sense of unity or oneness to an individual human being is illusory. Anyone can have more than one voice within them, as identification with the otherness of fantasy is a human condition:

"... if you were someone like Walter Plinge, wouldn’t you long to be someone as debonair and dashing as the Ghost?

If you were someone like Agnes Nitt, wouldn’t you long to be someone as dark and mysterious as Perdita X Dream?" (M 262).

Agnes does ‘officially’ become Perdita in a sense, as it is the name she gives while enrolling herself at the Opera House. However, this is just a partial identity, and in any case she decides to settle for Perdita X Nitt instead of the full fantasy alter ego, Perdita X Dream. Perdita is in real terms a non-identity, a larger-than-life product of self-modelling. Absence of identity can be seen to be signalled on the one hand by the 'X'; Perdita is not just a dream but an awareness, the ‘non-wonderful’ side to Agnes’ personality. On the other, it is represented by the word 'Perdita', containing within it as it does echoes of the suitably-romantic ‘perdu’; French for ‘lost’. Thus, her partial name never really represents Agnes, but has the status of a ‘lost’ signifier, only loosely and
temporarily attached to the dynamic process that is her identity. Perdita is a
dialogue within Agnes, but it is very clear that she is not supposed to be an
isolated phenomenon. Indeed, Granny Weatherwax has the ability to force
people to suddenly conduct just such a dialogue with themselves; “It was
infuriating, the way Granny tricked you into reading her half of the dialogue.
And opened your mind to yourself in unexpected ways” (M 133). Not only
does she trick people by manipulating the reversibility of perspectives in the
Discworld, but Granny also causes them to see themselves reflected in her eyes.
‘Opening your mind to yourself in unexpected ways’ could well be taken to
mean ‘making one recognise the differences of perspective within oneself that
one may be concealing from oneself’. The end result is that others’ internal
dialogues produce ‘double-voiced words’; words spoken by them but for
Granny. This is not the case when Perdita speaks through Agnes as she does,
for her order of language seems never to be preceded by an internal consultation
process. In other words, Agnes either abdicates responsibility or has no say in
whatever Perdita says.

Agnes has access to two quite distinct ways of seeing and behaving.
Perdita can say and do things that do not go with Agnes’ ‘wonderful
personality’—“... she makes sure she screams and faints before anything
happens,” said Perdita, through Agnes.” (M 362) when André asked why no-
one was looking after Christine. In this case, it could be argued that Agnes,
who is the one doing the actual speaking, is just blaming her uncharacteristic
nastiness on a convenient figment of her imagination. However, the
oppositional nature of the internal dialogue between Agnes and Perdita at times
reveals the very real difference in their modes of reception:

“The stairs petered out on damp flagstones, in almost total darkness.

Perdita thought it looked romantic and gothic.

Agnes thought it looked gloomy” (M 241).
Perdita possesses an Other mode of perceiving the world and, as Bakhtin writes; “Only knowledge of a language that possesses another mode of conceiving the world can lead to the appropriate knowledge of one's own language.”29 Although their multiplicity of perception problematises the relationship that Agnes and Perdita conduct with the outside world, the relationship between the two of them is in fact a very useful one, at least for the purpose of Agnes’ growing up. Through coming to know Perdita linguistically, Agnes comes to know herself.

In contrast to Agnes' prosaic straightforwardness of vision, Perdita is just the sort of person to subscribe to the language of Gothic romance and needs very little prompting to project imaginative possibilities onto anything. Psychologically, the two of them could be diagnosed as schizophrenic: “For the schizophrenic, the word is a thing... Language no longer mediates between interior and exterior spaces or self and other; it becomes other and turns into an object that invades the self and effaces its boundaries.”30 At first an idealised image that Agnes decided to aspire to, Perdita develops into a ‘wild side’, removing the distance between them. This is apparent when she speaks through Agnes; although she frees her up to say and do as she please, Perdita subverts the grounds upon which Agnes’ words are seen to be her own. Although many other Discworld characters are recognisably formed through Pratchett’s parodic dialogue with archetypal roles,31 none seems quite as explicitly tied up with the growing personal identity of their actor. Agnes comes to realise the limitations of what Perdita’s focus has to offer; a world tinctured by the clichéd conventions of ‘Mills & Boon’-style romance. She finds herself another option; instead of either identifying with her archetype to the point of effacing herself on the one hand or rejecting it altogether on the other, Agnes remains liminal and avoids the societal categorisation that threatened to stifle her.

Terry Pratchett’s witch characters operate on and across boundaries, blurring them in the process. They are imaged as being intrinsically liminal,
people whose place is somehow tied up with the ambiguous space of the borderline. In medieval village life, of course, the old woman living on the periphery of things was most likely to be seen as a witch and treated as an outcast. The Discworld witches, on the other hand, are compulsive outsiders, attracted to life on the edge: "Like it or not, witches are drawn to the edge of things, where two states collide. They feel the pull of doors, circumferences, boundaries, gates, mirrors, masks . . . and stages" (M 115). This is part of the reason why Granny Weatherwax has a problem with fiction. The mirrors in Witches Abroad and the Stones that acted as boundaries and gates to other worlds in Lords and Ladies were being (mis)used in such a way as to cause collisions between reality and unreality. The most obvious analogue for this blurring of the real and the fictive in our world is the act of artistic creation; in other words, fiction. The witches have to deal with this sort of thing, because, situated as they are on the outer, they can tell when boundaries are being tampered with.

It is helpful to draw a parallel between the witches and Bakhtin’s analysis of character, because he had a fondness for defining his favourite heroes as always liminal, always on a boundary.32 Maskerade’s Agnes Nitt is herself a consummately liminal character, one whose development is as much an internal relationship as it is one with the outside world; looking in, she sees Perdita. As Michael Holquist puts it: “At all the possible levels of stasis and change, there is always a situated subject whose specific place is defined precisely by its in-between-ness.”33 Agnes finds that her values are tested by the opportunities that open up or are shut to her; her self is in process, without the anchoring unity of character that is assumed by much of Western literary tradition. Her liminal existence is manifest when she thinks, “But behind the walls she could be the Perdita she’d always wanted to be” (M 233). This secretive liberation in the border zones of the Opera House puts Agnes in a
different sort of position from that occupied by the witches, one which is indicative of the unfulfilled depths of her fantasy life.

Granny Weatherwax has an offer for Agnes that in the end she cannot dream of refusing. In essence it gives her a choice between becoming what Bakhtin terms a ‘fully-voiced individual’ or remaining a character in a story. When Granny says “You have got a choice. You can either be on the stage, just a performer, just going through the lines . . . or you can be outside it, and know how the script works, where the story hangs, and where the trapdoors are. Isn’t that better?” (M 367), she sums up the power that the witches have. They share their position with parodic forms, which “enable us to distance ourself from words, to be outside any given utterance and to assume our own unique attitude to it.”34 Because they ‘know how the script works’, because they are outside ‘normal’ Discworld society in many ways, they are dynamic, never completed or finalised and capable of conversing with the authorial word. They are fully-realised individuals in the novel as opposed to characters who are just characters and nothing more. What Granny offers Agnes is not the outsidedness of the outcast or the dreamer, but a way to be separate from the system yet empowered with critical understanding.

It is no coincidence that the position Granny offers is close to a feminist critical perspective in many ways. Witches have often been identified as a powerful icon of gender identity because of their perceived difference and rumoured capabilities. As Shoshana Felman has observed:

The challenge facing women today is nothing less than to ‘re-invent’ language, to re-learn how to speak: to speak not only against, but outside of the specular phallogocentric structure, to establish a discourse the status of which would no longer be defined by the phallacy of masculine meaning.35

Rather than continuing to ‘go through the lines’ as the men who write them would have her do, Agnes says ‘yes’ to Granny Weatherwax and thus puts her
feet on a path between the lines of traditional expectations of women. As the first step to formally becoming a witch, this is a step towards taking part in a discourse which, in the Discworld if not in the real world, is not only not defined but hardly affected at all by the 'phallicacy of masculine meaning'. Despite the fact that the Discworld novels are written entirely by a man, this is not necessarily apparent at a glance. Due to the gender-neutrality of 'Terry' and the pro-feminism of Pratchett's writing, some readers have thought they were written by a woman.

Fantasy has been seen as something of a woman's prerogative; consider the pejorative loadedness which the realist tradition has attached to a phrase like 'old wives' tales'. The Witches novels are centred, to an unusual degree for fantasy fiction, on the activity of the 'old wives' themselves. Nanny Ogg, the only one of the main characters who could actually be said to qualify as an 'old wife', in being old and having been a wife, is herself anything but typical.36 Along with Granny Weatherwax, she persistently takes advantage of the way others see her: "It was central to Nanny Ogg's soul that she never considered herself an old woman, while of course availing herself of every advantage that other people's perceptions of her as such would bring" (M 285). In other words, she uses appearances to mask reality; she reads as an old woman on the surface, but between the lines she is a witch. Brian Attebery suggests that "the deliberate act of 'reading as a woman' . . . disrupts some of the same hierarchies and conventions of form that the strategies of fantasy deconstruct. What seemed necessary becomes contingent; what was excluded or occluded is brought into view."37 This gendering of one's literary reception echoes Pratchett's subversive interrogation of the possibility of there being a satisfactory unitary way of seeing things. Fantasy and feminism are both at times concerned to point out that a masculinist, hierarchical reading of a given text is not the only one that can be made. Terry Pratchett dialogises the diodic at every turn to show that things are not as they may have been thought to be; that
they are reversible, multiple and a matter of interaction between speaking subjects. Accordingly, when the witches ask, "'Have you got any special low terms for witches?'" and the coachman replies "'Yeah, how about 'meddling, interfering old baggages'?"' (M 61), he is soon made to see the error of his words.

*Maskerade* is a story of gender construction, one which takes the uses and abuses of women’s voices as a means of tracing Agnes’ growth to adulthood. She begins the novel defined and entrapped by her gender: “Agnes was, Nanny considered, quite good-looking in an expansive kind of way; she was a fine figure of typical young Lancre womanhood. This meant she was approximately two womanhoods from anywhere else” (M 36). Despite the fact that this judgement is delivered by a woman, there is the sense of a visual standard, set by the masculinising language of phallogocentrism, against which every woman is to be measured. In the course of the novel, she is judged primarily on the basis of her figure by most of the male characters. This provides enormous scope for cheap jokes in their dialogue, along the lines of: ”

"‘... what a range she’s got . . .’

‘Quite. I saw you staring.’

‘I meant her voice, Salzella. She will add body to the chorus’’” (M 32).

Agnes’ singing is subsumed into her appearance by these sorts of descriptions, which work the same sort of insidious magic that Cristina Bacchilega identifies as operating in the fairy tale genre: “By showcasing ‘women’ and making them disappear at the same time, the fairy tale thus transforms us/them into man-made constructs of ‘Woman’.”38 Whether on or off the stage, Agnes as a woman finds herself subjected to the male gaze, which can reduce her to the status of an object of attention or relegate her obvious talents to the background.

She may be ‘a fine figure of typical young Lancre womanhood’, but Agnes possesses an extremely atypical voice. She has a fairy-tale ability to do whatever she wants with it, but, as Nanny Ogg sees it, “Music and magic had a
lot in common. They were only two letters apart, for one thing. And you
couldn’t do both” (M 37). Agnes’ musical talent is a manifestation of her latent
magical talent, but it is also the key to both her subjugation within and her
liberation from the discourse of the patriarchal order. Her singing is the
language in which she is different from others, the means by which she hopes
to find a career. However, her way with words is literally what limits her as a
traditional female protagonist. ‘Woman’ has historically been characterised by
repressed dialogue: she is either to be seen but not heard or heard but not seen.
Because Agnes is judged to be worth hearing she falls into the latter category,
while Christine swoons into the former as a more conventional heroine, one of
those whose “characters express sensitivity and inner feelings. Their looks, as
the saying goes, ‘speak volumes’.”
Her language belongs to the same order
as the secretive discourse of Perdita’s romantic daydreaming, the language of
feeling traditionally associated with women.

There is, however, more than one language of feeling, which becomes
painfully clear in an encounter which underlines the importance of dialogue in
the construction of gender in Maskerade. When a door opens, we are told “The
person on the other side was a young woman. Very obviously a young
woman. There was no possible way she could have been mistaken for a young
man in any language, especially Braille” (M 131). Braille, literally the language
of feeling, is used here to fit the young woman into the category ‘woman’ as
defined by the masculine. She is not required to say anything, as her figure
‘speaks for itself’, with especial eloquence in the language of the blind because
it is also a quiet language, written only. Whatever she might say, her voice has
already been contained by her looks: it is not that she looks like a woman, but
that she is, first and foremost, undeniably Woman. Shoshana Felman argues
that if a woman is “‘what resembles a woman’ . . . it becomes apparent that
‘femininity’ is much less a ‘natural’ category than a rhetorical one. . . .”
So, in all patriarchal societies, the Discworld of Maskerade included, there is
'someone else' to judge femininity of appearance and women's own voices are silenced—unless, that is, someone like Granny Weatherwax is prepared to ask questions like: "It's a good job, is it, bein' someone else's voice?" (M 313).

Maskerade, despite its title speaking for itself as a novel concerned with what is and is not hidden by masking, has a section of dialogue which is very clearly pivotal to the entire plot. Agnes is manipulated into playing a role dictated by masculine others' opinions of her outward appearance:

"We would like you, as it were," said Bucket, 'to ghost the part...'

'Ghost?' said Agnes.

'It's a stage term,' said Salzella" (M 129).

The situation is akin to that when Dragon King of Arms is introduced in Feet of Clay and Vimes asks "'King of Arms?'", only to be told that it is "'Merely a title'" (FOC 34). The dismissal that Salzella makes is altogether as unconvincing as the vampire herald's. Just as a title is a name, which can be literally all-important in the Discworld's metaphorical environment, a 'stage term' is powerful in its own right. The 'ghosting' that goes on in the course of Maskerade applies not so much to the double-masquerading as the lead character from Phantom of the Opera, but to Agnes' haunting the background, displaced from an official centre stage position. Her brief but eventful operatic career is symbolic of women's voicelessness in a patriarchal system of identification; Agnes is heard but not seen while Christine, foregrounded for the audience's appreciation of her figure, is herself in turn not truly heard. The moment when Agnes is asked to 'ghost' her part in Maskerade could be said to be analogous to the marriage proposal for the literary heroine. Each is a key focal point for their future potential, threatening to curtail any further individuality of activity by sublimating them in the dominant masculinist culture or symbolic order.

Agnes' control of her voice is not wholly her own in the first place, as Perdita is an overactive component of her individuality. Considered as a Jungian example of the fragmented psyche on the road to selfhood, Agnes'
consciousness "operates by way of ... constructing an analog space with an analog 'I' that can observe that space, and move metaphorically in it." Perdita sometimes takes this role, but she can also be seen as an analogue of Agnes' ghostliness, because "The only [analogue] the ghost can construct to represent herself is a bodiless, memoryless intelligence--that is one of the conflicts she must narrate into resolution." Agnes-as-narrator faces the challenge of resolving her representation of herself to herself, which is what Perdita began as a part of. In order to achieve some sort of resolution (although it is not the sort which results in one's entry into the symbolic order), she unmasks her 'ghosting' and shows how it had been repressing her own voice by finally taking centre stage and stopping the show--for the second time in one night.

In novels which focus on women's experience "it has become a standing joke that . . . the protagonist feels she has 'become her own person'." Perdita's access to Agnes perhaps still remains; there is no sense that she ever disappeared. It is fair to say that Agnes seems more self-possessed at the end of the novel than she did at the start, but the point that Bakhtin would make is that none of us are ever 'our own person'. From the start of Maskerade it was apparent that a witch's identity is a dialogic relationship; "You needed at least three witches for a coven. Two witches was just an argument" (M 22). With the help of her fellow-coven-members-to-be, Agnes resists the injustices of a system structured around masculine expectations and is pushed towards the periphery, where the dialogue between a femininity defined by the schizophrenic nature of her desire to fit in, and a marginality of identity inspired by curiosity as to what is really going on around her, makes her into someone who is more satisfied with being her own kind of person than she previously had been.

The protagonists in Maskerade, including the Opera House itself, are situated on and interactive with borderlines. Agnes tries to resist the existing categories that life seems to offer; a domestically-doomed future or becoming a
witch: "'They want me to be something. But I'm not going to!'" (M 48).

Having submitted only partially to the ignominy of 'ghosting' her part, thanks to the staunchness of her alter ego, the mysterious Perdita X Dream, Agnes finds that she is able to resist this too as yet another unwelcome option. Because the borders of her subjectivity are not yet rigidly defined by an adult role, she does not have to fully 'be' anything. Instead, Agnes dialogises diodic notions of personal identity and lives on the margin. An even more extreme example of border identity is provided in *Maskerade* in the form of Greebo.

Instead of having an internal other like Perdita, the cat has a morphic other who manifests in times of stress. This places him squarely in the border zone along with the creatures that Kelly Hurley has described as 'the abhuman': "The abhuman subject is a not-quite-human subject, characterized by its morphic variability, continually in danger of becoming not-itself, becoming other." Greebo dialogises the trope of the lycanthrope, as he moves in the opposite direction across the frontier between animals and humans. *Maskerade* blurs the borders of narrative convention through its arch self-awareness of its own fictionality. To these violated borders must be added the line that isolates the represented space of fiction from the readers, because the novel's final performance enacts a fascinating breakdown of spectatorial distance.

Visitors to Ankh-Morpork's Opera House enter a carnival space within the carnivalesque, a place which operates on the border between art and life even by Discworld standards. The undercurrents of Gothic romance running through the Opera House cause people to behave in an affected way. It is as if opera is "a kind of 'border' fiction . . . [in which] the field of action is in . . . the borderland of the human mind where the actual and the imaginary intermingle." The Opera Ghost is just one of many superstitions which rule the lives of those who work within it, and for a time the company's belief in it helps to stage-manage several of their deaths as well. Agnes, for all her outward level-headedness and focus upon reality, is affected by the Opera
House because it brings out the Perdita inside her. It is something like Lily’s Genua in *Witches Abroad*, a place where the fantastic, the sensational, has become the norm. Within the carnivalesque of the Discworld, the Opera House and Lily’s walled fairytale city can be seen to operate as ‘enclosures’. As Rosemary Jackson suggests, “Enclosures are central to modern fantasy . . . [which especially relies] upon the Gothic enclosure as a space of maximum transformation and terror.”49 Both *Maskerade* and *Witches Abroad* involve the disruption of the enclosure, by the transgressive behaviour of the witches. 

The witches transgress societally-monitored boundaries, dialogising diodic constructs through their noncoincidence with them. This is most easily apparent when they take advantage of others’ perceptions of them; “Nanny Ogg usually went to bed early. After all, she was an old lady. Sometimes she went to bed as early as 6 a.m.” (M 20). Nanny’s standards are in turn a comment on the carnival liminality of the Opera House: “She was used to a life where the men wore the bright clothes and the women wore black. It made it a lot easier to decide what to put on in the mornings. But inside the Opera House the rules of clothing were all in reverse, just like the rules of common sense” (M 278). The wearing of uncharacteristic clothing, which has the effect of masking one’s normal self for a ‘special occasion’, adds to the topsy-turvisness of the Opera House’s carnival atmosphere. It is a place where the temporary suspension of normative rules of society seems permanent, a world away from the world outside. Significantly, it is not however a space without standards of its own; the rules may be in reverse, but they are still there. There is a tendency throughout the Discworld novels for subject matter to be rearranged in such a way as to divert the reader from set modes of literary reception, but subversion also installs that which it undermines. The rules of common sense therefore remain to some extent in the Opera House, even if only as something to be departed from and returned to on exceptional occasions, in a mirroring of the way that carnival time is normally seen as a brief departure from societal order.
The most obvious manifestation of carnival in *Maskerade* is the unmasking of the actors that goes on in the course of Agnes' (and Salzella's) final performance. Having found carnival space within the carnivalesque, the novel proceeds to re-carnivalise it, a movement that mirrors Pratchett's dialogisation of the diodic nature of the fantasy fiction genre itself. The mask-wearing masquerade is in itself only a faint form of the carnivalesque, according to Bakhtin:

... in the masquerade, in the satires of Swift and Voltaire, we can hear the echoes of carnival laughter that has been 'reduced'. For to sound fully in literature, a sense of having been *only just* transformed into literature must be preserved. Unlike Swift's works, Rabelais's seem to lie on the boundary between art and life, as if life itself had somehow come to enjoy 'extraterritorial' rights in the kingdom of literature.  

If the masquerade is too structured an artifice, the chaos that develops onstage in *Maskerade* belongs to a different, 'lower' order of performance. Zvi Jagendorf notes that "In comedy the return to ordinary experience may be guided wittily by the actor who drops his mask"51, suggesting that this signals a crossing between art and life within the frame of the comedy. *Maskerade*'s mask-dropping enacts a crossing, but it is one between art and life in the onstage work of fiction that also circumvents the lines between art and life in the Discworld 'reality' of the novel as a whole. In a scene of unexpected disruption, with the actors' masks coming off onstage, Bucket realises "The opera had turned into a pantomime. The audience was laughing" (M 341). The response to the carnivalesque unmasking of convention is carnival laughter, heard fully in literature, for although the audience take whatever happens to be part of the script, what is going on is in fact a spontaneous blend of art and life.

The laughter of the audience, whether they realise it or not, is born out of a clash of codes. Humour, according to Arthur Koestler, works through a
process called 'bisociation', causing the reader to see things in terms of two incompatible frames of reference at the same time.\textsuperscript{52} The seemingly stable, diodic framework of opera is suddenly dissolved and thrown into juxtaposition with pantomime, a pattern based on entirely different assumptions. It is as if two such far removed artistic codes, the highest of high art and one of the commonest of the popular 'low' folk forms, have found a way to speak to each other. The stage, and by extension the whole of the novel, has become a dialogical meeting-place of what appeared to be mutually-exclusive; it has provided a site of carnival subversion; it has created a zone \textquote{in which alien languages confront each other in public fora, in which different speakers ... exchange utterances, seeking meanings that will never reside exclusively in either's speech.}\textsuperscript{53} Neither opera nor pantomime holds centre stage, because for a time the diodic is truly dialogised and no one way of seeing is possible.

Carnival dialogises opera, but does not dismiss it; things do work out operatically. In her role as facilitator of endings, Granny Weatherwax makes sure of that: \textquote{The show must go on ... \textquote{'} murmured Granny Weatherwax, still staring out of the wings. \textquote{Things have to end right. This is an opera house. They should end ... operatively \textquote{'} (M 336). There is a multitude of endings, some of which follow the pattern of standard dramatic closure\textsuperscript{54} and others of which are rather more subversive, leaving things open. In accordance with the nature of the Bildungsroman, the future of the Opera House grows along with the emergent maturity of the protagonist. Through its contact with the present, the Opera House is shown to be part of the dynamic process of a world-in-the-making. Bucket wanted to bring opera into the present epoch, and strangely enough this is exactly what Walter Plinge seems to be achieving, in blending it with Andrew Lloyd-Webber musical-style productions. The likely impact of his new approach on the entrenched operatic canon is akin to the effect of the novel upon older forms of literature; \textquote{the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact
with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the openended present)."55 Of course the witches themselves remain on the borders, directing things from their position ‘in the wings’: ‘‘Oh, them as makes the endings don’t get them,’ said Granny’ (M 367). There is never an ‘ending’ for the witches, as they are on a level closer to the author and readers than other, more conventional characters. Their carnival liminality puts them in a position to witness stories which they themselves participate in, because their relationship to the phenomenal world is not blurred by quite as many masks as it is for others.

In the end, the mask that Agnes removes allows her to see herself more clearly. She does not need the mirror of societal approval, or the inner looking-glass of desire constituted by her imaginary ‘other woman’, Perdita. In fact, as the final scene of Maskerade shows (M 380), it is the others who need her. With its thoroughly parodied ‘When shall we three meet again?’, it echoes the means by which the scene is set in two of the Witches novels (WS 5, M 9). Just as Shakespeare is spoofed in Wyrd Sisters’ play on MacBeth and in Lords and Ladies, with its play that ended up entitled The Taming of the Vole 56, fairy tale and opera are subverted in Witches Abroad and Maskerade respectively. It is clear that in the Witches novels Terry Pratchett is talking about witches, but his comedic use of one of the most well known, even clichéd, lines associated with them indicates the way in which he means to go about doing so.

In discussing ‘what it really means to be a witch’, Maskerade answers for Agnes the question of what it really means to find her feet as an adult. Her sense of personal identity develops, as does her understanding of the position of women, alongside the ever-changing world of the text. Holquist has argued that “the suggestion of Bakhtin’s total oeuvre, conceived as a single utterance, is that our ultimate act of authorship results in the text which we call our self.”57 A reading of Maskerade would suggest that Terry Pratchett might have something similar to say about personal growth in relation to fiction. This does not mean to say that Agnes ends with the writing on the paper of the last page of
each copy of *Maskerade*, because along with the other witches she is in a position to read the multitextual world around her rather than just being read as a character. Agnes may not have 'become her own person', but after an encounter with the carnivalesque dialogue between art and life that is Terry Pratchett's Discworld, she has found herself to be someone's person--which is probably the best anyone can hope for.
Notes

1 For an example of the Discworld novels' investigation of the status of reality, one need look no further than the Zoons, a group who "have great respect for any Zoon who can say the world is other than it is... the Liar holds a position of considerable eminence... Other races... feel that the Zoon ought to have adopted more suitable titles, like 'diplomat' or 'public relations officer'" (ER 89).

2 See Wyrd Sisters, Witches Abroad and Lords and Ladies for further clarification. Wyrd Sisters has her up against the rhetorical power of the theatre. Witches Abroad sees her in opposition to narrative causality and the deterministic influence of fairy tales that have been told many times over. Lords and Ladies pits her against not only the puzzling performance of fiction, but against creatures who are supposedly only a feature of fictions.

3 As The Discworld Companion explains; "The sense of predestination permeates Discworld... On Discworld, the future is set. It's the job of everyone to fight back" [Pratchett and Briggs 139].

4 Holquist 61.

5 McAle 77.

6 Jackson 45.


8 Anderson 66. The Discworld Companion gives a fuller example of this phenomenon: "On Discworld, belief is a potent force. What is believed in strongly enough is real. (Conversely, what is not believed can't be real regardless of the fact of its existence. For example, the dog Gaspode can talk. But most people cannot hear him when he does because they know, in their soul, that dogs do not talk. Any dog who appears to be talking, says their brain, is a statistical fluke and can therefore safely be ignored)" [Pratchett and Briggs 138].


11 Anderson 44.


13 The part that Greebo played was really only that of a stand-in on the night.

14 Jackson 49.

15 There is a strong similarity between Granny Weatherwax's headology and psychology in Bram Stoker's Dracula, which "is represented simultaneously as an antidote to magic, an alternate form of magic, and finally, a magical new discourse by which to comprehend irrational behaviour" [Hurley 20].

16 Clute 27.

17 Mort in Reaper Man, Carrot in Men At Arms and Feet of Clay.

18 "Perdita Nitt, who had once been merely Agnes Nitt before she got witchcraft" (LL 78).

19 Pratchett and Briggs 317.

20 Butler 57.

21 Butler 58.

22 By one of the reckoning-processes outlined in The Discworld Companion, the Century of the Fruitbat is the twelfth century, which may help to account for the strangely-familiar nature of so much of the goings-on in the novels. [Pratchett and Briggs 80].


24 Pratchett and Briggs 317.

25 Pratchett and Briggs 317.

26 Holquist 19.

27 Jackson 87.
28 Jackson 82.
31 Examples in the Witches and Watch novels include Walter Plinge/the Opera Ghost, Magrat/Queen Ynci, Carrot/The King-In-Waiting and Lily/the role of Fairy Godmother.
32 Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics* 51.
33 Holquist 181.
34 Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics* 435.
35 Felman 135.
36 According to *The Discworld Companion*, Nanny Ogg "has been formally married three times, to Albert Ogg, Winston Ogg and Sobriety Ogg (witches are matrilineal . . .). All three have passed happily, if somewhat energetically, to their well-earned rest" [Pratchett and Briggs 301].
37 Attebery ix.
38 Bacchilega 9.
40 Felman 147-148.
41 Attebery 77.
42 Attebery 78.
43 Coward 42.
44 This situation is a hangover from the witches’ spell in *Witches Abroad*: "Greebo tends to flip into his alternate shape when he finds a situation he can’t deal with in the current one. On top of all his other problems, this means that people occasionally find a naked human running around meowing." [Pratchett and Briggs 201].
45 Hurley 3-4.
46 The actions of the mob hunting the Opera Ghost supply a good example of narrative’s reflexivity on itself as narrative: “Some of them had managed to get hold of flaming torches, because sometimes convention is too strong to be lightly denied.” (M 300). There is of course an additional pun here on torches as sources of light, which it seems valid to mention at this point only in order to draw attention to the degree of self-reflexivity involved.
47 McHale 49.
48 See Salzella’s catalogue of superstitions observed by the company: (M 85).
49 Jackson 47-48.
50 Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics* 463.
51 Jagendorf 12.
52 Attebery 114.
54 Henry Slugg tearfully reconciled with his long-lost sweetheart and the child he never had a chance to get to know, for one (M 365-366).
56 “because no-one would be interested in a play called *Things That Happened on A Midsummer Night*.” (LL 381).
57 Booker and Juraga 134.
Conclusion

“That is a nice dramatic ending, but life doesn’t work like that and there were other things that had to happen” (TLF 213).

Terry Pratchett’s Discworld novels subvert their subject matter, in order to interrogate points of view that might seem unitary or satisfactory in themselves. They present a world governed by the flexibility of parody, a double-voiced space in which there are always other things that can be said, in which there is always room for the ‘other things that had to happen’. The Discworld has no conventional absolutes of morality, as one’s internal perspective determines questions of good and bad, rather than a label applied from the outside. In fact, there are no universal standards whatsoever; the diversifying power of language is the dominant factor in Pratchett’s worlds of words. The Discworld brings an otherness to the familiar milieu of settled narratives and their reception, effectively dialogising them by constantly offering alternatives, foregrounding contrasting opposites and problematising stable reference-points. Subversion finds its most obvious target in the most familiar; the clichéd; the rigidly systematic; things which become automatised in our perceptions. Pratchett not only undermines highly conventional or canonical modes of literature, but dialogises the fantasy genre itself from within, asking questions at points where there is normally unexamined acceptance. The six Discworld novels under discussion show how he dialogises the diodic, refracting ideas and expectations of things as one-way or monologic in the lens of fantasy, in such a way as to ultimately interrogate the idea that there could ever be one single satisfactory way of looking at things.
Witches Abroad and Lords and Ladies clearly situate the Discworld on a borderline, with worlds of varying degrees of reality and unreality impinging from either direction. They exemplify the way Pratchett parodically cross-questions, recontextualises, distorts and rejuvenates narrative conventions, resisting conditioned, even automatic modes of reception in favour of an open play of possibilities. The double mirrors in which Lily Weatherwax loses herself to the power of the story can be seen as an image of over-indulgence in fantasy. Her fairy-tale-structured life and its accompanying repressive ‘semiotic totalitarianism’ is a case of narcissistic misguidedness of perception rather than evildoing. Wish-fulfilment is an intrinsic function of any sort of fairy godmother, but, in a telling parallel with the fairy tale genre itself, Lily neglects to consider others' individual interests before constructing what is perceived as a utopia for everyone. For Terry Pratchett, “There is nothing wrong with escapism. The key points of consideration, though, are what you are escaping from, and where you are escaping to.”¹ In Lords and Ladies, the false memories that people have of elves escape from the annals of folklore to rebound threateningly upon the Discworld. At the same time, the novel suggests that history and time are both flexible concepts--that the distances between different worlds of being are a great deal shorter than they might at first seem. Having played upon human fantasies and desires, the elves misjudge the power of plays and are relegated to their timeless world by a process of resistance which in many ways parallels the defeat of Lily’s personal city of dreams.

The three Watch novels, Guards! Guards!, Men At Arms and Feet of Clay, resist various plots that have been dreamt up with the aim of resurrecting monarchy in Ankh-Morpork. In the process, they highlight the fact that the absolutist views of the plotters ignore the irresolvable differences which are the defining characteristics of their carnivalesque city. They thematically deploy

¹ Pratchett, 'Let There Be Dragons' 28.
images of vision by means of lenses, in order to stress the subjective mediation process that informs all views of the external world and thus accounts for the diversity of society. Pratchett satirises perceptions of monarchy throughout the Watch novels: the institution of royalty is brought into a familiar zone of contact and shown to be an outdated, unnecessary one, which is employed for quite different ends in the course of the three books. *Guards! Guards!* provides an example of the way that narratives in the Discworld resist overt manipulation: instead of neatly acting its part in a time-honoured process for the legitimation of kingship, the dragon bites back. *Men At Arms* shows how it can be fatal, to yourself and to others, to over-identify with one point of view. The obsessiveness of Edward d’Eath and Dr Cruces contrasts markedly with the increasing egalitarianism of the Watch. *Feet of Clay* represents the culmination of Terry Pratchett’s meditation on monarchy, as Dragon King of Arms and his anonymous backers pose the most artful of all the threats to the post-monarchy of Ankh-Morpork made in the Watch novels. They show not only that ‘king’ is a tool which can be authorised by those in control of words, but that it is a completely arbitrary societal feature, one that means nothing in itself, relies on a ‘default setting’ in human perceptions and ignores the real needs of a diverse society by serving only the interests of those in power. Ultimately, the Watch novels suggest that a critical, dynamic approach to society, one which takes difference into account and values the lives of its members, is to be preferred over any one way of looking at things.

*Maskerade* returns to the ever-present Discworld theme of predestination, but with variations of critical significance. The parodying of fairy tale in *Witches Abroad* denies the conventional happy ending closure of the genre, which is shown up for its faults and inadequacies. Lily’s refusal to accept this situates her in a purgatorial open-endedness, while life goes on for the other characters. In *Maskerade* the parodied code, opera, is revitalised by carnivalising features, which allows the show to go on despite the fact that it
was inconceivable to many of the novel’s characters that it could ever have stopped. The carnival view of the world is hostile to any sort of definitive finale; all endings are seen as new beginnings and “carnival images are reborn again and again.” The operatic elements are counteracted in the sense that, although the Opera House is reinstalled by their actions, the witches assert their outsidedness from it, and in doing so, indicate that they are the ultimate stage managers and thus maintain some sort of privileged access to vision. While *Maskerade* parodies, carnivalises and dialogises the conventions of opera and the atmosphere associated with it, it also reworks the quest motif through which a youthful protagonist comes to some sort of understanding about their place in life as an adult. Agnes Nitt is restricted by conventional expectations, both her own and those of others, and cannot at first see more than one side to a problem without resorting to her fantasy double or mask, Perdita. Agnes’s identity and her understanding of what it is to be both a woman and a witch develop on the transition point between life and art, a liminal space for the operation of the carnivalesque which can at some times be seen to represent the lens of the Discworld.

The Discworld is less a mirror of nature, more a construction designed to humorously show the artificiality of language, the subjectivity of narratives and the ways in which they may have fallen short of depicting the complexities of life. Despite their mistrust of all narratives which seek to order or explain the mysteries of existence, the Discworld novels evince a genuine humanist concern for the value of life and, for all their fantasy escapist element, give a very real sense that they are about our worlds—about the interactions of twentieth-century human society. The Discworld novels dialogise the didotic, transfiguring narrative conventions and settled perceptions through the refracting medium of fantasy, Terry Pratchett’s literature of subversions.

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2 Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics* 468.
Works by Terry Pratchett

[Note: What follows is a list of Terry Pratchett's works which are directly mentioned in my thesis--this is not a full bibliography of his publications]


---. Personal interview. 2 July 1997.


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