Elements of Carnival and the Carnivalesque in Contemporary Australian Children's Literature

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For Kylie and my Parents

My precious girls

and Alf and Olly – remembered with Love

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP / ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within this text.

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the influence of elements of Bakhtinian carnivalesque in selected contemporary Australian children's literature. Many of the Bakhtinian ideas are centred on the work of François Rabelais, particularly his five books collectively entitled Gargantua and Pantagruel. Aspects of the complex field of Bakhtinian carnivalesque that have been considered include: attitudes to authority, the grotesque body and its working, the importance of feasting and the associated concepts of bodily functioning, customs in relation to food, and ritual and specific language such as the use of curses and oaths. The role of humour and the manifest forms this takes within carnival are intrinsic and are discussed at some length. These central tenets are explored in two ways: first, in relation to their connection and use within the narrative structures of a selection of books short listed (and thus critically acclaimed) by the Australian Children's Book Council from the early 1980s to the early 2000s, and second, by means of contrast, to the commercially popular but generally less critically acclaimed works of other Australian writers such as Paul Jennings and Andy Griffiths. The thesis concludes by considering the ways in which carnivalesque freedom is encouraged through and by new media.

List of Australian Texts

Aldridge J 1984 ... ... *The True Story of Lilli Stubeck*
Carmody I 1987 ... ... *Obernewtyn*
Fatchen M 1981 ... ... *Closer to the stars*
Fowler T 1981 ... ... *Wait for me! Wait for me!*
Gleitzman M 1991 ... ... *Worry Warts*
Griffiths A 2005 ... ... *Bumageddon: The Final Pongflict*
Griffiths A 2003 ... ... *Zombie Bums From Uranus*
Griffiths A 2001 ... ... *The Day My Bum Went Psycho*
Hartnett S 2001 ... ... *Forest*
Hartnett S 1997 ... ... *Princes*
Hartnett S 1995 ... ... *Sleeping Dogs*
Jennings P 1991 ... ... *Unmentionable*
Jennings P 1990 ... ... *Round the Twist*
Jennings P 1986 ... ... *Unbelievable!*
Kelleher V 1986 ... ... *Taronga*
Kelleher V 1982 ... ... *Master of the Grove*
Klein R 1989 ... ... *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly*
Klein R 1985 ... ... *Hating Alison Ashley*
Lurie M 1985 ... ... *Toby's Millions*
O'Neill J 1989 ... ... *Deepwater*
Park R 1980 ... ... *Playing Beattie Bow*
Phipson J 1981 ... ... *A Tide Flowing*
Rubenstein G 1986 ... ... *Space Demons*
Scott B 1984 ... ... *Shadows among the leaves*
Sharp D 1986 ... ... *Blue days*
Spence E 1982 ... ... *The Left Overs*
Vaughan Carr R 1985 ... ... *Firestorm*
Wheatley N 1984 ... ... *Dancing in the Anzac Deli*
Wrightson P 1983 ... ... *A Little Fear*
Wrightson P 1981 ... ... *Behind the Wind*

Introduction

This thesis explores elements of carnival and the carnivalesque in contemporary Australian children's literature. It is informed by the Bakhtinian idea of carnival and investigates to what extent these ideas are incorporated into selected contemporary publications. It draws on Bakhtinian concepts and discusses their influence within the field of children's literature.

Chapter one will discuss Bakhtin in terms of his theory of carnivalesque and will provide a basis for connecting the tenets of these ideas and how these have been used or adapted for use within Australian children's literature (as introduced in chapter two). Within this context, it will focus in depth on the idea of the grotesque body through differing aspects, as the role of the body is examined in a carnivalesque framework.

Books referred to in this thesis are taken from the areas of young adult fiction and junior books. Specifically, these books are selected texts from the Australian

Children's Book Council short lists from the year 1980 to 2000. The books that have been chosen from the early eighties have been selected on the basis that they were specifically written for young people and represent a beginning for the cultural literary recognition of children's books. Short-listing for the awards demonstrates a degree of cultural and literary endorsement, which has been reinforced by subsequent research and serious academic discussion. This in turn provides some critical basis on which the concepts and issues of these books are analysed in relation to carnivalesque ideas. In some instances this link can be tenuous owing to the narrative of the short listed books, which are predominantly serious in their themes.

As a means of comparison the works of writers such as Paul Jennings and Andy Griffiths, though they have as yet not received critical acclaim from established and recognised cultural literary award organisations, will also be considered. This is because many aspects of their narrative construct, from characterisation and plot to sub themes, motifs and focalisation, incorporate carnivalesque elements. It is noted that these texts have increasing market share and are extremely popular with young readers. It should also be noted that these texts represent a more recent period of time and encapsulate perhaps broader and more complex issues that influence textual concerns. Their increasing popularity is an important issue to consider in the context of reading trends and the philosophical assumptions that mark what may be a paradigm shift in the way reading material is viewed in terms of what is acceptable and appropriate for children.

The first chapter of this thesis will explore the idea of carnival and the main tenets of Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque. This thesis is not concerned with all of Bakhtin's theory, only that which relates to carnival and those aspects which provide a carnivalesque paradigm of understanding. This will form the basis for following chapters to discuss specific aspects and how they are evident within the texts of selected children's books.

The concept of carnival refers to the use of ritual and celebration in relation to life. It celebrates the two most significant stages of human existence namely birth and death. It is a rejuvenating process where social order is forgotten or temporarily suspended and all participants are equal within its rituals.

Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque attempts to describe the roles played by participants in carnival narratives – usually the novel. It is seen as a rebirthing and a reaffirming process for the renewal of society. All are participants within carnivalesque theory and each has a role to play in determining the continuing social structure of their society. Bakhtin draws specific attention to the role of the body in carnivalesque as well as the purposes of food and laughter. The usurping of authority is also discussed in relation to the subversion of norms or through parody. Laughter is an important feature of Bakhtinian theory and subsequently is dealt with on many levels. Concepts such as "the laughing truth" are discussed in this thesis as are the uses of language (oaths and curses for example) and visual sources – all aimed at subverting normal social discourse.

The second chapter will discuss selected texts in relation to exploring aspects of Bakhtinian theory, specifically in connection with themes, narrative ideas, plot, focalisation and character. This chapter will look at how authority is viewed within carnivalesque theory and subsequently how this is used in the writings of contemporary Australian authors. In particular it will consider how authority is approached and understood in chosen texts and how its antithesis is manifest in areas such as social taboos, class, race and gender.

The third chapter will explore the role of laughter and the comic and how this has been adapted, rewritten, modified and changed for the purposes of authors such as Jennings and Griffiths and other selected short listed authors from the Children's Book Council list. Comedy, as Warner (1998) in *No Go The Bogeyman* noted:

> ...[N]ot only makes one laugh but includes the monstrous and grotesque, the low and ignoble, the clownish and the foolish. (p.18)

Within this structure, examination will be given to the types of comedy used and their origins within the constructs of carnival. Concepts such as "the laughing truth" noted earlier, the sage words of the fool, are explored as are rhymes, ditties, puns, parodies, curses and oaths. The chapter will also briefly compare the stylistic concerns of

writers whose influences may be viewed as more "traditional" and acceptable to established critics and cultural institutions than those of later texts.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will examine the role of bodily functioning as a popular component of text, especially in relation to the works of Jennings and Griffith, two writers with mass commercial appeal, who have focalised the role of bodily functioning as narrative device. Direct correlation between carnivalesque ideas, carnival rituals and specific Jennings / Griffith narratives will be analysed as will Bakhtin's idea of the "material lower body stratum".

The normal uses of bodily functioning are earth bound or downwards whilst higher or heavenly values proceed upwards – the heart, the mind, the soul. Lower body stratum is intrinsically linked with the appetites of the human body, whether food, feasting, gluttony or the rituals associated with feeding. It can be seen that Bakhtin celebrates the body as symbolic of life and death and as a vessel which contains both higher ideals and the basest of drives and urges. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin (1984) noted that:

> One of the fundamental images of the grotesque image of the body is to show two bodies in one: the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated and born. (p.26)

The functioning of the body in relation to fluid discharge and biological purpose is an ample source of inspiration for Jennings and will be explored in relation to the contrast between design and function and the potential symbolic meaning of these acts.

The fifth chapter will discuss appetites in relation to both Bakhtinian theory and the writings of selected contemporary writers. Appetites of many types will be considered; not only the physical act of eating but also the urges and drives of the body and the psychological obsessions, desires, motivations and needs of individuals. This chapter will contrast the base and literal interpretation of bodily function in text, as evidenced in the junior fiction of Jennings and Gleitzman, with the more sophisticated explorations in narrative and characterisation of the concept of self through authors such as Wrightson and Wheatley. The concept of appetite and its

adaptation will also be analysed in the context of changing views of appetite from predominantly (if not explicitly) moral in earlier texts, to the base literal interpretations that characterise the work of Jennings and Griffith.

The concluding chapter of this thesis will look at contemporary issues surrounding the increasing popularity of what may be described as carnivalesque writing and its significance to Australian children's literature. Questions concerning the legitimacy of carnivalesque as an area within children's literature will be considered, as will the idea of to what extent do "market forces" determine the establishment of particular forms of writing? Does carnivalesque writing fall outside what is considered of literary merit because of its ideology, thematic concerns and reflection of popular language? What will change this? This will be discussed within the context of the media environment into which carnivalesque writing is delivered.

The meteoric rise and influence of what was the World Wide Web now more commonly called the Internet and the philosophy of net U.S.Age is discussed as influencing not only the subject matter of texts but redefining what is taboo and what is acceptable in writing. It is noted that the nature of net U.S.Age amongst online users is shaped by collective contribution and can be interpreted to whatever purpose and means another user chooses. This results in a constantly changing mass of information, uncontrolled by established order, authority or institution although limits are sometimes set to contain influence or control the reach of knowledge. The correlation to the carnivalesque in this context is discussed and some future research areas are suggested that may arise from the common philosophical tenets that underpin both the web and carnivalesque writing.

I

From the Margins: a framework for Bakhtinian carnivalesque

This chapter will focus on elements of Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque. As Bakhtin draws so heavily on the world of Rabelais, it will also discuss relevant aspects of those works drawn predominantly from Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. This discussion will begin with some of the ideas taken from Rabelais by Bakhtin and his analysis of these ideas. The nature of this theory necessitates a non-linear approach to these selected concepts, as interrelated terms often combine common features through emphasis on different aspects. For example images of the grotesque body may incorporate ideas centred on laughter or on symbolic creation to undermine official authority forms. Many central ideas are nuanced and

interconnected as carnivalesque theory commonly is. This will also be supported by various theoretical positions on unified themes that support the underlying ideology of what carnival represents.

Carnivalesque theory is broad, complex and challenging and incorporates many elements as noted above. The use of the writings of Rabelais is fundamental to Bakhtin's ideas of the carnivalesque and is sourced throughout his work and consequently provides examples to contextualise his theory. Bakhtin's central ideas are based on the work of Rabelais, in particular, the five books that concern *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Rabelais, 1955)[1], written in the sixteenth century. The theory centres on the celebration of the life cycle but this in itself is broad ranging and barely definitive as Bakhtin sees that carnival as way of life beyond categorisation. All the permutations of life; variables, chance, luck and human foibles combine to keep the nature of carnivalesque evolving and in a state of flux that is merely interpreted at a particular stage. Interpretation can be difficult as the true nature of carnival means a participatory role for all. As Bakhtin (1984) states:

> Carnival is not contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants live in it, they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect; that is they live a carnivalistic life. (p.7)

This is the nature of the theory that is inclusive of all as participants and subsequently uses this participation to evolve roles of individuals and their interactions. To better understand Bakhtin's complex theory, aspects can be drawn out and analysed, interpretation made and some of the relevant ideas to this thesis can be discussed.

At the centre of Rabelais' work was the importance of both the body and laughter and the function they served within society. Voloshinov (in Morris, 1994) has noted that:

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1. Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* books were first published in 1532. The references to the text referred to here are taken from the Penguin Books version, first translated in 1955. For the purposes of this thesis, this publication is the one used throughout.

> ...this folk humour constitutes a second reality outside the official realm; it is a complex system of meaning existing alongside and in opposition to the 'authoritarian word' of official orthodoxy. Its most powerful mode of expression is laughter, but it stems from a comprehensive way of seeing human existence that cannot be isolated in any particular way. (p.194)

Rabelais noted the richness of the interaction between people in society and incorporated these aspects of society into his writings in a way that celebrated the many milestones of human existence. This correlated with the cycle of life for all humanity and at its core was the continually changing human body that carried the individual through these life cycles. The dominant discourse throughout Rabelais' work is his celebration of the body and its many functions. Of these, two particular views of the body co-exist as inexorably linked through their creation and perfunctory role. A particular view of the body was as a work of nature, as creator and bringer of life - a symbol of fertility and richness:

> The material bodily stratum is productive. It gives birth, thus assuring mankind's immortality. All obsolete and vain illusions die in it, and the real future comes to life. (Bakhtin, 1984, p.378)

Rabelais, as well as seeing the body in symbolic terms, also saw the human body as corporeal and organic. The purpose and functions of the body were to be celebrated, as they were the reality for mankind and at the core of existence. This contrasted with the official view of the state/church of the body was seen as merely a vessel, a place to harbour before heavenly salvation.

Ideologically this meant that the nature of church doctrine was individual salvation of the soul. Carnivalesque celebration of the body and its many functionings, particularly the nature and role of birth, created new roles for the individual that focused on the role of the body. The view of the body generally was shaped by grotesque realism and the actions of the body thus represented a metaphorical view. It was representative of the collective, grotesque imagery of bodily functioning and subsequently an important aspect of carnival celebration. It celebrated what was real and all its attendant

sensations. It created the opportunity for new life to arrive whilst banishing that which was obsolete, used up or discarded, such as blood, bodily fluids and excreta. In essence it allowed for the propagation of the human race and the cycle of humanity to continue.

Of this principle Rabelais was able to separate the role of the carnivalised and grotesque body from the official orthodoxy of the church. Carnival images abound of the human body grossly exaggerated, performing feats that range from the gluttonous to the gross. There are many examples of the corruptible flesh being despoiled and debased, usually through association with grossly abundant food. The appetite of the body is constantly being offered up in connection with abundance and prosperity.

Bakhtin sees the body in the dual sense of physical form and its metaphorical functioning as previously mentioned. He sees that Rabelais' sense of the body, of being viewed realistically, was an inversion of the official notion of his time. It supposed an alternative to authoritative dictums that determined the metaphorical travails of the body.

The soul travelled heaven ward and the debased, defiled physical remnants of human existence were drawn earthward. Here Bakhtin notes the divergence of Rabelaisian thinking with that of formal societal constructs in that medieval ideology centred on the illusory aspects of a body's journey when it decayed. Church dictums and ideology were concerned with each part of the physical process and were connected to the grander allegorical purpose for the body. The suffering of the individual was to be endured in line with the church's teachings, the reward being freedom from suffering and recompense in the next life. All this bore little semblance to the physical reality that accompanied the actual existence of individuals, particularly the peasantry. The promise of a hypothetically better existence was an abstraction to remove the individual from this reality; suffering was the cord, the thread that reinforced the connection.

On a physical level Bakhtin deemed the body in the carnivalesque context grotesque. The human body was imperfect and constantly in a state of transition between life stages such as birth and death, pockmarked by the ravages of time and the inescapable

move towards decay. It opened to the world and interacted with it in a primal way, receiving sustenance and constantly ejecting bodily fluids and by products which, ironically, were a measure of the state of health of an individual. This constant state of flux aligned the body with the rhythms of life and on a cyclic course of renewal, rebirth, death and decay. It was as much a philosophical view as a condition of existence.

Bakhtin (1984) writes that:

> ...in contrast to modern canons, the age of the body is most frequently represented in immediate proximity to birth or death, infancy or old age, to the womb or the grave, to the bosom that gives life or swallows it up. But at the extreme limit the two bodies unite to form one. (p. 26)

The body is constantly on the threshold of two worlds, creation or destruction. The destruction of the body had no connotations of nihilism as currently viewed, but rather as part of a natural process that propelled human life. The duality that Bakhtin sees in the work of Rabelais is both journey and significant destination. Whilst the act of living entails a journey from birth through various life stages to death, the endpoints of this journey contain symbolic significance. These markers are significant points in carnivalesque because they are points of celebration.

The binary opposition of relative terms in relation to age indicate the fascination with birth and death for those living in medieval times. Death was a constant in life, life expectancies were low, the health of individuals was poor due to factors such as inadequate diet and the social conditions in which they lived. All physical acts were generally downwards, thrust towards the earth. The design of humanity emphasised this condition, with urinating and defecating for example being a primal downwards thrust. The physical attributes of bodily functioning were of significance in the cultural canon as well, being integrated into customs that necessitated explanation for the basest human activities and code for the acceptance of these undesirable, if natural, machinations.

Bakhtin called this the "material lower body stratum" and noted that it was a constant theme within the writing of Rabelais in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Rabelais draws a connection between the acts associated with the lower body, whether this was through the acts of birth, urination, defecation or sexual proclivity. Even the movements of certain physical acts such as spitting and vomiting showed a link between human existence and life cycles connected with illness and health. This cyclic schema was the nature of existence and was celebrated because of its constancy and its importance to life itself. Bakhtin (1984) comments on this connectedness to carnival:

> ...[T]his downward movement is also inherent in all forms of popular festive merriment and grotesque realism. Down, inside out, vice versa, upside down, such is the direction of all these movements. All of them thrust down, turn over, push head first, transfer top to bottom, and bottom to top, both in the literal sense of space, and in the metaphorical meaning of the image. (p.370)

Life as represented by carnival is associated through all aspects and manifestations as being of the flesh and thus also of its inherent decay and corruptibility of form. The many stages of this development are celebrated through the rituals attenuate to the human body.

Bakhtin's representation of the human form in this domain, the 'grotesque" body, played a principal role in all images associated with it, namely, eating, drinking, defecating and sexual proclivity. He noted that exaggeration, hyperbole and excessiveness were fundamental attributes of the grotesque (1984, p.303) and that these features were common across the Rabelaisian world, whether it be demonstrated through banquets, physical feats and acts, or the narrative imagery that accompanied the adventures of Pantagruel and Gargantua.

Take for example the Rabelais character "Messer Gaster" or Sir Belly. Rabelais makes the point that he is to be obeyed at all times or the cost will be too great:

> ...[H]e only speaks by signs. But these signs all the world obeys more promptly than Praetor's edicts or royal commands. When he calls he will not admit the slightest stay or delay. You say that when the lion roars all beasts round shiver, for as far – that is to say – as his voice carries. That is written, and it is true. I have seen the evidence. But I guarantee at Messer Gaster's command the whole sky trembles, the whole Earth shakes. The words of his

> command are – make up your mind to obey immediately, or die. (Rabelais, 1955, p.571)

The symbolic representation of the stomach as a person encapsulates these ideas of exaggeration in the grotesque. On a literary level Rabelais alludes to the strength of Messer Gaster that all will obey whilst making the general observation that the importance of food, the desire for food and hunger, are a universal condition of humanity and all other needs are secondary to this primal functioning. The grotesque element of this idea works on multiple levels but is characterised by being extremely hyperbolic in the context of Rabelais' work. The boundaries between the imagined and the real, the figurative and literal are blurred in Rabelais until they become as one, representative of the dual nature of object and subject. This is but one example where the grotesque defines and shapes the nature of the narrative, in the carnivalesque it is a condition that underlies and binds its structure.

The procurement of food and the act of eating opened the body to the world and signified in the basest terms the domination of the individual over the uncertainties contained in day to day existence. Thus a cycle was complete and closure ensued through the cessation of physical appetite. Accordingly a grossly distended, exaggerated form could be symbolic of a better existence. Rabelais' carnival is not merely reflective parody but ambivalent about human existence. The stress is on 'the downwards', all actions of the physical body move down to the ground, the underground and from this rebirth and renewal are possible.

The act of vomiting as a specific example contains all the facets of grotesque realism: overindulgence, distended and distorted stomachs unable to contain the quantities of food and drink imbibed until the inevitable "explosion" and the "gross" physical remnants of the act which remain as evidence. Yet this purging of the body was to relieve the suffering of the individual. This movement can be seen in the binary opposition it creates; sated – starving, full – empty, comfort – discomfort. This human characteristic of suffering and its physical machinations also serves to differentiate between religious and secular aspects of the attendant rituals associated with eating and drinking.

Carnival celebrates the sating of appetite and was on occasion, in opposition to the church's views on this issue. The exaggerated, grotesque elements of feasting in carnivalesque were encouraged in the excesses of feasting and banquets, where the individual could sate appetite whilst exercising little temperance. In contrast the church preached restraint and moderation embodied in the spirit of fasting. To do this ensured the flesh was chastened and the spirit strengthened. Vandereycken (1994) noted of the idea of fasting as:

> ...[A] form of self discipline and self castigation with the ideal of complete independence from all physical needs. To attain that aim hardly any means were shunned. As well as fasting, austere asceticism was accompanied by sexual abstinence, sleep deprivation, self flagellation, burning oneself and other forms of torture. By these rigorous practices the "sinful" flesh was weakened while the "perfect" soul was strengthened and more ennobled. (p. 18)

The period of Lent marked the fasting period before carnival and prompted excess before abstinence. To "cram" one self full was inevitably accompanied by purging from various orifices. To complete this perfunctory bodily role was simultaneously natural and "ungodly". Rabelais mocks bodily functioning through gross exaggeration in many instances, such as the flooding of Paris with urine and the swallowing of the pilgrims by Pantagruel and their subsequent discharge. The fact that Pantagruel at first does not notice this demonstrates the general order of importance when it comes to attending to bodily needs and functions. As Bakhtin notes of the symbolic importance of excrement:

> Excrement is conceived as something intermediate between earth and body, as something relating one to the other. It is also an intermediate between the living body and dead disintegrating matter that is being transformed into earth, into manure. The living body returns to earth its excrement, which fertilises the earth as does the body of the dead. (p.175)

This physical reality also has a role to play in the life of carnival as in the actual existence of the people. Again the reference is to the organic earthy nature of human existence compared to the aspiration to a higher realm as preached by the church.

These everyday acts of bodily functioning are hard to ignore when they are a by product of human existence and necessity.

The very acts of urinating, defecating and vomiting among other bodily fluid operations were held in particular regard by common folk as a reflection on the general health of individuals. Illness and sickness were purged from the body because of these actions, they had a positive impact upon the body and were celebrated accordingly. In true carnivalesque style, bodily functioning is a part of the encompassing cycle of life. Camporesi (1983) noted that this belief in purging became more popular with all classes as a way of decontaminating oneself from disease, that vomiting:

> ...was one of the chief techniques employed in the art of corporeal purification, in a society like that of the late Renaissance and Baroque ages, where the air could suddenly become evil and corrosive, bringing with it mysterious and widespread contagion, people might be easily stricken by a mere 'glance, kiss, flower, fruit or other form of food'.(p. 161)

This view delineates what purging or grotesque acts have come to mean rather than what they metaphorically represented in carnivalesque. The body becomes split between creation and decomposition, giving birth and wasting and withering with age. The dual role of the body was also linked with decay and death. From the destruction of the old, the new could arise and so could the continuation of life. Bakhtin called this concept of a dual model for a body a "double body" (p. 318). In this the grotesque merges the inner workings with the outer appearance and the stages of life that bring a new body from the old.

Important to the notion of the "body double" is Bakhtin's connotation with the grotesque body and its role in celebration, symbolic representation and carnival. The grotesque is a recurring idea that is important to many aspects of carnivalesque understanding and has to be returned to time and again. The grotesque itself is a term first appearing in relation to naming ornaments excavated from Roman digs. These were originally known as *grottesca* from the Italian word *grotta.* The term has evolved from its origins to centre on the aspects of the figures that populated these

ornaments. There was no natural rendering of plant or animal form instead mutation and transgression of form, playfulness with appearance that belied the stylised realism that dominated (Bakhtin, pp.31-32).

Over centuries this understanding of grotesque has changed to incorporate aspects of the monstrous and the horrible and in the context of modern media has lost many aspects of its multi faceted meaning. It is as Warner (1998) states:

> ...[T]his late grotesque is a style, a mood, a sensibility, and in the sense used before, a rasa or flavour that finds expression in art; it has a history, within the history of art and of taste, and its aesthetic appearance has changed and continues to change. (p. 246)

It is used only to shock, to offend or to scare where historically it has done all these things and yet suggested possibilities of form that were outside convention and inspiring of laughter. The body in Rabelais' time was viewed as grotesque in some of its functioning but never abstracted or removed from its purpose. The duality of its nature allows for various interpretations of its purpose and functioning by the participants within carnival and explains its enduring popularity as a metaphor for life.

The many aspects associated with the birth-death cycle such as birth and death themselves and the emotional attachments that the machinations of the body induce, are central to human existence and a component of the collective psyche. Emphasis may change with the interpretation of the grotesque, but while there is a corporeal reality to existence the focus to some extent will remain upon how the body is represented.

Contrastingly, church orthodoxy had strictly controlled the moral imperatives and lives of citizens with an emphasis on the soul as the part of human existence that lasted beyond the physical body. In relation to the physical reality of the death of an individual and the view then of its significance, Richardson (1988) noted that there has been:

> ...a prevailing belief in the existence of a strong tie between body and personality/soul for an undefined period of time after death. This belief underpinned the central role of the corpse in popular funerary ritual, and gained added power from confusion and ambiguity concerning both the definition of death and the spiritual status of the corpse. The result was an uncertain balance between solicitude towards the corpse and fear of it. (p. 7)

This ambiguity serves to allow attendant ritual to assuage fear and allow religious custom to take control of the body. Religious custom gave reassurance and hope for the continuance of the individual's spirit. Rites and church custom allayed the uncertainty of death for people. In this sense the body, from a religious perspective, was on a journey; a journey that all humans took singularly, alone and in linear form, from birth through life to reward or punishment in the afterlife.

Contrastingly, carnival viewed life as cyclic; death and birth were entwined and one not possible without the other. Having no end point carnival celebrates the touchstones of existence in a continuous cycle. It is important to remember that carnival was concerned with an approach to life, a stage upon which all were on as opposed to the individual pursuit of salvation as promoted by the church. So whilst the individual died in the physical sense, carnivalesque celebrates this as only one aspect of the human condition.

Determination of the soul's continuance was intrinsically linked to a life being regarded as good and virtuous as judged by the tenets of the bible reinforced through sermon, religious observation and daily ritual. As a simple binary opposite then, as Storey (1998) noted: "Carnival culture represented the body, the church represented the mind." (p. 131)

Furthermore it could be argued, as Clark (2001) writes, that belief structures have been split between orthodox and popular belief, or as he has called them "official" theology and "folk" theology. In incorporating religious parody into popular practice through carnival rituals and its components, the use of humour highlighted the similarities and antagonism that existed within structured religion.

The image of the grotesque body contains the view of the body readily offered to the world by outward appearance. Grotesque bodies also offer the inner workings of the body; of the blood, the organs, bowels and heart. Within them the body is connected at all times to the cycle of renewal and decay, to destruction and creation. Bakhtin's conception of the grotesque body differed from that of the classical as Ashley (2004) noted:

> …[W]hile the emphasis within the grotesque body is on its dynamism and its orifices, the emphasis within the classic conception of the body is on its cleanliness, completeness and closure. The classic body has been hygienically cleaned up, and eschews any sense of grotesque disorder. Its orifices – the eyes, the mouth - are typically represented as being closed, and there is little emphasis on the organs of the lower body – the belly, the genitals - typically found within grotesque imagery. This sense of closure, Bakhtin argues, conveys an impression of quiescence and social stasis, in stark contrast to the dynamism and social change represented by the anatomy of the grotesque body. (p. 45)

Grotesque bodies were linked beyond a purely physical level and notarised a symbolic representation of the wider world outside the physical construction of a human body, namely metaphysical attributes concerning the natural world and their permutations as represented by art, ritual and carnival. Rivers, mountains and seas could be equally the domain of a "grotesque body", likened to and contrasted with the physical abnegation of existence.

Furthermore the imagined life of the body and how this is celebrated is important to carnivalesque as it firstly knows no bounds; limitations are only placed on it by the participants. Secondly, imagination was beyond the control of officialdom and thus has a natural attraction in its ability to liberate. Furthermore, it allowed for the participants of carnival ritual to improvise with the image, the word and attendant rituals.

Important to and central within carnivalesque theory is the role laughter plays in relation to the forum for public knowledge. Laughter and its many forms can be seen as both rejuvenating force and unofficial truth. Popular causes of laughter such as curses, blazons, oaths and ditties were the currency of festivals and carnivals. They served to counterpoint the official serious tone of the church and were a means of

creating a parallel culture that wasn't restricted by dogma or the rigid social structures that the church imposed upon society. Bakhtin (1984) believed laughter to counteract:

> ...[T]he serious aspects of class culture are official and authoritarian; they are combined with violence, prohibitions, limitations and always contain an element of fear and intimidation. These elements prevailed in the Middle Ages. Laughter, on the contrary, overcomes fear, for it knows no inhibitions, no limitations. Its idiom is never used by violence and intimidation. (p.90)

Mocking official culture was only one aspect of the rejuvenating role of laughter. Laughter was a means of overcoming the uncertainties of existence and the mysteries of nature. Individuals within society united in a shared understanding derived from laughter at the roles of both authority and church and the nature and character of the immediate physical world. Jokes, satire, exaggeration and parody were the guises of humour that were created from constantly evolving market language and humour and simultaneously rich carnival tradition.

It created a universal bond that was fed from the language of the people which in turn was incorporated into various rituals associated with festive images and carnival. This language was understood by all and its intention was specific. Johnston (2001) observes that:

> [C]arnival laughter and mockeries are corporate play. Carnival depends on common senses of the ridiculous, in jokes, and knowledges. (p.139)

The nature of laughter does not allow for regulation and structure. Humour can mirror official practice and often parody and satire were used to undermine the seriousness of orthodoxy by being able to accentuate the improbable aspects in a multitude of ways. Writers and performers were able to move beyond the standard, the cliché and the inconsequential to question all aspects of a society.

Within the parameters of comedy, all characters had a set role to play and interacted with other "performers". Rabelais viewed the role of the "fool" as being a performer, though with a different purpose than other revellers and an obligation to the truth. According to Bakhtin (1984), the fool for Rabelais:

> ...presupposes freedom from personal material interests, from managing family and personal affairs; but the language of this foolish truth at this same time is earthy and material. This principle did not have however, a private selfish nature, but a wide popular quality. (p. 262)

In the time of carnival the fool is free to speak the truth as he sees it but in turn usually reflects those beliefs of the society he mocks. In an upside down world, where conventions and roles traditionally subscribed are suspended, the fool provides the opposition to established order. True carnival cannot exist when the mores of the day are maintained; through the interpretation of truth and subsequent laughter as provided by the fool, society is free to indulge in carnival pursuits. Laughter negates authority and the loose conventions of carnivalesque are observed through the role and message delivered by the appointed fool.

The message delivered could be an example of farce, satire, political comment or parody. The language of the market place underscored the context for comedy to be borne out and made it instantly accessible for its audience so the message was not lost. Inside the construct of the performance each agreed role remained true to the internal logic of the routine regardless of how far removed the message was from reality. In this sense, comedies and elaborate ritual associated with carnival were true to carnivalesque form, the crowd were included in the constructs of the performance and performance space.

Thus in a carnivalesque context the fool speaks "the laughing truth" and speaks for the social order represented in the crowd. He has the support of the crowd because he voices the sentiments of those around him. The fact that fools in Rabelais' time were signifiers by existence and not merely role playing, provided the framework in which Medieval society was bounded. The official life and its attendant culture, mores and the escape of carnival were ruled by laughter, abundance, celebration and release.

The enveloping culture of carnival allowed for multiple perspectives on areas such as the physical and spiritual body and appetite. It allowed for many uses and forms of humour for the performers of carnival. The peasantry either through celebration or in "ceremonial" role, engaged in the festivals of the day and shared in a rich tradition that was comical, earthy, satirical and reaffirming. Similarly, the roles of clowns,

fools and harlequins to deliver a form of "unofficial truth", in the language of the market place, was the connection between people and place, wisdom and reassurance.

In Bakhtin's words:

> [C]ivil and social ceremonies and rituals took on a comic aspect as clowns and fools, constant participants in these festivals, mimicked serious ritual such as the ritual rendered to victors at tournaments, the transfer of feudal rights, or the initiation of a knight. (p. 6)

It has been noted that official culture of the time was created with the structures of a rational, organised society that was moving from a feudal constitution and its attendant social mores and culture, to a society that was centralising its belief systems across social strata. Grotesque imagery was relegated to an aspect of culture that was incompatible with an overarching, if developing belief system centred on common beliefs and mutual understandings. The richness and diversity of popular carnival culture became a distraction from this move and an opportunity to keep safe within defined social custom, the most popular and acceptable means in which to question the tenets underlying society. The comic became the symbolic component of ritual, providing visual spectacle and as an "outsider" allowed the opportunity to speak "truth" as he saw it or at least in opposition to officially sanctioned information.

This also applied to the objects the comic used that were associated with power, the symbolic means of representing status and place within official hierarchy. These objects become the props in carnivalesque style highlighting both the absurdity of attendant ritual and the cultural value placed upon what were, when viewed outside the context of their social constructs. As Jervis (1999) has observed:

> [M]uch of the raw material for the carnivalesque imagination was provided by such allegories of the social, for the symbols embodied therein are endlessly available for interpretation, ridicule and parody. Any saucepan can now be a crown, and a crown is now revealed to be a funny hat. In place of a king we find the so called Lord or Abbot of Misrule, the leader of what were frequently youth groups who were important in organising processions, competitions and so on. Misrule himself might be a clown, or accompanied by jesters. (p. 16)

Remaining outside the social construction of official roles, the roles assigned in carnivalesque mock officialdom through the significance given to the patently ridiculous. In this way the role of the comic, the fool or clown is given the highest honour and 'rank' and leads the procession and the order of events. This inversion of the role thus heeds to the convention of leadership but undermines the traditional view of what this leadership may represent. In fact it may be the only convention given, which allows the free wheeling spirit of the carnivalesque to continue its tradition of attack and parody, to speak the "unofficial truth" as understood by all and to remain in the spirit which carnival designates.

Particular festivals were favoured with unique rituals that mirrored and inverted the essential elements of religious meaning. The idea of "Christmas laughter" for example demonstrated the church's efforts to contain carnivalesque parody that was prevalent around this important period on the Christian calendar. The many forms of worship and acts of faith embodied in liturgies, sacred prayer and gospel were popular targets for parody and satire. Indeed these mockeries of officially sanctioned worship mirrored the intent of their authors to break from official orthodoxy and free the commoner with laughter. For every important church date, a mock ceremony reflected unofficial truth.

The church, by unofficially sanctioning periods of time for these mockeries to occur, in effect recognised the role of tradition in establishing secular ritual and created a coded acceptance of the practice. This acceptance lead to the emergence of particular characteristics associated with popular and festive carnivalesque. The church, unable to eradicate the irreverent rituals mirroring church practice, guarded its theological ideology through this "compartmentalising" of secular practices. The church was able to create a distinction between religious observation and carnivalised ritual.

Carnival periods came to mirror official ceremonies and, as Bakhtin has noted, precede their onset. This helped to establish ideological parameters that defined true worship; a recognised period of relative freedom before abstinence as dictated by the religious calendar. This is important to note as this division has allowed the Janus - like face of religion/carnival treatment to survive and thrive with their potency and ideological considerations intact.

A period of revelry, of misrule and suspension of convention and social order, strengthened the tenets of the church through clearly defining its spiritual purpose. There is no confusion over the constitution of the sacred and the profane; each is distinct in its traits, practices and rituals, for example cultural aspects such as the use of official language were distinguished from lay languages, dialects and the colloquial use of speech in everyday contexts and settings.

The language of the market place reflected common idioms, colloquialisms and verbal and written parodies. Folk humour was a binding element of carnival, establishing a social cohesion within the structure of ritual. Roles within carnival allowed for parts to be played by all regardless of social standing and a suspension of the rules or principles that bound society to be temporarily suspended. Within the tableaux of characters the role of the fool was of crucial importance. Harlequins, fools and clowns are important characters within the writing of Rabelais as they deliver the spirit of festival at all times.

These characters of themselves were not roles but symbolic of a duality of nature as it pertained to life in the middle ages. Bakhtin (1984) noted that they represented a form of life that was real and ideal at the same time (p.8).In current terms Nikolajeva (1995) sees this influence on children today and in the literature for children, noting that:

> [T]he affinity of the fool with the child stems from the ambivalence between simple mindedness and wisdom: the fool is child and teacher in one person. This kind of association of contrasts is the fundamental element of humour. (p. 184)

The rich comic tradition of fooling or clowning has continued to this day with the role of comic no less diminished for the impact it has upon its intended audience. As Douglas (1975) observed in speaking of the impact of jokes:

> ...[T]he joke form rarely lies in the utterance alone, but it can be identified in the total social situation. (p. 107)

Thus the fool can still speak out using the idioms of their time to convey essential meaning and provide the means to humour, emulating the role of the fool in Rabelais'

time. The fool or clown assumes the role of questioner, mocker, and monitor of official reason and does so for the good of the common person.

The nature of language and communication were structures that could be construed as diametrically opposed. Bakhtin makes the point about the intertwining of both the sacred and the profane in the language of the market place and the talk at banquet tables.

Again, the language between the sacred and the secular represented the division between the official culture and the unofficial as represented by carnival. The nature of sacred language was the language of worship, of psalms and sermons delivered to God, its delivery channelled through officially led prayer and worship as ordained by the church or through private, individual worship based upon the teachings of the church.

Conversely, the language of carnival revelled in the blazons and ditties of commoners, the sayings, provincial idioms and the parody and satiric nature of the verse prepared for the amusement of the crowd. Language reaffirmed bonds and strengthened social cohesion, it allowed for the free expression of ideas though these conformed to the purposes of carnival which, amongst other roles, centred on exclaiming the "unofficial truth" and attacking the officialdom represented in public figures and official public life.

Where the church was austere, carnival culture was based on laughter, ceremony and tradition. Yet the parody of official rituals in turn became tradition, as exemplified by "The Feast of the Ass" where a mock bishop was elected for the day. Laughter endured in carnival as it could not be regulated due to its changing nature and many guises, whilst its role within religion diminished, though it was not totally removed.

The delivery of language is an important aspect of carnival as well as its content and intent. Much of the language used could be construed, at least by the standards of today, as abusive.

This gave it a special place in the scheme of the carnivalesque; being outside accepted norms and practices of official culture. Over time this understanding and use of abusive language came to change, it moved from a multi dimensional form of communication to what Bakhtin (1984) would call 'humiliating and mortifying' (p. 16). Current understanding of the concept has strictly negative connotations with little redeeming qualities, with its purpose to belittle or insult, reinforcing power relationships or to close dialogue.

Profanities and oaths were constructed in much the same way. They too were excluded from official language and found free expression in the marketplace. Here they developed to local dictates, style and culture, were endlessly repeated and adapted finding new voice and direction with each participant. Over time, these expressions created laughter, becoming and remaining popular. This tradition lives on in the works of many children's books.

The grotesque aspects of the uses of profanities, oaths and abuse were seen by Bakhtin to:

> ...retain their full meaning in the popular language from which his (Rabelais) novel sprang, and above all they retained their positive, regenerating pole. They were closely related to all forms of degradation inherited from grotesque realism, they belonged to the popular festive travesties of carnival, to the images of the diableries, of the underworld, of the *soties.* This is why abusive language played an important part in Rabelais' novel. (p. 28)

Important to note too has been the historical development of the cries of street vendors from which Rabelais drew some of his inspiration. These cries are reflected in the language used in the construction of the narrative in some of the episodes in Rabelais' books. The praise is sung of many dishes and foods as well as material goods in a similar way to street vendors spruiking their wares. The universal praise of their wares reflected a deeper appreciation of the important connection between appetites, the body and rejuvenating cycles.

The nature of hunger attributed specifically to characters is important in defining the roles of societal members and how they interrelate. Concepts such as sacred and

profane, high and low culture, authority and carnival role play could be established within this context.

In Rabelais' work, for example, the figure of the fat monk or friar was symbolic of gluttony, idiocy and grotesquery in relation to both physical and psychological make up. Like many other aspects of church culture and status, mockery removed the serious and officious nature of authority. Authority by nature is vested in persons, in office or the positions held within these. The natural course of authority runs with power which is created by a group of individuals and is inherent within a particular group and its resources. To be "in power" implies one group's dominance over another.

When applied to the church, power was often expressed through the use of force, often synonymous with violence. On an official level this was used to symbolise the authority of the church, over morality and common custom. However, authority must by definition be unquestioned by those it seeks to dominate or as Arendt (1970) explains:

> ...[I]ts hallmark is unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither co-ercion nor persuasion is needed. (A father can lose his authority either by beating his child or by starting to argue with him, that is by either behaving like a tyrant or by treating him as an equal.) To remain in authority requires respect for the person or the office. The greatest enemy of authority, therefore, is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter. (p. 45)

In the context of the carnivalesque, we see this suspension from traditional roles and the defining of figures, synonymous with authority. The nature of carnival allows only the symbolic gesture, of labelling of particular figures that become comic due to their one dimensional status. The mode of official form is vaguely defined in terms of action, apparel or mannerisms that define the binary position from which the comic form is fed. Mockery of the status of forms of authority and its guises of representation are allowable due to the exaggeration of specific aspects. The more recognisable the motif of authority, the greater comic invention is possible.

The symbolic gesture binds the crowd to the action of the market performance and allows it to play out with the intention of ridiculing official truth and "proper"

representation as understood by the masses. It is universally understood that this representation suspends associated power manifest in the authority figure. One exaggerated aspect not only allows the freedom of comic invention but also removes the mechanisms that enforce codes of convention inherent in official language. Physical powers that enforce the rule of law and officially sanctioned societal roles, based on existing power structures are undermined.

The church for example as has been stated was a source of comic invention and inspiration. Necessity and the overarching influence that the church held over all aspects of society made it necessary for the peasantry to follow it for guidance but conversely made it seem meddlesome in their affairs. The currency for the transaction between the laity and the church was the preparation of the soul. To this end the imagery of hell served as a means of warning off and maintaining individuals in the teachings of the church.

The abstraction of how hell could be classically described was a conflicting source of discomfit and terror for the individual as well as an amorphous concept that was adjusted by church hierarchy to suit its needs or in answer (or reaction) to the actions of Christians. For many it may have seemed difficult to avoid the possibility of entering hell when the possibility of committing sin was apparent everywhere – in the actions of individuals, the choices that people had to make in relation to how they lived and the fact that the church was the state in determining many other factors of life besides those of a spiritual nature.

Carnivalesque culture took away the serious nature of this official culture and the roles within it, providing a release from rigidly held societal roles. In relation to the notion of hell, Camporesi (1990) notes that:

> ...[T]he parody of classic hell, the anti model suggested by popular-carnivalesque culture, was an instrument of apotropous exorcism, a formula for exorcizing which drove away fear with laughter and jests. It may be placed broadly within the broad spectrum of sacred parody, the use of scornful registers, inverted liturgies and other comic practices. (p. 67)

The forms of worship become the tools by which the carnival inverts the natural order and popular forms (in the broadest sense) of communicating, such as prayer or liturgies. These allow the participants of carnival to knowingly laugh and reaffirm their being, regenerating the spirit of community.

The diverse means of humour allowed for the unofficial truth to be revealed. Official doctrine specified often austere measures for the "correct" means of living. The perceived hypocrisy of many church figures and subsequent scepticism towards the nobility of many of those who had taken vows is a steadfast notion within *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, as the following exchange between Gargantua, Grandgousier and a monk demonstrates:

> ...[S]imilarly a monk – I mean one of those lazy monks – doesn't till the fields like a peasant, nor guard the country like a soldier, nor cure the sick like a physician, nor preach and instruct the world like a good gospeller and preceptor, nor carry commodities and things that the public need like a merchant. That is the reason why everyone hoots at them and abhors them.
>
> (Rabelais, 1955, p.126)

Later when Gargantua is asked about monks praying for us, he replies:

> ...[T]hey mumble through ever so many miracle stories and psalms which they don't in the least understand. They count over a number of paternostas interlarded with long Ave Marias, without understanding them or giving them so much as a thought; and that I call not prayer, but mockery of God. Still the Lord may come to their aid if they do pray for us, and not through fear of losing their fresh bread and fat soups. All true Christians, of all degrees, in all places and at all times, pray to God, and the Holy Spirit prays and intercedes for them, and God receives them into his grace. (ibid, p.126)

Inherent in the above quote is the regard unto which members of the church were held. Evidently to Rabelais the ritual of worship as recognised, structured and ordained by the church, was cynically viewed by the commoner. The irony in "Still the Lord may come to *their* aid if they do pray for us" (italics mine) reveals not contempt for religion but the institutionalised order of worship and the attending hierarchy with positions of power and authority.

In keeping with the principles of carnivalesque, access to religion is for everyone, not the exclusive domain of a select few. This isn't to say that individuals within the orders of religion were less than holy, though common opinion and stereotyping suggests a representative view was held in which religion could be satirised, parodied and mocked. Rabelais makes the point too within the above quote with the examples he lists; worthy deeds are very much a part of the physical world, their outcomes are observable, tangible and provide instant gratification. An existence based on belief and intellect is open to ridicule as there is no apparent independent measure of its worth or integrity. Interesting too, is the rich use of gastronomic language to insinuate corpulence and greed. Interlarded correlates gross appetite with the removal from day to day struggle and undeserved success.

To be fed and to be free from hunger were the goals of peasants in times when food supply was uncertain. The failure of crops or disease were corporeal realities, the loss of the physical ability to tend animals or food sources was also worrying and life threatening. Bakhtin saw that all endeavours were tied to the act of eating and devouring and at that instant, the individual had overcome (temporarily) the struggle to survive. Subsequently, feasting and eating have an important ritual role to fill in society.

Ritualised eating held many sacred objects that were integral to the observance of ritual whether this was done in derision or deference. As the church viewed the sacrifice of Christ from the altar and the pulpit as physical centre of worship, carnivalesque banquets have at their centre the ceremonial table. Nikolajeva (2000) notes of food in relation to worship, that:

> …there are many parallels between the altar and the table, the altar curtain and the table cloth, the sacrificial knife and the butcher's knife, and naturally between a priest and a cook. (p. 14)

The table and the altar are both sources of sustenance, one for the body the other for the soul. Each has an important practical and symbolic meaning attached to its role. In carnivalesque banquet, the ceremony associated with eating at the table and associated discourse, Bakhtin noted that:

> ...[T]he themes of table talk are always "sublime", filled with "profound wisdom", but these themes are uncrowned and renewed on the material bodily level. The grotesque symposium does not have to respect hierarchical distinctions; it freely blends the profane and the sacred, the lower and the higher, the spiritual and the material. There are no mesalliances in its case.
> (pp. 285 – 286)

Rabelais' work is filled with images of feasting and revelry, of indulgence and satire. There is often no distinction made between acceptable practice or conventions of decorum and the earthy, lower order humour that characterises many carnival feasts and ceremonies. Eating until one was full or sating an appetite was the goal of feasting, to ensure continued existence.

Food is used as both euphemism and metaphor in Rabelais' writing. To some extent, the role of food, its benefits and availability, underlie all motivations of character in some form. Manifest mainly in banquets, the action thus can take any course with any character and allow the advent of any idea, philosophical concern or narrative direction. The role of the banquet reflected the major ideas of Rabelais' writing and was structured similarly to the structure of carnival – it could be profane or high brow, ordered or chaotic but at all times inclusive. Bakhtin (1984) noted the "mighty aspiration to abundance and to a universal spirit." (p. 278)

All important conversations, all philosophical discourse was around the table between companions. Mixed with these revellers are all aspects of Rabelais' carnivalesque; colloquial language, the language of the market place, exaggeration, oaths, curses and toasts. These forms of speech were allowed and flourished during feasting as its celebratory nature allowed frank and open speech. This served a communal purpose for the collective body rather than the individual. In this way the banquet feast was restorative for the community and its participants, due in large part to the process involved in providing food for a large gathering.

The excess of food demonstrated the elimination of hunger and the certainty of being sated. It was a triumph over adversity and celebration of the fruits of the individual's labour. The celebratory nature of the feast continues to this day and in many parts of the world, though a cultural shift has occurred over time with many festivals and

carnivals being tokenistic and "symbolic" of their origins. Where once feasts were communal events now predominantly they are individual, private affairs.

The nature of the feast has lost its Rabelaisian intent in that what is celebrated is no longer part of a cyclic process, rather a linear progression marked with events that signpost a progression or conversely mark an anniversary of "looking back". Bakhtin would describe the negative aspects of life in the Middle Ages as being an integral component of the celebration and accepted as such. Modern banquets and festivals have removed the connotations of negativity completely or have their origins simply pitched as an historical footnote, as a means of explanation for their beginnings.

Simultaneously this may have come with greater comprehension of the origins and the science associated with understanding of the many facets that constitute human life. Kristeva (James, 2002) sees current attitudes to bodily functioning as revulsion to perceived upheavals to established social codes of cleanliness and bodily functioning; that the excretion of bodily fluids is a negative transgression to the semiotic realm of bodily rhythms and pulsions (p. 23).

Carnivalised life, as represented now through mass media, moves against the established notion of what carnival represented. Pieces of carnival through their fragmentation have become discontinued and disconnected, exaggerating effect in some aspects whilst being misrepresented in others. The idea of repulsion stemming from the biological mechanisms of the body is an example of this. Removed from the context of its function within many carnival traditions, exaggeration has degenerated into a corrupting process. The carnivalesque celebrates the role of the body in re-birthing and regenerating, all of which is transforming and none of which is possible without decay and death.

These cyclic occurrences in the life of humanity are not separated in a carnivalesque understanding but incorporated into essential component parts of life. Kristeva's ideas also demonstrate the fact that implicit in what she deemed "abjection" was the role of culture. Culture conditions response, the ethical standards to which we measure ourselves and acceptable and non acceptable patterns of behaviour. Carnivalesque life, being outside the boundaries of culture by encompassing all aspects of life, is

more than a particular strand of lifestyle choice. It can only be characterised by unique aspects and are subsequently focal points for the differentiation and celebration of carnival. By focusing on one part of carnival the risk is that its inherent truth becomes representative of the philosophy driving it. Cultural tradition provides as Waugh (1997) states:

> ...[A] recognition of the condition of situated embodiment from which arises all human activity, including art, and also offers a structured "impersonality" which might provide discipline for the desires and promptings of the individual body. (p. 51)

Tradition provides the means through which the ideals of form are carried. Differences in social mores, ethical standards, trends in popular culture and prevailing attitudes at particular times contribute to what aspects of a cultural tradition will be carried forward and which of those will not. Attitudes evolve over time and can reflect new thinking. This is important to note as with the rise of knowledge and level of education within society aspects of carnivalesque have become reinterpreted.

In Rabelais' time the essence of carnival was not to understand the process involved in creation or explanations given for the workings of the natural world, but to accept these machinations as an intrinsic aspect of all life. Many aspects of the carnivalesque have become homogenised components, part of a "package" that is representative of the spirit of carnival. Each separate part stands alone and away from the others and has developed cultural identity in isolation. In this way a modern audience is able to look to each individual part and label according to beliefs, societal values and norms so one aspect of a performance (as carnival is now viewed participation and interaction is minimal) solely represents one feeling or response.

This contrasts with the nature of carnival, defined by Bakhtin, as being without identifiable boundaries. Individuals could not be outside the construction of the drama when their actions influenced the direction carnivalesque drama took.

The physical reality of carnival interplay has at the very least become more passive with a clearly delineated role for participant and audience. Performance can be

viewed analytically within a constructed context of the viewer, whereas the carnival of Rabelais' time allowed no such structure. Bakhtin (1984) described this as:

> [T]he carnivalesque crowd in the marketplace or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organised in their own way, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organisation, which is suspended for the time of the activity. (p. 255)

I make this point because the elements of carnivalesque as outlined in this chapter are applied in this manner to much of children's literature and this can be construed as subversive by its nature. Elements are exaggerated for effect, enlarged to highlight their inherent difference from the norm and in their own way undermine the established order.

In summary, Bakhtinian carnivalesque is complex and broad due to the all encompassing nature of the phenomena that characterises it. Central to Bakhtin's interpretation of Rabelais' work is the role that food, the "grotesque" body and laughter play symbolically and physically. The body in its physical state was representative of the passage of time on the individual, accentuated at human milestones such as birth and death as well as the physical acts that were attendant on these conditions. These physical acts had a definite metaphoric significance for Rabelais that tied the life of the individual intrinsically to the cyclic concept of carnivalesque life. In this cycle all was reborn and remade after annihilation and decay; an equal measure vitally important to key concepts within carnival.

In this regard the idea of the grotesque body became a predominant force; its machinations exaggerated its functioning hyperbolic. Bakhtin has stated that the grotesque body contrasts with the idea of the classic body that had been the major artistic ideal in representation. The classic form is closed off, perfect and inviolate; the grotesque in a state of transgression, open to and interacting with nature and its cycles. The grotesque body is as much a product of this environment, it was restorative and regenerative but also imperfect and deteriorated and was celebrated as such.

Bodily fluids were symbolic of these acts and lent themselves to gross exaggeration whether associated with the decay of the body at death or through fluids that represented the body's life force, the role of blood, for example, or the filling and emptying of the body as represented by the acts of urinating and defecating. It is important to note that these acts were intrinsic in the role of carnivalesque, as they were in the life of the individual. This contrasted with the religious belief of a linear progression for the body; where the soul continues its journey after the physical death of the body and its subsequent decay. The body is the vessel for the journey in carnival and both the body and the soul were equal.

The link between the body and laughter was the use and the metaphoric strength of food. Essential to the well being of the individual it also had an important ritualistic role to play in carnival. The carnival table was the place where the conventions of the carnivalesque played out, community was united through the common bonds of labour and its produce. It reaffirmed and reconnected people; rituals were reaffirmed through the celebration of the people.

To this end laughter was an intrinsic aspect of these rituals. It affirmed and undermined official orthodoxy and structure that represented this division in the ideals of the body. The classical form was very much a part of official doctrine, artistic representation and the aspiration of the individual. The grotesque body, earthy and realistic, was the inescapable truth in the scheme of life for the commoner. This physical reality of what happened to the body through birth and death and the effects upon it due to appetites, both physical and psychological, was a common touchstone in various carnivals and carnivalesque play.

It is important to note that laughter was an important mechanism in which to sustain the central ideas of carnival and in the process rejuvenate and strengthen community bonds. Laughter by nature is not controlled and this allows for the modes of laughter to appear in many guises such as satire, mockery and parody to name a few. The conduits for these reveries, mock plays and stagings were fools, clowns and harlequins, outsiders who were seen as universal truth speakers and represented the views of the crowd (an important aspect of the construction of carnivalesque culture) that usually contrasted official versions of the truth. Plays themselves relied on the

inversion of the symbols associated with the customs being mocked and were a mixture of the sacred and the profane. The role of the clown or the role of "clowning" in Australian children's literature has taken a prominent position in bringing many of Rabelais' philosophical tenets to the narrative structure.

Before industrial production of food to some extent ensured the continuity of supply, food could be scarce, uncertain in terms of supply and often be in a fragile state due to technologies and natural circumstances such as drought, flood or disease amongst other factors. The collection of the harvest and its bounty had a greater significance because it was a victory over uncertainty and freedom from hunger at least in the short term. Ritual celebration then became an integral and entwined part of food culture, expressed through the banquet or feast. This in effect was a microcosm of the society participating in feasting, shown through the mores of the table and expressed through the language of the marketplace and the colloquial use of language.

Indeed carnival essentially celebrates the alleviation of hungers and the sating of appetite, a victory over want. It was also a way of dealing with the physical reality of the changing nature and appearance of the material body. Laughter served to reaffirm bonds and establish traditions and provided relief from the physical realities of society. The overarching influence of the church, not separated from the state at this time, made it the predominant concern of the laity in terms of governance and spiritual guidance. This explains the methods employed in Rabelais' time for the inducement of laughter, parody and mock ritual mirroring important religious dates.

Whilst laughter was important and its forms were encouraged and propagated through the markets and meeting places of the collective, the nature of the language used was crucial in delivering the message of carnival in a recognisable mode. Language reflected colloquialisms and idioms of place. Puns, mockery of official forms and sacred rites reflected a basis in grotesque exaggeration.

Bakhtin has noted also the role of street vendors and spruikers as being influential on those aspects of the dialogue he includes in his analysis of Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Important in this context is the philosophical understanding of the features of language and how these are differentiated between Rabelais' time and our

own. For example, Bakhtin observes how abuse has become representative of a solely negative purpose in its modern guise.

In the time of Rabelais, abuse, curses and oaths served to undermine and vilify aspects and persons of official culture but were also seen as a regenerative process for the community, restoring balance and therefore having an intrinsic part in the cyclical nature of carnival festivity. Parody of official figures has also changed in regard to the status and type of figure being ridiculed, though current representative figures still reflect the perceived imbalance in power between authority and the general populace, particularly for children. So whereas Rabelais' targets of ridicule were monks and representatives of the church, the authority figures in the writing of children's literature reflect the smaller confines of the child's world, concentrating on the schoolyard, its representatives and the home. Parent figures in general can also be symbolic of the power dynamic within the narrative.

This dynamic is exploited in many children's books that we may consider subversive in subject matter or underlying ideology, because there is an implicit mistrust of authority and specifically of adults. This tension propels the narrative and enables the further erosion of the influence of traditional figures of power.

In the next chapter I will look at the role authority plays in children's literature, the guises it takes and the attitudes expressed towards representatives of power. Using the tenets of Baktinian carnivalesque I will examine how an understanding of the aspects of authority can be applied to selected Australian children's books.

II

Blurring the boundaries: the paradigm of Authority and the Carnivalesque in children's literature

This chapter explores the role of authority in selected Australian children's books through the paradigm of Bakhtin's carnivalesque theory. The idea of authority will be looked at through its representation in traditional authority figures and structures, particularly those figures that are representative of authority in relation to the protagonists of the selected texts. The texts referred to in this chapter are Donna Sharp's *Blue days* (1986), Robin Klein's *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* (1989) and *Hating Alison Ashley* (1985). Judith O'Neill's *Deepwater* (1989), James Aldridge's *The True Story of Lilli Stubeck* (1984), Bill Scott's *Shadows among the leaves* (1984), Isobel Carmody's *Obernewtyn* (1987), Victor Kelleher's *Master of the*

Grove (1982), Sonya Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs* (1995) and Roger Vaughan Carr's *Firestorm* (1985).

The books chosen to analyse concepts concerning authority within a carnivalesque context make apparent varying relationships to authority and use different structures and genres to develop these ideas. Examples will be taken from some parts of each story though not the whole texts, as this chapter explores those parts specifically relevant to the idea of authority. Texts by Griffiths and Jennings will be used to contrast ideas, concepts and subtext ideology to the works noted above.

Sharp's *Blue days* and Klein's *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* are examined in the context of the relationship between adolescence and authority institutions and figures. Klein will also be discussed in terms of the power relationships between individuals such as in the narrative of *Hating Alison Ashley* where the main protagonists are two young girls each representative of stereotyped constructs and how authority is viewed and portrayed.

Novels that are representative of the past in terms of the narrative action such as O'Neill's *Deepwater* and Aldridge's *The True Story of Lilli Stubeck* will be discussed in terms of the authority views that are made explicit in the text and by implicit suggestion by the author. The nature of these "historical" constructs of the role and the machinations of authority will be discussed. This allows the question to be asked of whether or not it is fair to examine authority through a modern paradigm when mores and social convention may have been markedly different from our current experience. Furthermore, as a basis of this line of inquiry that reinterprets a rustic past and perhaps romanticises its existence, Scott's *Shadows among the leaves* is examined for its treatment of authority and authority figures.

Scott's story also allows a further development of the "agrarian ideal" and bridges the divide between depictions of rural realism and agrarian economy as a basis for futuristic and apocalyptic genre writing as discussed in Carmody's *Obernewtyn* and Kelleher's *Master of the Grove.*

Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs* and Vaughan Carr's *Firestorm* will be discussed for their differing depictions of 'gritty' social realism. This will be considered through the social context of Hartnett's protagonists and the depiction of a town's response to bushfire in Carr's work. Implicit in these texts is an underlying view of authority that will be examined through the "lens" of the carnivalesque.

Finally in terms of examining changing views of authority, it is necessary to discuss within the context of the Children's Book Council short listed books issues of censorship, taboo subjects and changing readership tastes for a new configuring of authoritarian positioning. To do so it is important to look at both Jennings and Griffiths, current popular writers with a growing following amongst young readers. In this chapter, some stories from Jennings' *Unbelievable* will be analysed and further on this continuum, Griffiths' *Zombie Bums From Uranus.* In this way we can see the progression of the burgeoning means of lampooning and undermining authority that has become more complex. This has enabled new constructs for the role of authority to be played out.

As a starting point we begin with a definition of power and authority, discussed in relation to inherent carnivalesque attitudes towards authority and authority figures. These are then examined in relation to the textual considerations and subtext of the narratives used here.

Casey (2002) defines authority in this way:

> ...[T]he most important meaning the word authority has concerns the assent given at the deepest levels of the person to something higher and greater than himself. This sense compels us to certain courses of action over others and generates a resistance even to the possibility of actions contrary to the truth or value accepted as supreme. (p. 79)

Furthermore Casey adds that authority differs from power as authority respects personal freedoms, the ability to comply or resist is available to individuals and is neither compromised nor diminished if the individual submits to the rule of authority, (though authority would be diminished if the freedom to respond in these ways was removed). Institutions and individuals representing authority hold the values that

society believe to be at the core of governance and as such are accepted as decision makers for the benefit of the community as a whole.

There are many aspects of such a concept that can be equally applied to the narrative structure of numerous books within Australian children's literature and this chapter will look at aspects and views of authority in this context. The relationship of authority to subject matter, narrative and writing process will also be considered in terms of character and focalisation as a mechanism to challenge ruling views.

Australian children's literature has many examples of writers, novels and characters who challenge authority within the text, often represented through the unfolding narrative and encapsulated in the dynamics between characters who signify inherent societal power structures. As well, texts that challenge conventions and conservative views through genre choice and construction of text (though the text itself may follow a traditional story pattern) are also considered. Finally, texts that through their existence invert expectations of what children's literature has been traditionally defined as, are looked at in relation to more traditional texts. In essence, books that are internally quelling against traditional power sources, role models and stereotypes; books that create external dissonance and challenge, and books that have redefined attitudes to these traditional protagonists and changed what is acceptable as children's literature or considered appropriate material for children's literature.

Attitudes towards the traditional organisation of power, whether this be the church, state, ruling elites or commonly accepted mores, and the authorities behind these structures, are more apparent when considered within the dynamic between the carnivalesque crowd and the representatives of power in Rabelais' time. Elements of the carnivalesque such as the forms of laughter, the role of food and images of the body, all have a common thread from the writing of Rabelais to contemporary Australian children's books. Most in some way show this connection with authority in either promulgating the experience and enhancing the narrative structure or reacting against the representation of power to further the protagonist's cause.
Authority in and of itself is not considered, rather it is seen as a means to study the dynamic between protagonists. In other words though specifically addressed by Bakhtin in analysis of Rabelais, is addressed here through the dynamic between

representative characters of different backgrounds and the inherent power and authority of these roles.

Consider Bakhtin's (1984) analysis of feasting and its relationship to authority:

> ...[I]n the framework of class and feudal political structure this specific character could be realised without distortion only in the carnival and in similar marketplace festivals. They were the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance. On the other hand, the official feasts of the Middle Ages, whether ecclesiastic, feudal or sponsored by the state, did not lead the people out of the existing world order and created no second life. On the contrary they sanctioned the existing patterns of things and reinforced it. (p. 9)

Bakhtin goes on to say that official feasts took from the past to confirm and reinforce the present, making official feasts serious, stable and unchanging. (ibid. p.9)

It is this unchanging and reinforcing aspect of authority that is apparent within the character types of many Australian children's books, such as teachers, parents and wider community authority figures such as policemen. Authority figures and structures may be made explicit through the narrative structure, become clear upon the unfolding of plot or upon the character dynamic established within the text. Authority figures may be familial, representative of personal power or status afforded by money, connections or attractiveness and in some instances intellect. The role of carnival as noted by Stephens (1992) is:

> ...[G]rounded in playfulness which situates itself in positions of non conformity. It expresses opposition to authoritarianism and seriousness, and is often manifested as a parody of prevailing literary forms and genres, or as literature in non canonical forms. Its discourse is often idiomatic, and rich in a play of signifiers which foregrounds the relativity of sign – thing relationships, and hence the relativity of prevailing "truths" and ideologies. (pp. 121 – 122)

In considering these ideas it should be noted that the books discussed are from the Children's Book Council short listed books for children and young adults, from the early eighties to the late nineties. These books are specifically chosen as they are recognised as being representative of quality writing and the best of each year. The other limitations imposed are to consider only young adult and juvenile literature, as commonly defined. It is also significant that these texts arrive at a time when other

prominent Australian authors such as Paul Jennings are beginning to gain popularity (the first Jennings book appeared in 1985).

During this time period it has become more apparent that there is an increase in novels that contain ideas and concepts that are transgressive in nature, becoming more popular both commercially and as preferred reading material for young children. It should be noted that with the advent of a writing style and formula as favoured by Jennings and the commercial success of his writing, other authors who have become popular such as Andy Griffiths need to be considered and their relationship to award winning titles from the Children's Book Council. The contrast between what is apparently acceptable and considered of quality contrasts with the often critically ignored but increasingly popular texts that display the baser elements of carnivalesque theory. These texts continue to push the boundaries of what is acceptable, whilst raising questions about the gratuity of some aspects of the narrative.

The particular texts discussed from the Children's Book Council award lists are predominantly serious in nature, the established order is never challenged with the status quo maintained. Characters act out or rebel against a system that has determined an individual's social position. However, these only highlight their differences from the mainstream and are further used to accentuate the inherent strength of existing power structures.

In Sharp's *Blue days*, a coming of age story, the main protagonist, Marie Lucas, is forced to confront the issues of adolescence and take responsibility for her actions. Marie Lucas' coming of age addresses some of the common issues concerning teenagers, such as acceptance from peers and personal identity, whilst broadening the scope of the individual's rite of passage. This also includes include some wider questions about the nature of faith (with some brief narrative interludes on faith) and the familial phenomenon of a single parent family. By the end of the story, Marie conforms to find her place within society. The experience of the teenage years is a rite of passage that a person may go through to become a socially responsible member of the adult world. That is, a role has been fulfilled and that role conforms to the overriding structure of the society that Marie is about to enter into.

This predominant theme of conforming after coming through an ordeal or a series of trials that test the resolve of character, is supplemented by a set of stereotypes that support this transition. Issues of poverty (Marie's friend is poor though happy) intrinsically give a message of anti materialism. Intellectualism, the relationship of the protagonist to her peers, contempt, perceived superiority and alienation are all addressed through the paradigm of "coming of age", yet pale to the overall narrative voice of adapting to the predominant ideology of the book's society. She eventually accepts the authoritarian structure of the adult world as she comes to know it and takes her place in its schema accepting its confines and controlling her desires. Derrida (1978) states of desire that:

> ...[D]esire ... permits itself to be appealed to by the absolutely irreducible exteriority of the other to which it must remain infinitely inadequate. Desire is equal only to excess. No totality will ever encompass it. Thus the metaphysics of desire is a metaphysics of infinite separation. (p. 93)

To desire to be different will result in isolation and non acceptance. The pressure to align with the predominant ideology is both constant and unmoving. This structure exists and is impervious to change from the individual. Society forms and moulds Marie's character until the differences of the individual fade to be replaced by conformity to the societal norm.

This structural authority that is unchanging, omnipotent and oppressive is evident in Klein's *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly.* Angie has a sordid existence full of desperation, depression and physical deterioration associated with drug culture. Though her starting point is the type of existence associated with the marginalised and dangerous (physically and psychologically) it is Angie's intent to return to what she sees, and the author presents, as a "normal" life. This is readily achieved through the nostalgic reminiscences Angie has of life before her addiction. Her addiction is in binary opposition to the wholesome existence of the life she led before drugs and she contrasts the sordid reality she frequents with the imagined life of someone who belongs. The Derrida quote can again be seen in the context of Angie losing control in her battle to conquer her addiction – desire wins out again and again. However, this desire is seen not as a freedom with attendant possibilities, but an impulse little

controlled and therefore dangerous to the individual, the individual's health and her ability to adapt to societal expectations.

Sharp's *Blue days* and Klein's *Came Back to Show You I Could Fly* address the overriding need to conform through the mores of their times. Klein's book also adds the imperative of a legal framework over the protagonist's situation. She is acting against the law when using drugs. There are many penalties for doing this including prison, a means of punishing the individual for breaking the law as determined by society and sets an example to all other individuals.

Laws and regulations all assist in reinforcing the social contract and established order of a society. To comply is the easier option and a means of passive acceptance. The structure of authority again gives definition to the culture in which it operates. So the protagonists in Klein's book through the illicit use of drugs create a counterpoint to the lives of law abiding citizens and thus a perspective for which organised society can be viewed. Angie's visits for example back to her family home are visits to either repair relationships or for money to support her habit. These returns are fraught with tension because of her lifestyle, but they are also contrasted through the physical attributes that Angie and her mother represent. For example, the way that they dress is representative of their character. Angie is very casual and ornate, colourful and vibrant, whilst her mother dresses demurely, a reflection of her authority within the relationship and the power she exerts over Angie, though this is tenuous.

The relationship dynamic is explored in some depth in Aldridge's *The True Story of Lilli Stubeck.* Lilli is from a family assumed to be Gypsies by those around her. This allows the author to explore some of the associated stereotypes, racial and social, attending the life of Lilli and how she lives. Root (1996) notes this as cultural differences being aestheticised and artificially exaggerated to provoke and prolong the sensation of ambivalence and unease (p.50). This is important in the context of the story and to the sub textual views espoused by the narrator. It places Lilli on the periphery of ordered society and differentiates her role from that of Mrs. Dalgleish who represents ordered society. In a microcosm of conforming to societal views and standards, Mrs. Dalgleish is able to control Lilli's behaviour through her appearance, and with her appearance her social standing. In this way Mrs Dalgleish hopes to

improve Lilli's social standing and have her accepted by the influential people that she herself mixes with. Lilli can only make it through acceptance of the social mores that Mrs. Dalgleish is attempting to impose on her, to make her acceptable to "polite" society.

This representation of social mores through the manifestation of characters exemplifies how authority is structured to confirm and reinforce power structures as they exist. The complexities of the relationships are managed through the dynamics between characters which can be drawn out and analogies made about the nature of society in general. The rights of individuals are protected in society and this makes it difficult to change the hierarchy of control as one individual or defined group may have the means to reinforce their position at the expense of another group, or as Ripstein (2004) in *Philosophy and Public affairs*, states:

> ...[E]xternal duties thus limit the things people can do to each other. As a result they give shape to a specific kind of social order, one in which people stand in rightful relations to each other, and one in which rights are clearly defined in accordance with general laws binding on all.(p.10)

Ripstein further elaborates that rights are reciprocally imposed limits on individual's freedom, which means that if everyone is to have rights all must be subject to the same limits. It is this tension, this inability to change the status quo that propels plot and creates dramatic tension between characters.

Consider Klein's *Hating Alison Ashley*. The narrator, a young school girl named Erica, despises the new girl Alison, who moves to town from a "better area". All of Erica's judgements are made on the basis, at first, of physical appearance; Alison is blond, beautiful and well dressed. The emphasis on the superficial, stylistic qualities that determine status represent the literal difference between the girls. Alison's stylishness to Erica is a reflection of her taste and an implicit sense of superiority. It makes little difference that at the story's conclusion Erica realises she is in fact the snob and has used a stereotype to cloud her judgement on the nature of Alison's personality. Klein has differentiated her heroine from her nemesis by using symbolic power as represented in our society, namely looks, appearance and material trappings.

Erica learns to empathise and understand Alison but the balance of power within the lives of two families hasn't changed. Erica's family are still poor and seemingly unchanged whilst Alison's mother is still stressed in a "status" job. In this sense the character of Erica uses the only weapons at her disposal until she is accepted, and that is to ridicule Alison and all she supposedly represents. It is as Bakhtin noted the role of satire, parody and ridicule to reduce the officiousness of higher status objects, officials and institutions and this Erica effectively does.

A sense of equality and egalitarianism is evident throughout many Australian children's books, where status, social power and influence are part of the subtext of the narrative. In O'Neill's *Deepwater*, the narrative revolves around a small rural village in country Victoria during the First World War. The story follows the fortunes of many protagonists during the war and reflects many of the clichés about attitudes of the time, namely the euphoria of war and fighting for the empire. Other less noble characteristics are also explored in the plot, such as the valley's xenophobia towards the German Henschke family.

This representation as a plot device can be seen to serve the purpose of creating the "other". In this instance though O'Neill inverts this representation to show the German family as a hardworking, decent Christian family and the locals as bigoted and intolerant, especially as the war continues and its deprivations gradually become apparent. Interestingly, developments in the plot highlight the Australian ideal of egalitarianism and conversely, the undermining or attack on any deemed too successful or to have not earned their apparent good fortune. Take for example the arrival of Miss Playfair to the community as the new school teacher. She creates general unrest and is treated warily by the locals. As the war ends and its consequences are borne out, the idea of natural justice becomes apparent; Miss Playfair marries a returned serviceman and has a difficult marriage. Other characters who have been created more sympathetically arrive at outcomes that reflect their sturdy, hardworking ethos and have a more benign or prosperous future; everyone's land becomes bountiful and an agrarian/pastoral idyll is created. In this regard this culmination of group efforts for the collective good reflects the ideals of a carnivalised society. Beyond ritual, the need to harvest crops is central to the survival of community and is removed from the purely symbolic sphere. Values such as the

ones that are implicitly recognised as being valuable in O'Neill's text are shared within the carnivalised world view.

The subtext suggests that egalitarianism only extends to those people who will not change the expectations placed on them. Whilst this might seem to place the ideals espoused in this text as outside the functioning of carnivalesque, the connection exists between a sceptical view of those who may rise to power and those already established in positions of hierarchical control. Power and authority are not to be trusted regardless of the circumstances through which they are established. Whether authority exists or is created through personal politics, the societal structures from which they arise or the resources available to individuals or groups, authority is mistrusted. This is exemplified with the competition for Miss Playfair's affections.

The authority invested in individuals is a dilemma in that the need to rule, govern or order society is apparent to all citizens, though through this the opportunity to abuse, disenfranchise or disempower is a distinct possibility. Casey (2002) talks of the challenges to modern authority and its ideal:

> ...[M]odern societies are now extremely pluralistic, and the real crisis in authority lies in part in the conclusions we have drawn from this fact. Faced with conflicted understandings of the truth about human existence, we have privatised all questions of meaning and value and accepted relativism and utilitarianism as the preferred forms of moral reasoning. (p.79)

Whilst O'Neill may not be inverting the social order with her characterisations, the political purpose of focalising the struggles of Deepwater's community highlights the values of community; respect, support, hard work and self-reliance. With these values that help to define the characters, the reader is able to place each character within both the hierarchy of community, and establish their status; they are part of the accepted community or conversely outsiders. These ideas contrast with many of the ideas that authority invokes in people and subverts the perceived intention of institutional authority and people in positions of authority. Like carnival, the idea of mistrust in Australian children's literature is extensive, with its discourse running through the narrative structure from socio-political representations of character to the ideologies expressed. Barsky (1998) noted of discourse that it is:

> ...a living entity inasmuch as it constantly evolves and adapts, taking in new expressions and terms from various strata of society or from different cultures or groups. This dynamic, never fixed status of language threatens authority and is therefore itself subject to various attempts on the part of authoritarian institutions like governments to control its functioning. (p. 629)

Barsky relates this to a belief of Bakhtin's about the role of discourse in carnival and its connection to representations of official authority sources. The narrative structure of the novel allows the author to question status quo through the creation of dramatic tension, positioned through different individuals or groups to contrast various viewpoints that may or may not reflect an officially sanctioned or accepted social structure and its inherent hierarchy. The discourse in the novel centres on the language of empire and is contrasted with the traditions that constitute the German heritage of the Henschke family so that on a superficial level there is no divergence from a commonly used language but a separate entity in the structure of the language itself. The discourse of character helps to expose beliefs and ideology more readily than can be achieved through characters operating within a pre-determined authoritative structure.

The examples given thus far provide contrasting views of power solely through the subset of society they supposedly represent. Individual characters or groups and the ethos they live by, the moral positioning of their lifestyle and their actions, implicitly suggest a belief system intrinsically linked with consequences that help to shape the subtext of the narrative. The actions of characters and their motivations are used to reflect a position on authority whether in accordance or disagreement. The reliance on language and discourse between characters can be seen as secondary to the socio-economic position that they are in; their position in society readily lends itself to a series of actions and entrenched value judgements that define the novel's discourse and the author's intention. So for example, whilst the young narrator in *Deepwater* may have some views that differ to those of the farming community, the tension in the novel arises from the tensions that exist on the larger ideological scale concerning race and the issues of loyalty, honour and historical obligation.

Two further examples of imposing set values through the representative façade of a particular social group are Scott's *Shadows among the leaves* and Vaughan Carr's *Firestorm*. In both narratives, views on authority, which are negative, are readily apparent. In both books there is resentment and mistrust of authority; authority as represented by an amorphous entity that is given little explanation or revealing detail.

The representation of authority is used as a one dimensional mechanism to distance the views and actions of the main protagonists in the story. The official in Scott's book is compared unfavourably to a turkey, his actions and mannerisms are ridiculed and undermined and the basis of his character solely represented through this one instance in the text, his authority thus diminished. In Vaughan Carr's *Firestorm* the narrative is serious yet still presents an opposition to the manifestation of authority as it appears in the narrative, in this instance the professional fire fighting service. The "Official Firies" are despised by the volunteers for abandoning the town and leaving it to its fate when large, out of control bush fires approach the town.

The narrative is retold through the perspective of the young narrator who has familial ties to the crew and a connection to the town, his home. The position of the official fire brigade is never fully explained or their motives for their decision revealed thus making it easier for an empathetic reading from the perspective of the volunteers. The idea of authority as remote, arbitrary and somehow non essential to the lives of "regular", "everyday" people is easier to accept because of the author's positioning of the reader. In this regard, the link can be seen to the idea of carnival and its view of authority through, as Murphy (1992) when discussing Rabelais states, a "generalised disrespect directed towards authority and the status quo." (p.2)

In Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs*, this disrespect becomes an abhorrence of the principal authority figure of the story, Griffin Willow. Griffin is the patriarch of a dysfunctional family who are outsiders to society and have subsequently become outsiders to normality due to the tensions and dynamics that have created the abnormal relationships between family members. Yet these bonds, as damaged as they are, are zealously protected from outsiders or any perceived threats to the family operating as a unit. The Willows run a caravan park with the irony being that the park is so

rundown and unattractive it barely seems worthy of being a destination for a holiday and all that is implicit with the concept.

Rather than review and respond to the entire story as interesting as it is, the main concern in relation to views on authority are the fragile connections between family members and the menacing, volatile presence of Griffin overarching and dominating each of these relationships and how these are disturbed by the arrival of the artist Fox. His interaction and upsetting of the power hierarchy within the story (with his pursuit of Michelle), results in his rejection, played out in a cruel prank, and the tragic consequences that lead to the death of Jordan.

This powerful story resonates for the view of authority it represents in the dirge-like narrative voice of the text. Hartnett sets authority as a corrupted, malevolent force embodied in the patriarchal figure of Griffin. The reader is led to loathe this figure as a distortion of leadership, though he has strength of character. Arendt (1970) noted of this that:

> ...[S]trength unequivocally designates something in the singular, an individual entity, it is the property inherent in an object or person and belongs to its character, which may prove itself in relation to other things or persons, but is essentially independent of them. The strength of even the strongest individual can always be overpowered by the many. (p. 45)

When Griffin's unquestioned authority is shaken by the secrets revealed by the artist, he re-establishes absolute power by the use of violent force, murdering Jordan. How this affects relationships and the power structure within the family is unknown as when Fox returns to the park he finds the family has left, and the story finishes on this open-ended coda.

Hartnett's perspective of authority in this context allows the reader to see power within the opening paradigm as abusive. Arendt also mentions that the surest way to undermine authority is to ridicule it and laugh at it (ibid. p.45) Part of the depressing oeuvre of the story is the absence of humour which makes authority absolute and positions the reader to despise its complete power.

Whilst Hartnett used the geographic isolation of her setting - an unnamed, non idealised space for the complex narrative - many other Australian novels also reflect on the ideals as represented by geographic space.

An Arcadian idyllic exists in some Australian texts contrasting lifestyles from "the bush" and city living. The move to the bush, usually a result of moving from urban environments is framed by a desire by the protagonists to simplify their lives or to add value through reintroducing a connectedness to the land. It is a highly idealised concept that suggests a greater ownership for the individual over factors that contribute to their quality of life, their destiny and personal empowerment.

Through the paradigm of authority it can be seen as a move from a centralist perspective to an emphasis on the individualised pursuit of personal freedoms. In this sense it allows for individuals to follow a philosophical path free from the obligations that people are compelled to follow when they operate within a preordained system of rules, laws and structures that individuals adapt to. Hirschkop (1998) makes the point that:

> …[O]ne cannot derive such an "ethically obligating position", the sense of oughtness which turns a norm or a value into something compelling, from a demonstration or proof that something is right, for proof can only justify something that is objectively right, and objective norms – laws, we might call them – always provide escape hatches for subjects because they apply to people in general and to no one in particular. Law provides people with reasons but not conscience, and only the later makes one truly responsible in thought and deed. (p. 585)

The move towards the land reflects the conscious decision of individuals to reclaim ownership of their lives and related forms of production, as well as taking control of one's personal destiny. There is an empowerment through breaking from existing power structures and the controls placed on individuals within these by authority. Moving to the bush is an ideal expression of this philosophy.

Many Australian children's novels that use this as a plot device are creating it to be viewed as a utopian alternative to the existing reality of urban dwelling. There is no developed economy, economic benefit or supporting infrastructure for a move to the

bush and simultaneously an increased hardship is created and possibly an uncertainty of supply, at least in terms of food. Whilst this is often secondary to the unfolding of the story it symbolises both a diminishing of traditional authority sources and frames the actions of the protagonists who make these moves in a philosophical sense. Its relationship to authority is to remove it from the deliberations and motivations of characters. The relationship to carnival is to create a self contained world that moves to its own machinations, rhythms and internal logic, suspending the influence of the greater ordered world outside the boundaries created by the actions of its participants.

This idea of a return to rural lifestyles, of subsistence and connection to the land is a rich source of ideas for many writers and provides possibilities to be explored in different contexts, so whilst some novels use the return to the land as symbolic of change or freedom from industrial society, others exclude this context by removing the conditions as we know them now to look at the possible disastrous consequences of policies and how these would affect future society.

In the post apocalyptic novel *Obernewtyn* by Isobelle Carmody, this idea of agrarian subsistence has been taken to its extreme conclusion. Society has broken down and reverted back to an immediate reliance on agriculture to support society economically and as a means of organising its social structure. Authority is invested in a group simply known as "The Council" and the sub group of herders (those with animals) have power in the scheme of the society that Carmody has created. There is a group of outsiders with various powers of extra sensory perception which is outlawed.

Similarly to books discussed earlier, *Obernewtyn* has a shadowy, powerful authority organisation that controls the people through violent means. "The Council" is never explained or their actions given meaning; the fear they inspire in people such as Elspeth and Rosamund is shown through the effect that decisions have on these characters and never through the purpose of the council in controlling the remnants of humanity. This symbolic portrayal of power is complemented by establishing below the council the hierarchy of the people left after the event of the "Great White", presumably the detonation of a nuclear bomb and its aftermath.

The herders sit at the top of the social order, their status ensured by their possession of livestock. The political message inherent in the narrative suggests that power, privilege and status are still linked to material possession. Carmody's novel is serious in tone with no humour in its story line, there is no comic relief from the oppressive and depressing air of its plot. In this regard, authority is total and there is no element of carnival to subvert the predominant ideology, Emerson (1992) notes of Bakhtin that carnival laughter is valuable to largely liberate us from terror (p.258) To some extent this novel could only be set in the future where the possibilities of change, equality and freedom are able to be removed and the story to almost act as a fable or cautionary tale. Carmody presents a bleak future where humanity has almost destroyed itself but not its ability to impose order and authority on the survivors. It is suggested that in this vacuum created after the destruction of the "old order" that forms of authority naturally occur and subsequently establish control.

This domination of a particular group will inevitably lead to the disadvantage of one group or another. The focalisation of the reader in this instance is directed to view "The Council" with suspicion due to stereotypes of the arbitrariness that domination and power provide. Sidorkin (1997) notes that:

> ...[D]omination implies some sort of human involvement. Yet domination does not necessarily include instances of evil, of intentional harm. If someone intentionally does harm to me, it may severely hinder my freedom. But this does not mean that all, or even most limitations of my freedom comes from someone's immoral intentions, even if another human being actually causes the harm. For many of the bad things that happen to us, there is nobody to blame. Domination is another side of social association, which is constitutive to human existence. (p. 2)

The power dynamic in the narrative isn't balanced to present an objective representation of all the subgroups that Carmody has created. Instead the remoteness of the council is reinforced through their removal from the major action of the plot, the implications drawn from their activities, are played out by the remaining groups who suffer the consequences of the council's actions, which are neither discussed nor explained.

In Rabelais' time, the ideology of the church state was the driving force behind the values, laws and customs underpinning and sustaining society. Carnivalesque was the response to official culture drawn from a rich history of folklore and tradition, the celebration of people over circumstance, of plenty over famine, of the social contract over the views and the power of officialdom. Carmody has removed the carnival element from *Obernewtyn* as there are no ideologues to oppose or beliefs to undermine within the story, instead we have a suspicion of what this power may represent or from where it may be drawn without the ability to attack it.

Similarly Kelleher's *Master of the Grove* is set outside modern civilisation and recreates a world that is bound by its own laws of logic, culture and custom. This world allows Kelleher to focus on aspects that propel the story and suspend disbelief; we can have no qualms about a world that is entirely of the author's creation. Todorov (1973) has explained this as the use of the fantastic:

> [T]he Fantastic, as we have seen, lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from "reality" as it exists in the common opinion. At the story's end, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that the new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvellous. (p. 41)

In this sense Kelleher has created a story that is marvellous in its construct and in its resolution between Derin, a chosen disciple, and Krob, the powerful wizard. In this instance, the mechanisms of absolute power can be observed in the actions of Krob. The authority of the narrative is invested in the power and control that Krob has, particularly over the plains people and the inhabitants of this world. Again stereotypes of power are observable in the characterisation of Krob, blinded both literally and metaphorically, he is also physically portrayed as fragile and old, wizened and bent.

The age of Krob is symbolic of the rule of authority it is established over time and moulded through systems and management. To be represented as young would imply a certain violence to achieve hierarchical control. Authority is stereotyped as a state

that has come to be rather than to be imposed, although this transition would have to be completed quickly at some stage.

The power of Krob has arisen from his authority resulting in the total submission of the plains people to his will and to his appearance and functioning as a wizard. Absolute submission to authority has become the creation of power and removal of freedoms. Derin (2002) upsets this status quo because of his principles, or as Casey notes in relation to authority:

> [P]eople with convictions are trouble because they are compelled to act in inconvenient ways and have a capacity for resisting the demands of power. (p. 79)

Krob cannot destroy the principles that Derin believes in and his belief systems reinforce his opposition to what is central to the wizard. In this instance there is no parody or underlying satirical attack on the values of Krob's world, just an attempt to wrest power from an entrenched authority source. An act of violence is the only means of changing established order. Bond (1991) points out that:

> ...the idea that human beings are necessarily violent is a political device, the modern equivalent of the doctrine of original sin. For a long time this doctrine helped to enforce acceptance of the existing social order. For reasons the church could not explain everyone was born to eternal pain after death unless the church saved them. It carefully monopolised all the sacraments which were the only means to salvation. To be saved a man had to accept the church teachings on the way secular society should be organised; if that society ever needed restraining or reforming, the only ways of doing this that the church permitted were admonishment and excommunication." (p. 9)

In this explanation the vague nature of authority, in this instance the church, is reinforced as a power source to be respected and obeyed without overt disclosure of its machinations or difficult and indelicate questions asked. Culture is created for and by authority by the laws and regulations that authority itself imposes. Violent change is often the only means of recreating the order or restoring justice to society at large. In *Obernewtyn* this overthrow is possible due to violent change because the pretext of a future society is created where its marvellous societal rules transcend or disregard those we experience in the day to day structure of our society. In this way, we can

imagine a society where the authority that rules, can be so easily overthrown. Bakhtin (1984) stated that "every blow dealt to the old helps the new to be born." (p. 207)

These novels may exaggerate the effects upon their societies that communities but to some extent they are a natural extension or conclusion to the growth and development of authority. That is to say they are based on events and situations that could occur under particular circumstances. The reader doesn't have to completely suspend disbelief to place themselves at the centre of such novels. Authority is viewed and interacted with entirely through the paradigm of issues we confront now; the nature of authority, its extent and who it serves.

When we look at the work of Paul Jennings for instance, many of the issues concerning authority and authority figures are present in his stories but what differs is the approach taken to creating narrative tension and resolution. The fact that the work of Jennings has largely been critically ignored (though the popularity of his work continues to grow), is an issue that will be discussed in a later chapter. There are many aspects of the authority paradigm that Jennings uses in a way that parodies and undermines authority figures and institutions of authority, scatological humour being a predominant device in his works.

Jennings often employs a first person narrative in each of his stories. In this way the reader sympathises with the narrator, sees events from their viewpoint and eliminates any conflicting ideologies that may be represented in the text. The individual traits of the character are foregrounded to promote the unique qualities of character and to strengthen an empathetic alignment with the reader. This is in contrast to the generalist, vaguely defined characteristics of authority and authority figures that have come to increasingly be viewed with mistrust, disdain and hostility. Brill (1998) notes of this that:

> [P]ower was desacralized long ago. Individuals are protected from the arbitrariness of public administration and are free to express open mistrust of rulers. The authority of the state is no longer elevated onto a pedestal. The individual is the new celebrated statue. (p. 12)

A sympathetic portrayal removes the influence of traditional power figures, removing their motivation and undermining their reasons for behaving in the way they do. This diminishes their worth as compared to that of the main protagonists whether human or anthropomorphised animals such as the animal character created by Jennings, "Singenpoo". The nature of Jennings work challenges as writing as it transgresses, utilises taboos and questions by its existence the very nature of writing for children.

The writing of Jennings can be compared in some ways to folkloric elements in Rabelais, anatomy and functioning being used to produce a shock, usually through the use of humour. Bakhtin makes the point that Rabelais' work has been redefined as an understanding of humour; its sources and historical development have changed over centuries. When the nature of humour became more important and its construction was examined, revisionist analysis isolated the subject and its internal components, looking at the parts rather than the whole and the interrelatedness and connection that were so crucial to true carnival.

Rather than the rejuvenating and life affirming quality of humour and the comic, laughter came to be seen as reactionary and almost solely for the purposes of ridicule. Rabelais came to be looked down upon when an understanding of his work lost its multiple perspective understanding and came to symbolise the "low brow" and thus had limited merit. Although the spectrum of genre, content, style and subject matter are far vaster in the works of Rabelais than Jennings, the underlying principle is the same, the rejection of the subject matter as unworthy. Consider in this context the view of humour post seventeenth century as expressed by Bakhtin (1984):

> …[T]he sphere of the comic is narrow and specific (private and social vices); the essential truth about the world and about man cannot be told in the language of laughter. Therefore the place of laughter in literature belongs only to the low genres, showing the life of private individuals and the inferior social levels. Laughter is a light amusement or a salutary social punishment of corrupt and low persons. (p. 67)

This view has had a marked influence on the writing of Jennings and the characters who espouse the views of the "low", in this sense the poor and dispossessed, the socially isolated or marginalised, and their opposition to the recognisably socially

superior (but corrupted by position or deficiency of character) public authority figures as created in his stories. The idea that there is certain subject matter that is unacceptable or unworthy of serious consideration in terms of the quality of writing, is an issue to be later addressed in the context of new media, but with this prevailing attitude it allows Jennings to strongly define and separate protagonists into representations of authority or positions in opposition to it. The work of Jennings, both novels and short stories, allows the author to explore these relationships and authority structures through different social relationships.

Unbelievable by Jennings is a collection of short stories dealing with a range of subject matter and different characters. The structural approach to each of these stories is similar in that there is a first person narrative and resolution that concludes the story as if its creation were an elaborate joke or the narrative is working towards a punch line. Stephens (1992) would describe this text as "interrogative" as the reader is positioned by signifiers to understand the gag. Stephens also makes the point that:

> ...[A]ction focused outrageousness in more recent texts may move more deeply into taboo areas in response to the steady shift in the boundaries of taboo during this century. (p. 123)

Jennings' story is action packed, and covers any number of topics that may once have been regarded as taboo, such as death, sexual relations (implied as it is) and the abuse of power. Even if we are to allow that these may not be transgressive as topics they may still seem to be inappropriate or too "adult" for children's literature. So whilst the writing adheres to convention, the underlying ideology challenges the reader to question the authority invested in influential figures in the story or the inherent power structure that the narrative works against.

In "Pink Bow Tie" we see many of the symbols of power represented in a child's world but also recognised as having power over children and status within the adult world. The most hostile and intimidating setting for the narrator is the Principal's office, where the story begins and ends. The Principal "Splodge" is the authority figure, the name in itself an evident mark of disregard, a name that suggests waste, a disgusting association by suggestion. The other authority figure is the hoodlum on the train who causes the narrator unease. In this regard we see two sides of the face of

authority; the officially sanctioned, the mandated, the power invested in institutions and its representatives, and the other less salubrious side created and maintained through a force of power embodied in violence. In both regards there is a fear and mistrust of these positions and an assumption of the corruption that power generates.

The "Age Rager" a device that allows the user to speed up or reverse time on other people, is introduced into the story as a plot device to change the direction of the narrative. Interestingly it also allows the reader to see the binary nature expressed in the features/representations of other passengers on the train. The old, wizened lady becomes younger, the hoodlum is obliterated through the speeding of time. The reader sees binary opposition in younger/older, helpful/helpless and age/youth.

In this sense the parallel can be drawn between time concepts in this work of Jennings and Rabelaisian carnivalesque. True carnivalesque was expressed in the living of a moment where the actions of participants were suspended from real life. All roles and manners, graces and etiquette were determined within the confines of the carnival. This ability to suspend real time removed the ability of authority to control the processes of living and removed its need to manage the lives of people, there was no future and no past. Jennings' protagonists experience a similar carnivalesque moment with the effects of time on the train passengers and are frightened by the moving forwards and back of time. In this world authority has no hold.

The chronotope, the relationship between people and events and time and space (Johnston "Children's Literature" in Winch, Johnston et al, 2001, p.347) is shifted time and again to create this effect and to prevent authority from becoming established. This is important to note, as time is the principle means of firstly allowing authority to exist and to become established. Usually this is invested in the traditions that establish the maintenance of authoritative power.

This point is highlighted by the conclusion to the story; the Principal has confiscated the device and has made himself younger. He symbolically walks away from his office with the secretary on his arm. What is implied is the freedom of youth, authority being denied through the age and act of the Principal as well as attendant privileges that authority bestows. In terms of taboo the act of becoming younger

works on two levels for Jennings' narrator. Firstly it makes the threat to the narrator become more urgent and immediate; the old Principal has become a young protagonist in competition with the narrator for the girl. Implicit in his actions are the athleticism of youth; he has entered the sphere of influence of the narrator. Secondly it removes the abstract hierarchy of control that existed as the arena in which all characters operated. Becoming younger removed the physical threat, retaining only authority as constructed by time and experience. The physical appearance of the Principal embodies this view of authority that Jennings makes apparent to the reader as Calasanti, Slevin and King (2006) state:

> ...[S]uccessful aging means not aging, not being "old" or, at the very least, not looking old. The body has become central to identity and to aging, and to the maintenance of its youthful appearance has become a life long project that requires increasing levels of work. (p.15)

Age is the signifier of authority in this text but also serves the purpose of making the authority figure remote and one dimensional, unknowable personally and impenetrable as an institution.

Further along this treatment of profane and taboo subjects are the "bum books" of Andy Griffiths. In relation to authority I only wish to analyse one of these books, its implicit ideology and its relationship to various forms of authority and how these are enacted.

The basic premise of the "Zombie bums" trilogies is that a group of bum fighters are trying to remove the threat of a zombie bum takeover of the earth. The hero of the story is Zack who is thrust into this role due to circumstances that unfold during the plot. In *Zombie Bums From Uranus*, as the title states, the Earth is at risk of invasion from Zombie Bums. Zack and his fellow fighters from the bum fighting academy are called upon again to fight the Great White bum, leader of all bums.

Noticeably, Griffiths' story has many of the features and structural patterns common to adventure writing and has many stylistics pastiches to emboss the simple formula of his writing. Zack, the unwitting and reluctant hero, is classifiable as the protagonist common to hero quest tales. His subjectivity is revealed to the reader as events

unfold; he questions his motives, his beliefs and motivations as a new reality is revealed to him. Like a true hero he draws from the strength within, strength he was unaware of, he is changed and has become his destiny. The plot moves to resolution through the device of a temporal imposition in the narrative – Zack has limited time before "the brown hole" sucks them into its centre and destroys them.

So whilst the attendant markers of specific genre are in place for Griffiths' story and it is in this sense conventional, it is the subject matter that is transgressive and challenging. The authority imbued in convention that is determined by societal expectations is being flouted. The text, far from being a series of little transgressive acts punctuating the narrative, is in fact part of a carefully constructed plot that tackles many taboo subjects predominantly around what Bakhtin would call "the material lower body stratum". These are focalised as serious issues and concepts for the reader by the author.

In this sense it is carnival, for as Jung (1998) notes of carnival:

> [C]arnival is the "Jesterly" play of difference aiming for the creation of an alternative or reversible world order. As a Ludic form of subversion, it is playfully, that is, non violently, subversive as it intends both to reconstruct a "real" world and to reconstruct a "possible" world at the same time. (p. 105)

Griffiths' world is fully realised with set laws that are observed and obeyed by all protagonists and contains many cultural activities the reader recognises as being drawn from the mores of our society, tea drinking being one such example. The challenge to authority exists outside the parameters of the story which is conventionally constructed and instead poses the question of what is acceptable as subject matter for children and to what extent can this be realised? It also adds a dimension to the question of the role and appropriateness to much of children's literature.

The challenge to the status quo, as Griffiths has demonstrated by these texts, is moving from within the pages of children's stories to the underlying socio-political issues around the entire process of selection and publication of specific books that

many may see as subversive due to their selection of subject matter and of questionable integrity when contrasted with what has historically "gone before".

Daston and Park (2004) noted that over the last twenty years sensibilities of the public at large have shifted profoundly with a questioning of ideals, rationality and good taste and with this questioning of traditional conceptions of order and social and intellectual propriety, subjects once on the margins have moved to the centre in terms of cultural and academic appeal (p. 10). Authority established by tradition has been challenged by the introduction and customising of marginalised, taboo and subversive topics to reflect a growing societal appetite for stories that have these ideas as their central tenets.

As a final point on the works of Griffiths, ironically there is a sophistication not belied by his subject matter. It also allows opposition to the officious serious tone to be established, confronted and ultimately undermined through ridicule, satire or a sense of absurdity to make this point about authority self evident. Griffiths however doesn't allow interplay between the counterpoints established as they are within traditional texts, but creates a constant world where transgression moves from the printed word to the actual physical world of the reader.

The question has moved beyond a discussion of what is the right course of action within the narrative in terms of a dilemma, of morality or conscience, to a direct challenge to authority monitoring the availability of this as reading material particularly to parents as observers and guardians of what children are reading. It also contrasts an absolute moral position with the direct thrill it provokes in upsetting conventional readers and "common decency" whilst establishing a juvenile position. Suffice to say that the publication of Griffiths' stories opens a new arena for the discussion of the role of authority.

What is most apparent is the use of one of the most common tools for undermining authority is the use of humour in many forms. The books discussed in this chapter have used it predominantly as a central mechanism to question authority, challenge the status quo or simply as a device enabling the development of character. Even by its absence it says something about the nature of its importance and adds to the

atmosphere and mood of the narrative. Whether this is ridicule or satire to diminish the power of authority or a more Bakhtinian construct where the situations created are celebratory, equal and rejuvenating whilst celebrating the comic and absurd, officialdom is reduced by its banishment from the carnival. In all these instances laughter is the currency used to construct a differing reality.

The focus of chapter three then is laughter and this will be discussed in terms of its enduring appeal, how it is used, and its significance to the carnivalesque spirit. Laughter as a concept is crucial to Bakhtinian theory and this influence will now be discussed in the context again of selected Australian children's books.

III

Scatology and mirth: The importance of carnival laughter and humour within children's literature

This chapter will explore the role of laughter and humour in relation to Australian children's literature and how these principles reflect carnival uses of humour. This chapter will begin by introducing selected texts followed by a discussion of some theoretical aspects of humour. How these relate to carnivalesque and the means that comic elements are utilised in writing for children, will be analysed with examples from chosen texts. Selected novels will then be used to further elaborate these ideas, highlighting the roles of laughter. Emphasis will be placed on how this is achieved within the narrative structure and the manifest forms that humour takes within a carnivalesque framework.

Novels to be discussed in this chapter are Gillian Rubenstein's *Space Demons* (1986), Robin Klein's *Hating Alison Ashley* (1985), Morris Gleitzman's *Worry Warts* (1991) and short stories from Paul Jennings *Unbelievable!* (1986), Andy Griffith's *The Day My Bum Went Psycho* (2001) and Max Fatchen's *Closer to the stars* (1981) will be analysed

Other novels to be analysed in this context are Gleitzman's *Worry Warts* (1991) and Jennings' collection of short stories in *Unmentionable* (1991), ("Ice maiden", "Little Squirt" and "The Velvet Throne"), "The Gum Leaf War" from *Unbelievable!* and from Jennings' *Uncovered*, the story "Pubic Hare". These will be examined to identify the sources of humour and how these once taboo subjects are used to propel the comedic aspect of the narrative and their emphasis on "base" elements.

Griffith's *The Day My Bum Went Psycho* will be used to further the arguments drawn from both Gleitzman and Jennings, and to look at how the use of scatological concepts have continued to develop and become increasingly popular with young readers. These books will be discussed in terms of how they use what may be considered as taboo subject matter for comic effect.

Also from the Children's Book Council short listed books, Rubenstein's *Space Demons* (1986) and Klein's *Hating Alison Ashley* (1985) will be discussed to contrast the different forms humour takes in these novels, the role it plays and how it is different in concept to the later works of Gleitzman, Jennings and Griffiths. Fatchen's *Closer to the stars* (1981) will also be contrasted in this way and examined for its different perspective when considered in relation to the subject matter of the narrative. Each of the texts discussed will be compared to Bakhtinian theory to correlate carnivalesque principles with the ideals underlying contemporary Australian children's literature.

It should be noted that each of these books has been chosen to contrast a particular style of humour and as a representative form of the development of the comic ideas contained within. With this in mind, the idea is not to look at each particular joke

within the text, or all novels with similar comic elements, but rather these select few that represent fundamentally different philosophical positions on the comic ideas and subject matter that are used. Particular emphasis is placed on these few books to demonstrate this "carnivalised" laughter through selected comic moments. In this way we can compare the development of novels that have these elements and have been generally critically lauded to those that are increasingly influential due to commercial circumstance.

As referred to in chapter 1, Bakhtin (1984) saw the role of laughter thus:

> [I]t is, first of all, a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated 'comic' event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnivals participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third this laughter is ambivalent; it is gay triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. Such is the laughter of carnival. (p. 200)

This element of carnivalesque humour is still a common aspect of the humour used within children's literature. Although characters' actions may result in a comical outcome for themselves or another character, the reader's reaction will vary according to what aspects of the situation strike them as funny. This may vary from reader to reader and depend on many factors that the reader brings to the text. There is an ambivalence about what makes funny situations work as they allow differing responses with repeated readings. It is as Galinanes (2005) in *Poetics Today* states:

> …[H]umorous novels, far longer and more complex than jokes, largely base the process of incongruity – resolution on an interplay of, on the one hand, text - internal coherence established by the persistent use of strong implicature in the creation of character and, on the other, text – external incongruity established by the narrator's appeal to the reader's encyclopaedic knowledge. (p. 79)

In this regard, an author appeals to the universality of experience of the reader to establish an image and thus the construction of character. Subsequently, these "constructions" are determined by interactions the reader brings from experience to the text. The use of humour arises from diverting a normal reaction to the actions and motivations of a character with what has been established as a behavioural norm.

Laughter as a general principle is a universal response that evokes joy, mirth and bonds people by the shared experience in which it has been produced. The act of laughing is spontaneous and infectious and provides an opportunity for participants to respond to an apparent truth. Fudge (2003) in *Textual Practice* writes:

> ...[T]he "true" laugh is simultaneously of the body and of the mind. One of the crucial things about it is that it cannot be faked; a true laugh is always true – of the body, not quite willed (and therefore unfalsifiable), but it is also, paradoxically willed and therefore of the mind. A good laugh is a laugh in which body and mind agree: in what the intellectual faculty regards as "deformed" is in parallel with the bodily movement. (p. 283)

Laughter in essence is an innate response to situations regardless of their construction, whether the initial premise is designed to produce this response or through some inadvertent signifiers that result in an inappropriate response.

In Gleitzman's *Worry Warts*, the young protagonist Keith decides on a "get rich" scheme that will hopefully alleviate the misery he sees in his parent's life, and to this end decides that opal mining will make this happen. The construction of this scenario allows the narrative the widest possible vista to incorporate many types of humour. Base humour is used in Keith's toileting at the mine, Australian colloquialisms are used as a humorous device, the sheer incongruity of the scheme contrasts sharply with the expectation the reader has for a character like Keith in this situation.

There are many theories of what prompts an individual's response to humour, in essence these relate to why some things are funny and others are not. Laughter is the physical result of a set of circumstances centred on protagonists or ideas that influence the response and the strength of that response from individuals or groups. Within many children's books, humour is used to entertain, to make a pertinent point to the reader or to establish empathy for character. We all laugh but understanding the processes of why this differs between individuals is complex. It is as Grotjahn (1968) states of the comic:

> ...[T]he comic is not exclusively bound to the world; wit is. The comic may be found in situations, in action, or in behaviour; it may be the result of observation and interpretation. (p. 16)

Plato (Munde 1997) believed that humour was based on the premise of the individuals superiority to others, allowing the individual to laugh at the misfortune of others or inversely, getting their 'comeuppance' from others. This belief reflects the plutonian view of societal structure in essence as a class based system which Plato based on skills, intellect and birthright.

For example many of the narrators in Jennings stories are afforded outsider status, created through applying attributes that the reader implicitly understands as being representative of a certain class. For example, characters/narrators that are the children of single parents, parents who act oddly (at least according to the child) or have moved to the area in which the story is set making them literally unknown and thus vulnerable.

It is also evident that this form of humour is apparent in the many comedies represented in the mass media such as those on television and those screening at the cinema. This premise is used as the basis for situational comedy; the cultural clashes between differing socio economic groups. The pretences and stereotypes of these classes provide the events and ideas established to provide a humorous outcome. The audience in these instances laugh because they recognise the traits that are being lampooned or parodied and the pretensions being flaunted. We laugh because we are not exposed personally but recognise the conceits being exposed. Vandaele (2002) in *Poetics Today* notes of this:

> ...[J]okes often present incongruities that still need to be "explained" in one way or another; understanding them demands an effort, and a failure of perception is easily noticed and increases the implicit social pressure. Understanding a joke leads to superiority feelings. (p. 225)

There is a similar approach used in children's books as a platform for parody. This is used in carnival though chiefly to target the seriousness of officialdom.

Another theory of the machinations of humour is the use of incongruity. Incongruity rests on the nature of assumptions and expectations, incongruity only works when the expectations of spectators, viewers or readers are not met. An assumption of relevant cultural knowledge is supposed of a passive observer as the "set up" meets expectations of the viewer/reader. What follows is an expected mode or pattern of behaviour resulting from the action. When this is inverted or simply changed to something improbable, an incongruity is created for the observer. As Munde (1997) notes of this:

> ...[I]ncongruity is generally recognised as the cornerstone of humour, for without the correct set of expectations the unexpected is not surprising. In some cases, repeated exposure to humorous stimuli diminishes the response, but for humour that offers rewards independent of surprise the response does not extinguish quickly. (p. 220)

In *Worry Warts*, Keith's family are burdened with cultural stereotypes of being English. There are underlying issues concerning generational conflict in terms of expectations and attitude to life. Gleitzman uses incongruity when these expectations of character are set in the reader's mind. We expect Keith to follow his parent's life course, we can empathise with his need to get rich – most children could, but opal mining is an unexpected detour and an incongruity is created.

Many children's books use this idea of incongruity, often through a young protagonist as a means of undermining the natural order of events or the societal norms established within communities, while also positioning the character for a sympathetic understanding from the reader. It is a form of power to act and operate in ways that are unprecedented or expected; rules and laws are not followed and this creates equilibrium for the protagonist/s against the system or representatives of authority in these power structures.

Increasingly this narrative mechanism is used repeatedly, which in turn diminishes the power of incongruity to produce laughter and forces more taboo ideas to be used to shock, titillate and surprise.

Importantly, not all constructed narratives with humorous intent are funny, or all official, important social rituals without some amusement to the observer. Laughter is a physical act and can be wholly separate from the stimulus. Cultural understandings and social mores play a significant part in an observer's ability to "find the humour" in a given situation as James (2004) states:

> ...since humour is a learned response, to appreciate its incongruity and tendency to disrupt 'usual' expectations, to understand its satirical references and differing forms, and to respond to its plays on language and roles, requires at least a rudimentary knowledge of the ways in which a society operates too. (p. 368)

This knowledge or conditioning of individuals varies according to experience, culture, family history and status thus making a predicted response harder to ascertain. For example, Jennings utilises a particularly Australian trait in supporting the underdog. In many story's Jennings narrators are the (as mentioned) outsider, but also seen as weaker or more vulnerable through their physical attributes or social status.

Other theories of humour include Freud's (Munde 1997) notion of "release from inhibition", and Koestler's (Munde 1997) idea that preferences for humour were determined by the experiences and composition of each individual. The enigma of laughter is that no theory adequately explains how it works or what triggers this response.

An important aspect of all theories on laughter is the role of language in each. Bakhtin (1984) noted of the importance of phrases and tropes and their context in creating laughter:

> ...[T]here exists in addition a multiplicity of forms that for the various indirect linguistic expression of laughter: irony, parody, humour, the joke, various types of the comic and so forth. There is no aspect of language that cannot be used in a figurative sense. In all these approaches the *point of view* contained within the word is subject to reinterpretation, as the modality of language and the very *relationship of language to the object* and *to the speaker*. (p. 237)

It is hard to censor because it is hard to predict, which in turn is one of the most positive attributes of laughter. What makes something funny, as already established, can differ from individual to individual because of a range of factors. These can include the onus being placed on particular phrases or pre existing ideas of what certain phraseology means, and when considered in the context of the social or cultural group to whom an individual belongs. Jennings uses a phraseology particular to certain views of Australian character, terms we might associate with a larrikin-like streak or are broadly Australian in their colloquial descriptions of people, places and situations.

In "Pink bow tie", for example, the narrator (a young school boy), uses terms such as "laughed my head off" to describe something particularly funny and "real knockout" to describe the beauty of a female character. There are also examples of sub culture identification that would be apparent to an Australian reader or those familiar with a stereotyped view of Australian character. Old Splodge, the school principal is speaking to the narrator, who has been summonsed to his office:

> I go in and sit down. 'Well, lad' says Old Splodge. 'Why have you dyed your hair? Trying to be a surfie, eh?" He is a grumpy old boy. He is due to retire next year. (p. 2)

Jennings establishes the position of each character to allow the reader to find humour in this scene. He contrasts the disparate attitudes between the two protagonists to highlight the generation gap. He also allows a certain stereotype to exist based on the choice of phrasing for the school principal as well as casting him as the "out of touch" authority figure. By referring to the narrator as a "surfie" Jennings also establishes at once that the man is using the term in a derogative sense and the narrator is then viewed with suspicion. "Surfie" is meant to convey a label for someone outside the mainstream of society in this instance and is established within the context of the meeting between principal and narrator.

As Galinanes (2005) in *Poetics Today* states of jokes in a specific culture:

> ...[T]hey render a maximum contextual effect with a minimum processing effort. Since humour appreciation decreases when it depends on a concept that cannot be understood without an effort or when critical examination is required, speed of processing being essential for the success of a joke, it seems evident that such ready made conceptualisations are of the utmost utility. (p.87)

This can develop or evolve depending on circumstance and the nature of experience an individual lives through. What is humorous can change and this is particularly true of children depending on the age of the reader and is as much dependent on oral skills as well as "world" knowledge:

> ...[I]t is children's oral language that is a large part of what they bring to print, together with an understanding of the topic in question. Children use their oral language as a resource as they deal with written text and they do not confuse one with the other. (Winch, Johnston et al., 2001, p.22)

Munde (1997) has noted that the stages of humour development for a child increase in complexity as the child ages and experiences more of the world and this is reflected in the underlying conceptual and philosophical assumptions behind the choices children make in choosing texts. Munde suggests that studies have shown predominantly that children prefer reading materials that are humorous in nature up to a "young adult" readership. Within this reading age frame she suggests that the level of complexity of the associated humour within texts increases with each group developing cognitive abilities. This is reflected in the types of text that are chosen by children moving from junior fiction to young adult novels.

Take for instance the nature of humour used in Jennings' stories as compared to those of Klein. In Jennings the humour is scatological and often crudely simplistic. It is also very egocentric, speaking to the reader about the protagonists' predicament with little attention afforded the motivations of support characters. In *Hating Alison Ashley* the humour moves to focus on the interactions of characters, particularly "Yurk" and Alison, and is more sophisticated; awareness is created of the motivation behind their actions.

Munde (1997) states that Kappas (1997), in her analysis of children's humour, has identified ten categories of humour particular to children at ages five, nine and fourteen. Kappas identifies that five to eight year olds prefer characters of an animal or child nature to be elevated to positions of status and authority through simple humour devices such as exaggeration, nonsense and slapstick, which allow their success in the end. The next age group, eight to ten year olds, preferred human protagonists and a limited exposure to defying prevalent moral social codes; though these come to no end and do not disrupt the status quo. In this regard the ludicrous situations established by Jennings fit this category as they allow, through establishing "marvellous" situations, any eventuality in plotting or character.

At this age, Kappas in *Children's Literature in Education* states that children are beginning to understand and appreciate more complex language features, popularly given form as "joking" insults and various forms of verbal humour as well as puns, repetition and riddles (pp. 220 – 221). Children now have a new found ability to laugh at the various predicaments that humans can find themselves in as long as there is the safety of detachment. This transference marks the bridging of humour in the written form with a correlation to the physical world for the young reader. In the last group, children aged ten to thirteen become more worldly, responding to open defiance, sarcasm, insults and ridicule. Young adult fiction targets this developing awareness of the wider world and the relationships of characters within it.

What is important to note of these distinctions is the types of humour that are introduced to the young reader and how writers successfully employ these devices to create narrative, develop sympathetic and empathetic heroes that young readers can readily relate to. Writers can establish scenarios that are entertaining and allow the protagonist to right an injustice that has been the result of a misuse of authority.

This restoration of the social order reflects the very goals of carnival and uses the same means of achieving this through the use of humour in its various forms. Hollis (2001) has noted of this progression to the written word, the embodiment of carnival in literature, that by the mid seventeenth century carnivalised literature was no longer directly influenced by carnival itself but by its own tradition (p. 229).

The tradition of carnival caught the nuances of language in the uses of humour, comic verbal compositions, parodies, curses and oaths. This tradition can be seen in the use of humour in children's text. The insult and the use of sarcasm clearly reflect these early verbal features of the carnival and remain popular in writing today. The resultant laughter reduces those in power to a level on a par with their adversaries; it removes power because it is not respected, laughter is the currency of this lack of accord.

In Griffiths' *Bumageddon*, the Great White Bum is the villain and central nemesis of the bum fighters. There are many exchanges between the Great White Bum and various affiliates of the bum fighters and the bum fighters themselves. The Great White Bum represents authority when he takes power from the group. This gives Griffiths reason to use humour, sarcasm and abuse to undermine this position in the minds of the reader. The following is an exchange between the "Great White Bum" and a near vanquished adversary, the "Mutant Spew Lord Puddle":

> "What I want to know," said the mutant Spew Lord Puddle, as the laughter subsided, "is what is your excuse?"
> "I beg your pardon?" said the Great White Bum. "Excuse for what?"
> "Your excuse for being a big pimply loser with half of his left cheek missing who doesn't know who his true friends are!" (pp.173-174)

Griffiths choice of terminology reflects the language of the playground, the language that children themselves use. Colloquial terms such as "spew" and the use of slang terms to describe features of human anatomy reflect both the carnival ideal of the body grotesque and the language of the marketplace.

Due to its spontaneous nature, laughter is hard to control, suppress or legislate against and this instils a tension in those who fear it. In this way humour undermines power and through the acts of satire, pun and ridicule, power is reduced and control is loosened.

Bakhtin (1984) stated that:

> ...[L]aughter could not be deformed or falsified as could every other form of seriousness, in particular the pathetic. Laughter remained outside official falsifications, which were coated with a layer of pathetic seriousness. Therefore all high and serious genres, all high forms of language and style, all mere set phrases and linguistic norms were drenched in conventionality, hypocrisy and falsification. Laughter alone remained uninfected by lies. (p. 236)

An important aspect of laughter is the establishment of truth in relation to humour. Bakhtin has noted that one of the most important figures in carnival was the fool whose function was to reveal truth to all participants, the "laughing truth". This role was accepted by all participants as was the liberal licence given to him to target anyone in society. Usually those with a higher social rank or position were ridiculed, or the forms of ritual that reflected their status:

> ...[C]ivil and social ceremonies and social rituals took on a comic aspect as clowns and fools, constant participants in these festivals, mimicked serious rituals. (1984, p.5)

Bakhtin (ibid, p.5) noted that "minor occasions were also marked by comic protocol". The rituals of official culture were serious in nature and reflected the passage of authority into legitimacy. Laughter being viewed as a challenge to inherent authority was removed from official practices which ostensibly lead to a variety of parodies and mock rituals challenging not the legitimacy of official office, but its attendant rites. In Griffiths' bum books trilogy, parody of officialdom exists on most levels from "the academy", where people are trained to fight bums, to mock heroics after battling giant bums and suffering "battle injuries". As Bakhtin had noted, the concepts themselves are not defiled – they exist as we understand them - it is the rituals around the actions of Zack and the other fighters that we acknowledge as absurd.

Parodies need the significance of sanctioned culture, with its solemn markers and representative gestures, to contrast its unofficial, dynamic and carnivalesque nature to produce the laughter of the carnival crowd. As Warner (1998) states:

> ...[L]aughing is a means to knowledge and a way of communication and the humour that buoys it is familiarity. Learning what to be afraid of and what not to be afraid of enters imagination and thought with the earliest exchanges; theses tropes play with fears in order to allay them. (p. 348)

Warner is talking of the social conditioning that influences the precepts of laughter for the individual from an early age, beginning with the interaction between a newborn and its mother. Importantly, it is the phrase "Laughing is a means to knowledge" that has significance for the carnivalesque. Part of the shared joke and subsequent humour lies in the fact that the form of humour used, exposes a truth that would otherwise go uncontested or be accepted for the pretence that covers it. Authority remains unquestioned, unchallenged and the status quo maintained.

Authority also works on the perceived threat that is contained within; whether this is on a straight physical level or a more abstracted plane that may have economic, social or political connotations for the levels of society without authority. In this way it can be said that "Humour is clearly one of the chief and most successful ways in which popular culture resists fear" (Warner, 1998, p.328). The role humour and laughter play in restoring equality to all societal participants and its rejuvenating effects can not be underestimated.

Bergson (1911) noted that the comic comes into effect when a group of people turn on one of their number. The joke or humour then relies on a pre-existing knowledge, an understanding of the social mores and cultural understandings of that particular group pitted against this new reality and social hierarchy thus created (pp. 6 – 8). The act of laughing, empower one group and disempower another. Again this is best demonstrated through Jennings who uses this device continually; villains are always getting their comeuppance from the "underdog". What makes these stories enjoyable is the fact that after the groups of adversaries are established, with one group having an obvious advantage over another, the tables are turned.

For example, in Jennings "The Gum Leaf War" the protagonists are two neighbours Foxy and McFuddy, who hate each other, whistling tunes on magic gum leafs found on only one tree, to give each other ailments. After a bushfire, there is one leaf left which the narrator gets a hold of. Both old men turn on him when they realise he has it. In turn he plays a tune on the leaf and the two men are punished; their noses grow to seven centimetres in length.

The role of the comic and the comic element exists, though the designation has been transformed from the time of traditional carnival to the present. With a greater awareness of and respect for the rights of other individuals, and protection under the law that differentiate between acceptable forms of contact, the use of humour has developed along a sociolinguistic trajectory and away from pure physical forms. Indeed most would view most attempts at physical-based comedy or "slapstick" as "low brow" and unrefined or basic, which may indeed mean a further move from an essential component of humour that Bakhtin (1984) saw in Rabelais' time, where the movement and celebration of the body were just as important as the use of abuse, blazons and negation:

> [T]his logic of "the wrong side out" and of "bottoms up" is also expressed in gestures and other movements: to walk backward, to ride a horse facing its tail, to stand on one's head, to show one's backside. (p. 411)

The corporeal performance of the participants of carnival made a physical statement to ridicule official rules and views through inverting common customs and acts and highlighting the absurdity of socially acceptable forms of public conduct without (it must be added) the self consciousness of expression apparent in our society.

The comic's role is less symbolic today of a particular character and more likely the result of other factors such as, but not limited to, group dynamics, personality and cultural heritage. The individual is less a focus than the group in creating a humorous situation. This contrasts with the role that jesters, fools and clowns played in the schema of carnival celebration. In the representation of the peasant and lay folk, clowns and fools were designated a symbolic role and were "king for a day". The world was turned upside down and all social norms and roles inverted. For truth to be revealed, they were given roles in the carnivalesque plays of feast days and mock ceremonies profane by nature. Their very foolishness exposed universal truth, their physical clownery a certain wisdom. This symbolic depiction of the fool has been reinterpreted for children from its carnival origins but retaining child-like qualities of "wisdom in innocence". Nikolejeva (1995) states that:

> ...[T]he figure of the fool was an element of common discourse in which children could participate: it was an official terrain to which children had access. (p. 184)

The role of the fool in many modern children's stories has taken on a different perspective. There has been a move away from the fool as wise, simple and benign to the individual who is isolated or on the periphery of the society and he or she is directly or indirectly commenting on. Take for instance Keith in *Worry Warts*; it is his naivety and earnestness that mark him as a fool. The reader is positioned to think of his opal scheme as "hare brained" and it is interesting to note that a cynical view is taken of his idealism. The focalisation of Keith's character no longer needs to be at the centre of events though his activities are still necessary to the development of narrative. Authority based views of adults have moved to a perspective incorporating the views of children. As Mallan (1993) sees it:

> ...[E]arlier books broadcast an adult's point of view; children were seen as miniature adults who needed to be indoctrinated with the values, beliefs and customs of adult society. Accordingly the books had a clear mandate. (p. 50)

In a sense, this development has further removed the authoritarian element as the focalisation is with the outsider and their perspective of events. Laughter then has the ability to "strip, as it were, the object of the false verbal and ideological husk that encloses it" (Bakhtin, 1984, p.237).

The central characters or protagonists in these texts share the same perfunctory role of the clown or fool, to comment on the actions of the society they are a part of, have rejected or are an outsider to for whatever reason. Their outsider status gives them the opportunity to comment on or observe the cultural proceedings of the populace with a critical eye and with unencumbered truth, creating opportunities for comical situations to occur. Bataille (1997) stated that:

> ...[G]iven a relatively isolated system, perceived as an isolated system, and given that a circumstance occurs that makes me perceive it as linked with another (definable or non definable) whole, this change makes me laugh under two conditions: 1) that it's sudden 2) that no inhibition is involved. (p.60)

The outsider can comment or observe the incongruity of a situation relaying events to the reader with no hint of the unexpected, but also bring the comic aspect to full fruition due to no self involvement or subsequent, inadvertent act of censorship from the narrator.

Again using the main protagonist Keith from Gleitzman's *Worry Warts* (1991), Gleitzman presents the young boy as an outsider, different to his peers due to various factors such as his heritage, family origins and to some extent the environments in which he has been raised. Keith decides that for his parents to be happy it would be better if they were rich and thus sets out on an improbable scheme to find opals to secure the family's financial future and thus their happiness.

Gleitzman creates many different aspects of Keith's character to promote his outsider status. He and his family are English and have emigrated to Queensland in search of a better standard of living and way of life. Keith is an only child living in an alien place and has little in common with his school aged friends with the exception of Tracey who is his best friend. Again this difference, a girl as best friend for a young boy whilst not unnatural is unusual and delineates Keith from others. Other features such as his interest in painting and the fractious state of his family heighten the separation of Keith from the other characters in the story.

In all Keith attempts, he does so with earnest commitment, which only serves to make more comical the results that follow whenever these intentions are put into practice. The intensity of his feelings is a result of his outsider status and his desperation springs from this same desire to return to a commonly accepted status quo for himself and his family. La Farge (2004) noted that:

> …[C]ertainly it is true that we laugh at others, whether in real life or in art, we do not share their feelings. The characters in a comedy may be afflicted with all sorts of violent emotions-from love to hate and from joy to sorrow – whose only effect is to make us laugh. For Bergson, the more intense the feelings are, the funnier they seem. (p. 132)

The comment on Bergson at the end of the quote I have left in as it is particularly pertinent. The absurdity of Keith's scheme paradoxically invites the reader to be more empathetic and sympathetic to his plight. In this sense it is the incongruity of Keith's beliefs as contrasted with his behaviour which heightens the comic aspect of each episode. Again too, Keith's outsider status allows some acceptance of these episodes to be fully realised, suspended disbelief to be maintained and his continuing non - acceptance to proceed.

If Keith were to be a part of mainstream society some sort of self censorship would have to be involved, for Keith would have to conform to societal expectations, and with this self awareness his schemes would not eventuate. Thus Gleitzman allows the reader to accept Keith for the many good traits that motivate him whilst highlighting the differences between Keith and other characters and making observations of common human behaviour.

Gleitzman uses incongruity to create humour and other forms as well. The character of "Curly", who is in fact bald, is representative of a larrikin streak of humour that is a very Australian form of humour. This and other idioms and colloquialisms are highlighted for the reader as being uniquely Australian and again Keith's representation as outsider serves to make this apparent; he is unaware that this term used by others is in fact a joke and never questions why this moniker is used.

Many forms of the humour that Gleitzman uses are standard; visual puns, cultural understandings, the incongruous meshing of characters, geography and purpose. He does however in one instance create a situation with a taboo subject.

In an underground space, when Tracey and Keith are searching for opals, Keith decides to paint. He does this by mixing dust with his own urine. What is interesting about this incident is how a taboo subject is mundanely treated. Keith urinates in front of Tracey to compound the transgressive nature of this exploit; social decorum would dictate that individual's toileting be done in private, though there can be some argument that with younger individuals this isn't as socially abhorrent as it may be with adults. Interestingly there is no reaction from Tracey, thus suggesting an acceptance of such behaviour, or perhaps this is Gleitzman's purpose, to present an act that parents/adults might find offensive as normalised social behaviour for children.

Again it may be some comment on the masculinity of Keith and the reinforcement of a stereotype to further distinguish the separateness of Keith's character with those of his peers and in this particular instance, Tracey. It may be as Clarke (2001) in the *Faulkner Journal* noted: "Humor, as a component of masculinity, is a highly contested discourse that both reinforces and polices masculinity." (p. 20)

In Jennings' *Unmentionable* (1991), we find many concepts within stories that are specifically targeted at young readers, subject matter that is "carnivalised", grotesque and unusual, or has deeper themes relevant to a younger audience. Some of Jennings stories have aspects that may be considered taboo in nature and as a result, used to create humorous situations.

In the story "Ice Maiden", the narrator falls in love with a sculptured ice figurine. In the course of the narrative, which I won't go into in great detail, the narrator manages to nearly drown, becomes infatuated with the figurine and becomes locked in an embrace with the statue. Besides the absurdity of the plot on a literal level, there is an air of transgression with the covert spectre of sexuality underlying the text. The idea of sexuality in the young reader or the sexualisation of childhood is usually avoided in most children's literature for younger readers; the fact that it is alluded to adds to the tension of the narrative. Whilst this is alluded to only in its mildest, least threatening form, the idea it encourages adds a dimension to the comical situation when the narrator kisses the statue.

The humour in this situation works on multiple levels; the incongruity of kissing the statue and the embarrassing social predicament of being stuck to the ice to name but two. There is also the underlying suggestion of the sexualisation/fetishism of this transgressive act. Jennings builds the humour of this act through concentrating on the comical aspect and the consequences of committing an act that is embarrassing and outside societal norms.

Again this is evident in both "Velvet Throne" and "Little Squirt", where the comic element in some parts centres on the act of urination. Jennings not only mentions the act but goes further to add descriptive detail to emphasise its comic effect for the young reader. In this regard too Jennings makes the act of urination a device to achieve different ends in both these stories. It is used in an ironic sense in "Little Squirt" where the mother's advice has been twisted and misinterpreted by the boys having a contest in urinating, whereas it is used as a descriptive device in "Velvet Throne" to heighten the grotesqueness of the situation.

In each of these instances the taboo elements are framed around an adult conception of taboo subject matter for children, which is perhaps why Jennings uses them both as plotting mechanism and legitimate subject matter. It is as Mintz (1996) in *Literary Criticism* noted:

> ...[T]he uses and gratifications of any humour depend upon a number of variables: who says what to whom under what contextual circumstances. The same joke, image or caricature can have hostile intent and aggressive function, it can enhance group moral. It can be aesthetic - comedy creating exercise or it can be employed ironically as a sign of friendship and acceptance that is so strong, so transcendent that otherwise taboo utterances are acceptable. (p. 28)

It could be argued in this instance that the forging of a particular narrative design which is indelibly aimed at children and their interests, relegates the idea of this as a taboo subject by adults, to irrelevance. It is more important to be funny than uphold societal expectations for the child and what is acceptable for them to read or learn. Looking at the subject of schooling in relation to societal expectation, Jennings never portrays school in a positive light. Principals are usually devious, unhinged or evil and the battle to stay safe (physically and mentally) is continual. Yet the obvious societal expectation is that children attend school and learn. The implication is that parents/adults are the ones who instil values in educational institutions.

What is interesting to note of Jennings too is that the transgressive subject matter is mixed with the socially responsible and morally just ideas that are a part of mainstream society. This serves two purposes, it encourages a socialising factor for young readers to accept their society and what is just within it, but it also serves to heighten the comic aspect of those acts deemed socially unacceptable. These two features are almost played off as binary oppositions. The effect is to shock with the scatological acts overlaying the underlying thematic trends that encourage a positive, socially aware and idealised view of society.

In Jennings' *Uncovered*, the story "Pubic Hare" has many of these features. The first instance lies in the title, a straight forward, matter of fact labelling of what the story is about. There is no allusion, the use of a "double entendre" is lost on reading the title once it is stated aloud. The shock is in the matter of fact approach to naming this story and, if anything, the connections to young adolescent sexual development. A subject that can be embarrassing, difficult and intensely private is treated as a matter of fact narrative or in a style that Duarte (1999) may label "functional ambivalence." (p. 73)

The comic element of Jennings' "Pubic Hare" lies in the intention of the narrative, as stated in the title and the resolution of plot with many of the features that are implied to the young reader by the term, namely the embarrassment, the difficulty of coping with the physical change and the move physiologically from childhood to adolescence.

It is this treatment of taboo and the awareness of it as such by the author that heightens the comic element. Green (1995) states this as:

> ...[P]erhaps there are situations, attitudes and beliefs that are off limits to comic treatment, but surely comic art can be served only by those who reject taboos of decorum and give free reign to the logic of comedy; the unrestrained play of this logic once unleashed achieves the *only* truly serious purpose of comedy, which is finally to expose the potentially ridiculous even if what is exposed proves disturbing or offensive. (p. 195)

The ridiculousness of the narrative in this particular story is limited only to the idea of puberty/sexuality and the idea that the development of profligate growth, which is usually a private matter and socially off limits to talk about, should propel the narrative action. In other instances recurrences in orientation and setting, such as school, participants and even moral outcomes, restore the equilibrium. Bullies get their comeuppance and order is restored for the main protagonist.

Jennings also relies on stereotyping to heighten the effects of the comic element. The religious figures in the story chant their mantras and are bald, to go any further into any descriptive detail would remove their otherness and subsequently one of the principle features on which the story revolves. It takes only the common elements of a situation, concept and character to allow the humour to work for the social group it is created for as:

> ...[S]hared social values permit this choice of target regardless of the comedian's own preferences or inclinations, and it will alight on common fears – of decay, of illness, of dying. Humour is not personal, but political in the widest sense: its effect happens through its reception by a community or social group.
>
> (Warner, 1998, p.330)

In Griffiths' *The Day My Bum Went Psycho*, human bums, are on the verge of a revolt – they want to swap places with human heads. It is up to Zack, Eleanor and assorted "bum fighters" to put down this revolt.

This scatological approach to humour relies on the individual reader's reaction to subject matter that has been taboo and now is the catalyst for all ensuing comic episodes in the novel. I mentioned in the last chapter that the structure of the story was a large, complex narrative that challenged conventional understanding of appropriate text and reading material for young readers. The philosophical premise for doing so was to enforce again and again a challenge to authority manifest in the forms of arbiters of taste; that is, those who decide what is appropriate for children to read, parents and teachers in the child's immediate world to traditional power institutions within publishing such as critics and publishers.

Griffiths uses many humorous forms to present the joke in a shortened form and as a more complex idea encapsulated in the thematic concerns of the novel. It is a grotesquery and its ambivalence allows a physical reaction to the improbability of its narrative concerns and the "gross" material functioning of humans, whilst simultaneously permitting a reading that uses conventions of traditional genre such as hero quest, thriller and boys adventure tale. For example, Griffiths' bum fighters travel back in time to fight the gargantuan bums from prehistoric times. This both parodies evolution through paralleling evolution of bums with human development and allows Griffiths to physically exaggerate the size of bums. Griffiths seems to say if it is likely to give offence, why not make it bigger?

This relates to Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque:

> ...[T]he grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relationship to time is one determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensable trait is ambivalence. (p. 24)

The novel itself is a parody of many genres that are particularly of interest to young readers. Griffiths takes no overt position when using these stylistic interpretations for the story, only allowing each to move the narrative a little closer to its conclusion.

Landwehr (2002) in *College Literature* says of parody:

> [P]arody constitutes not merely a postmodernist form of intertextuality, but also functions as a self reflexive strategy that foregrounds the mode of representation itself. Postmodernist works simultaneously acknowledge their dependence on established forms of representation. (p. 7)

Indeed Griffiths relies heavily on the attributes of other genres as vehicles to pun and shock throughout the narrative, though this is a necessary development to propel the story. Of the jokes themselves, they may not work, and may be considered crude, debased attempts at humour which many readers may see as "low brow". Within the context of the palimpsest of a journey narrative or hero quest, the jokes form an internal logic to the development of plot. In this essence Griffiths is validating the existence of this form of humour by the creation of an internal world that is bound by its own conventions and forms of logic.

The novel concludes with order being restored, the revolt being put down, and Zack and his bum being "reunited". On a superficial level, the plot has followed narrative convention from orientation and setting, through a series of events, complication and resolution to a coda that ties up the loose ends. However, the comic aspects of the novel transform the notion of incongruity from the narrative to the world outside the novel that the young reader brings to the story. The reader laughs at the subject matter of the story, the related puns and double entendres.

Seebeok (1984) notes that a comic effect is realised when there is a violation of a rule, committed by someone the reader does not empathise / sympathise with and that we (the reader) can then feel superior to for their actions, whether this helps to reinforce the rule or question its legitimacy. This view could be argued of the reader's

reaction, not to the concerns of the story itself but to the nature of Griffiths' book and the wider implications for the uses of such scatological humour in the context of such books and authors. Why is it funny? Is it funny, and is it funny because of the reaction it causes in those who are against such writing? It may be due to the media context in which its target audience are located and this is discussed in the final chapter.

In Klein's *Hating Alison Ashley*, the use of humour is contrasted with episodes of a dramatic and serious nature. The essence of the humour lies in the misunderstandings between Erica and Alison and the stereotyping of their socio - economic background for comic effect. Indeed in this regard, the idea of superiority of class has been a major source of humour in much Australian literature. As Jones (1993) says of the development of this kind of humour historically in Australia:

> ...[N]ew chum jokes, used to test and reject newcomers (often portrayed as upper class Englishmen) for their inexperience and assumptions of social superiority, expressed the tensions of class conflict whilst reinforcing group solidarity among the old hands. They also helped to foster a sense of national consciousness and identity. (p. 1)

The expectation that Alison will get her "comeuppance" adds to the tension and subsequent comic effect of the narrative. Klein builds this tension through focalising on Erica, her thoughts, feelings, inherent prejudices and how this is manifested, whilst giving no extensive narrative voice to the character of Alison. The reader views Alison only through the paradigm of her relationship with Erica, at first slight and increasingly more complex until both characters become the central components of the text. It is only here that Klein begins to strip away the preconceived ideas that Erica has in relation to Alison's life. One by one each of Erica's prejudices are undone by the reality of Alison's home life and existence. This reality brings the sobering idea to Erica that what she imagined Alison to be was based solely on her own bigotry.

Klein finishes the novel with a kindling of friendship between these two characters that initially are portrayed to have little in common but turn out to be more alike than they could have imagined. Klein's novel turns out to have a moral message, and the

status quo is maintained with order restored; there is no difference between the girls, class difference is shown (in this instance) to be illusory and all ends happily. This end point shows the novel to be no longer comic as there is no difference between characters, no further instance where the reader can feel superior to one, both or all of the characters and no incongruous new beginning or challenge to established order.

Once the reason for Erica to feel superior is established (she isn't as "superficial" as Alison), the narrative tension can develop. Ironically this is concocted by Erica, herself making judgements based on superficialities, though indicators of social superiority, clothes, postcode and parental occupation would suggest that Alison has a higher social standing. As Vandaele (2002) notes "superiority highlights its social functioning; being superior is always being superior to someone." (p. 225)

The reader here can enjoy the comic elements derived from the expectation of a stereotype being observed. Whilst stereotypes are by nature superficial it is for this reason they can be laughed at. The reader understands the exaggeration and doesn't feel compelled to reflect upon an act or behaviour as a reflection of a personal weakness or foolishness. As Warner (1998) noted:

> [T]here is a kind of laughter that mocks what is most cherished, and the grip exerted by that most cherished desideratum relaxes only when it is deflected. (p. 330)

In this way we can see the importance again of the idea of clowning and foolery from Bakhtin's carnivalesque. The role of the fool established and made known universal truths without fear of reprisal whilst the carnival ran. Individuals laughed at the essential follies of existence without the embarrassment of being individually identified. The individual could laugh as everyone wasn't laughing solely at them.

In Rubenstein's *Space Demons* the use of laughter has again a different context. We have seen in the works of Jennings, Gleitzman and Griffiths that scatological humour and addressing taboo openly, are used to shock, titillate and provide the catalyst

for the humour that ensues. They provide a stream of novels that have adapted the contextual use of the comic to fit the society of which they are a part. *Space Demons* holds a more conventional view, a traditional approach to the use of humour in its narrative.

Briefly, Andrew, Ben and Elaine are drawn into a video game that feeds and develops through drawing upon the negative, hateful feelings of the game participants. They are drawn in and must fight to escape this game. In essence the story has elements of thriller and horror, the humour is secondary to the plot and is minute in comparison. Though the element of humour is a minor aspect of Rubenstein's novel, what is interesting is the form it takes as the ridicule of an authority figure.

The students call Mr. Russell "Brussel Sprouts" as a way of undermining his authority. The manifestation of authority and its representation are brought low by the disempowered imposing the ridiculous. Grotjahn (1966) notes of caricature that:

> ...[T]he caricature is a variation of the comic. It aims at the unmasking and degradation of a person of authority or fame. A favourite method is the over emphasis of one feature. (p. 17)

Rubenstein gives us the teacher's name only as the means for his ridicule. His value as an authority figure is implicitly undermined by this label and serves only to forward the author's negative view of his character, highlighted by the students' lack of respect or propriety. Bakhtin (1984) noted of this that:

> ...[A]buses, curses, profanities and improprieties are the unofficial elements of speech. They were and are still conceived as a breach of the established norms of verbal address; they refuse to conform to conventions, to etiquette, civility, respectability. These elements of freedom, if present in sufficient numbers and with a precise intention, exercise a strong influence on the entire contents of speech, transferring it to another sphere beyond the limits of conventional language. (pp. 187 – 188)

This is not particular to Rubenstein's novel, the predominant trend in the short lists of the Children Book Council has been towards books with heavy themes and serious natures. There has been a scarcity of the truly comic with "funny" episodes being either related to a particular compartmentalised episode from the text or situational comedy only related to the actions of the protagonists and not the story as a whole.

In Fatchen's *Closer to the stars,* we see carnivalesque elements entwined into the plot without the consequences breaching or traversing the author-reader relationship. There are many comic moments in the novel connected to, I assume, the philosophy of aviators and pilots. The episodes in this context seem to suggest a challenge to social mores and laws, traditional power sources and officialdom in any form.

This is perfectly exemplified by the symbolism entailed in the town dance. Structured and organised, the dance is thrown into chaos when Paul, the main protagonist, lets a ram into the hall and pandemonium ensues. The situation creates a carnivalesque moment, all participants become a part of the action. However the intent is not to undermine authority as such, but establish the rebelliousness of Paul's character and differentiate his role as a signifier of a different moral code to others, specifically those characters who are civilians and not related to military experience.

In another episode a similar situation occurs with an absurd scene involving a car and "chook chariot", going through the sentry gates at an army base. The humour here is the car, epitomised as irreverent, crashing into the physical, ordered world of the army base. The army is the epitome of power, order, structure and societal authority. The reader laughs because there is an expectation that, because of stereotyping, there will be a swift and possibly violent reprisal on the people in the car. The reader here also expects a return to the equilibrium and social order that the armed forces provide.

The subtext suggests a particular masculine reading of characters and developments. The catalyst for action are men and their role within the air force, their stunts and rebellious actions. There is a risk in this sense that such an exclusionary, gender specific text can limit the comic element produced and humour, without a satisfactory conclusion, loses its appeal to the reader.

The use of humour in these children's books works on many different levels. With the increase in age of the young reader, the complexity of ideas that can be expressed and understood begins to expand. The writer too can move away from the purely physical elements of humour and form the ideas developed to test the parameters of the young reader's world. This can be expressed through the direct questioning or challenging of authority as well as the more subtle questioning of power relationships through the use of humour.

Bakhtin (1984) stated that carnival used laughter as a means of joining people, that laughter was a universal expression and not an individual reaction to the comic and that it was directed at everyone including the self (p. 11). To achieve this many authors have placed an emphasis on the incongruity between formal expectations of behaviour and decorum to the expectations of what is appropriate as subject matter for a children's story. This has been in many ways a reflection of societal views and mores creating the context for what is written and what is acceptable, a period of time defined by other developments in mass media entertainment.

We have seen in the nature of laughter, its causes and applications, the elements of humour used to reflect textual understanding. Laughter creates the impetus for narratives that are more and more challenging to the sense of individual and societal decorum. The new market has more content once considered taboo, private and unspoken, but now allowed and seemingly flourishing in its more abject material representation. For the young reader this has meant that the increasing use of toilet humour and scatological concerns are moving towards a more mainstream position, encouraging both "edgy" subject matter and further challenge to the status quo and what is acceptable.

Bodily functioning has become the means to move beyond a compartmentalised view of humour. What could be classified as "toilet humour", contrasts with other traditional sources of comic material to be the catalyst for action and new narrative concerns. With this in mind the next chapter will look further at the role of bodily functioning in children's literature and how this can be read in terms of Bakhtin's idea of carnivalesque.

IV

Conflicting thrust: Bodily Functioning in children's books representing symbolic function within the Carnivalesque

This chapter will examine the role of bodily functioning and compare some of these ideas with Bakhtinian concepts related to the body and its carnival conception. Texts discussed in this chapter are Andy Griffith's *Bumageddon: the final pongflict* (2005) and short stories from Paul Jennings' *Round the Twist* (1990). The chapter will centre

on a closer analysis of these two writers and specifically one text from each, who use the role of the body and associated bodily functioning to both propel the plot and utilise subject matter once considered taboo.

Griffiths and Jennings are the only two authors who will be discussed as there is arguably little evidence to suggest that this same subject matter is as crucial or central to narrative in the work of other authors of this period, as it is to these two authors. Examples from these texts will be used to contextualise Bakhtinian ideas and how they are represented. The carnivalesque body is more than just physiological functioning, it is symbolic, functional and an area of narrative importance.

Specific areas, which involve the machinations of the body, will be discussed in the context of Bakhtin's ideas of the carnivalised body, the importance of the material bodily world and how these concepts can be applied to the selected texts. Initially some of the broader aspects of the use and views of bodily functioning in a carnivalesque framework will be discussed. Intrinsic too is the role of food and drink as a change agent in all these processes and the attendant rituals that support and promote its significance, such as the banquet, the feast and periods of abstinence. The role of food will also be discussed and intertwined with an analysis of aspects of bodily functioning.

This particular idea will be discussed a little later in this chapter in relation to the works of some Australian authors who use food as motif, prop and for comic effect, rather than solely as a means of sustenance.

The role of the body and its many functions relate specifically to the natural cycles of life and death. Nourishment and waste and the processes that linked cycles, is a central tenet of Bakhtinian carnivalesque. The body and its connection to the world at large and subsequently, how its literal / symbolic representation is important in understanding its dual role. The internal world is transformative of input from the external world and vice versa, is also crucial in explaining the importance of bodily functioning as ritual in carnival. Bakhtin (1984) has stated of bodily functioning that:

> ...[T]his is why the main events in the life of the grotesque body, the acts of the bodily drama, take place in this sphere. Eating, drinking, defecating and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing) as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body – all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old or new body. In all these events the beginning and ending of life are closely linked and interwoven. (p. 317)

These "acts" of bodily drama contain elements of release and transformation. The emphasis is placed upon those apertures or features that face the world and are the conduit for the internal to become externalised. Images of the mouth, the nose, the anus and genitals are intrinsic images of the carnivalesque and are important symbolically to the rituals that celebrate the role of the body. In Griffiths' *Bumageddon*, the natural biological functioning of backsides has been subverted to represent base functioning. Its role within ritual has been removed and its imagery symbolises one dimension only. Abstracted from the overall relationship to the body and exaggerated in function, Griffiths uses this subject matter for coarse punning and jokes.

The body and its functions can be revered, ridiculed, lauded and welcomed for their significance in true carnival view of the body, as well as acknowledged for their biological necessity. Camporesi (1983) noted that:

> ...[T]he obsessive belief (manifest in many cultures) that the interior of the human body was little more than a latrine, swarming with worms and lice ready to feast on the intestine, is almost timeless. It is effectively confirmed by medieval Christianity which bases itself on the assumption that procreation happens *ex putrid.* (p.78)

As stated in earlier chapters, carnival mirrored the serious, the officious and the sacred ceremony of the church, parodying the feast and celebrating traditional practices that were outside church sanctioned practice. Carnivals and ceremonies that celebrated the natural order, the harvest, bounty, season cycles, could be more liberal in the sense that they were a celebration of natural phenomena or a response to the conditions in which the populace found itself. In contrast, official church ceremonies

were an observation, a marking or passing of the immutable and unchangeable. Bloch (1982) noted of religious views of death that:

> ...[I]n much Christian iconography of the late middle ages decomposition of the human body is often emphasised so that the purity and non corruption of the liberated soul can emerge more strongly from contrast. (p. 285)

The decay of the human body began from the moment of birth until its physical demise. Religion concentrates on the deterioration of a body as a singular event. The body is solely the vessel in which the soul travels and its obvious corruptibility is non-regenerative. The body putrefies and rots, its purpose is limited to transporting and protecting the higher essence of the individual, other purposes and processes of the physical body are ignored or viewed with a similar view of the overall corporeal nature of human existence. In Jennings' secular observation of the body, bodily functioning represents only one aspect and similar to Griffiths' view, it represents decay. Disgust is evoked through this functioning, but in no instance with either author, is it used for anything other than for negative framing.

Shusterman (2006) says of the body:

> ...[T]he living body - a sensing, sentient soma rather than the mere mechanical corpse-embodies the fundamental ambiguity of the human self in several ways. First it expresses our double status as object and subject - as something in the world and as a sensibility that experiences, feels and acts in the world. (p. 3)

The carnival body has an ambiguity, defined by practice and accepted as a multi-faceted concept. In this sense the human body reflects the inherent truth of carnival; it is a complex, ever changing organism that can be viewed through many different paradigms and the perception of its function and purpose changes as often as the elements that create its momentary perception. The body is the centre of desires and physiological need, placing it at the forefront of existence. Rabelais (1955), talking of the body in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* euphemised as "Messer Gaster", said of it, that "the satirist is correct when he says that Messer Gaster – Sir Belly – is the true master of all the arts." (p. 571)

Classical views of the body define it in negative terms that associate the understanding of the body in the context of physical purpose. The body is a vessel for the soul where it is housed until it is freed through death and proceeds to take the "essence" of man on a higher journey. The flesh is weak, to be disregarded and a signifier for the impurity of humanity. The body decays, rots and ultimately has no importance in relation to the spirit and with this its symbolic meanings are pared, it is:

> ...merely one body; no signs of duality have been left. It is self sufficient and speaks its name alone. All that happens within it concerns it alone, that is, only the individual, closed sphere. Therefore all the events taking place within it acquire one single meaning: death is only death, it never coincides with birth; old age is torn away from youth. (Jarvis, 1986, p.103)

We see in relation to instances where the body or aspects/representations are deemed beautiful that an idealised view is taken which removes the body from an everyday context, from the profane, to create something untrammelled and sacred. In Griffiths' *Bumageddon* this idealised representation of beauty is applied to bums. The most majestic of these is the "Great White Bum" who is also portrayed as the progeny for future generations of the bum. In this way Griffiths idealises this particular specimen as an ideal just as classical representations of the body have attempted to do.

This classical view of the body contrasts with the multifaceted view provided by Bakhtin (1984) of the grotesque body:

> [G]rotesque imagery constructs what we might call a double body. In the endless chain of bodily life it retains the parts in which one link joins the other, in which the life of one body is born from the death of the preceding older one. (p. 318)

The dual concept of the body in carnival means that it can be endlessly reproduced and reformed. It can be seen as an objective or subjective space and able to change, whether this be through significant life events – birth for example or aging, or seen through paradigms such as socio-political importance or biological functioning. In Jennings' "Age Rager" for example, time can be sped up or slowed, people can be made infants or aged so that they die, through a device the narrator finds on a train. Jennings represents the cycles of life and inverts the natural order of human

development. He uses this to show only the negative aspects of life; one passenger is turned to a skeleton, another to an infant. There is no connection to the natural cycle of life and the narrator feels a horror with the consequences of his actions, life has only limited possibilities and one unavoidable fate once begun, there is no symbolic function of the body other than to age.

It is significant to note that this dual nature has been removed and made abstract, the view of the body that has become increasingly idealised, trivialised and rigidly defined in cultural meaning. We see the use of the body and its functions as "dirty" rather than in the context of their natural functioning as necessary. Functioning has become abjection to a cultured and technologically advanced society. As Lloyd-Smith (2005) noted:

> In a secular society, arguably the clean and the unclean take the place of the pure and the impure, the sacred and the profane. The abject retains its force as an insult and affront to the symbolic system. (p. 194)

The spontaneity of the carnival was without rule and subsequently had a rambling, ongoing flux-like quality. Within this philosophical approach and response to natural phenomena and events, the human body and its unpredictable machinations were accepted as such and celebrated, symbolising the rhythms of life and the stages that the body progressed through. Griffiths has parodied this through creating a dualism for the roles of backsides and associated bodily functioning. Bums live independently from their owners and are instilled with personalities and the ability to think and feel. This represents an abstract and compartmental view of the carnivalised duality of the body; the only purpose is to shock through the limited functioning they have been assigned.

Minogue and Palmer (2006) in *Journal of Modern Literature* say grotesque realism presents the individual body as one part of the common social body that is endlessly regenerating (p. 103). Tihanov (2001) stated of this collective body that it has held a rigid definition of function when viewed outside the individual:

> ...[T]his collective body denies the value of the individual appropriation of the world. Its overwhelming collectivity rests on its "non classic" constitution; it

> is grotesque in the sense of not knowing beginning or end, exterior and interior, depths and shallows. All this makes the grotesque body insusceptible to the grand, the historically intransient, and the monotonously serious. (p. 75)

Tihanov makes the point that this created a mistrust of individual experience; that the nature of an event had a specific meaning tied with collective experience. In the instance of carnival celebration, all roles of the body were acknowledged and celebrated. In Jennings this individual experience has taken a different dimension within the collective experience. A large gathering allows the possibility of embarrassment for the individual, a humiliation that causes the individual to retreat from any collective experience. In terms of settings, Jennings uses a number of places where gatherings are common, particularly schools. There is a level of personal embarrassment common to the situations and characters within them, that the reader can empathise with.

This duality of nature concerning the body has over time been diminished with each stage of life representing only one conclusive meaning. The openness of the carnivalised body has lost its ambiguity and its symbolic power to represent bodily complexity. Castle (1986) talks of "rational individualism" where the individual is a closed entity, removed from the common body, non-receptive to the conditionings that are a part of all human existence and subsequently a little removed from the conditioning that provided a sense of altruism which was for the good of all society. The significance of this change is most apparent in the way carnival ideals of body and functioning are used in some current children's literature as part of the narrative structure. This in turn elevates the taboo level of the text, as individual's bodies and their functioning are no longer spoken of in polite society and if they are it gives them an exaggerated effect.

The body then has been seen historically in the context of its physiological functioning and purpose as well as the physical limitation on the achievement of a higher order purpose, a spiritual significance. Carnival celebrates this dichotomy of purpose recognising the spiritual path of the individual but celebrating the machinations of the everyday functioning of the body. As Napier (1992) noted:

> ...[F]or the human body is the sole object in the universe for which we have both the objective ("different") and subjective ("same") knowledge, the only thing moreover, about which we can lack consciousness and be maniacally self conscious. And it is because of this singularity of this self awareness that both the symbolism of the body and the notions of how the integrity of one's body-image boundary is maintained invariably become the arena of our most explicit statements about the strange and the foreign. (p.141)

The roles of the body and the effects upon it occur through acts of eating, defecating and giving birth. Dying is a distinct ritual and it is possible to view the act of nourishment or birth as separate rituals which have significant effects upon the body. Ritual attends the table as with birth and death rites, both secular and sacred, as a way of understanding and creating meaning for the physical process that follows. The body is represented in many ways of being, from the nubile to the distorted wasted remnants of age, but in an ever-changing form that correlates to significant events in its physical development and lifespan. Of this Bakhtin (1984) states that:

> ...[T]he body discloses its essence as a principle of growth that exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking or defecation. This is the ever unfinished ever creating body, the link in the chain of genetic development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they enter into each other. (p. 26)

Central to this idea of the distorted body is the significance of the natural world or the "material bodily world" as Bakhtin described it. Its role accentuates the connection of the body with its place in the physical world and the characteristics and symbolic elements of its functioning.

As mentioned, the orifices that are the connection between the physical and the symbolic have great importance in the carnivalesque, so too within the work of Jennings and Griffiths. In Griffiths' bum series books, every effort is made to make the bums more disgusting. This is achieved through concentrating on the physical aspects of their functioning and descriptions of how bodily waste is used. Similarly Jennings achieves much the same effect, though urine as a motif seems to be the preferred. Particularly important to Bakhtin were those parts of the body, the orifices,

that connected the inner sanctum of the body with the natural world. In particular Bakhtin (1984) saw the role of both the face and mouth as being important:

> … [T]he most important for all human features for the grotesque is the mouth. It dominates all else. The grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth; the other features are only a frame encasing this wide open bodily abyss. (p. 317)

Through this gaping abyss much of what defines carnival, grotesque appetites, the human body as subjective/objective form and is defined and given character in carnivalised form. This opening is a two way connection between the body and the world, receiving sustenance and building life whilst also removing waste and returning to the earth. Griffiths' *Bumageddon* limits this to one symbolic meaning only and exaggerates this effect greatly through creating a landscape through waste, for example, "brown lakes".

Over indulging when imbibing food and drink can often take on a grotesque character full of comic potential and is still in use as comic device today for many authors. However the contextual meaning for this has shifted from a worldly understanding in a carnival sense to a purely literal translation that emphasises its repugnant physical attributes. In Jennings "Spaghetti Pig Out", the character "Rabbit" eats so fast he vomits everywhere and over everyone. The narrator rewinds the scene so that the vomit is ingested making the scene doubly disgusting due to the incongruity of such a thing being able to happen. The readers' reaction to this event, which is repugnance, may result from a clearly defined and rigidly set definition of the role of the mouth in purely physiological functioning. Anything viewed outside a carnival definition with no carnival value, can only allow the act to be seen as horrific:

> …[T]he intake of food happens at one and only one locus: the mouth. This largest of the breaches in the sheath that protects the body is the principal material incorporator of the outside world. It is the last defence, the point at which the critical decision of incorporation occurs: swallow or spit it out.
> (Rozin, 1999, p.14)

When the reader then is confronted with the act of vomiting as the previous Jennings example shows, they see an instance that suggests something sickly or inconsumable

being rejected as well as this threat being represented in the physical machinations of the removal of waste. The simple imagery of regurgitating appears as rejection. Carnival represents this too as a distortion, protuberance and reaction of the body, meeting forth the world and interacting, but does not shy from the naming of acts and is careful not to confer singular meaning.

What is significant about the features of the human body in this context is the trajectory of the processes such as eating, defecating and urinating, childbirth, death and burial. It is the significance of the downward thrust that is important in understanding a grotesque conception of the body. As we have seen, what Bakhtin called "the material bodily lower stratum', the thrust of the carnival body is characterised by acts towards the earth and focused on the features of the body that promote this or by functioning that exemplify it.

In Jennings' "Spaghetti Pig Out" a magical remote controls people's movements. Linda points the remote at her father making him drop his pants and pull them up over and over, and at a faster and faster rate (p.101). The absurdity of someone having to drop their pants and pull them up over and over is comic, as this episode suggests a lack of decorum and personal embarrassment. It is also suggestive however, of the toileting habits of humans. The mere suggestion is enough to indicate the author's intent.

Bakhtin has noted:

> [T]he essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is transference to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their dissoluble unity. (pp.19-20)

The mouth and the digestion of food, the related removal of dung, urine and other bodily byproducts and also childbirth, are as important as the genitalia in these roles. All these actions go down towards the earth, revitalising and replenishing and as such are viewed as part of a cycle. Contrastingly, Griffiths' landscapes – those created by the giant bums - can be seen as an extreme exaggeration of this effect whilst losing their ambiguous carnival meaning. These aspects represent the visual spectacle as

well as the biological act and are as such an important aspect of the carnivalised and grotesque body image:

> ...[T]he grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon. The grotesque image displays not only the outward but the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs. The outward and inner features are often merged into one. (ibid, p.318)

The understanding of grotesque in this context, allows the reader to see the functioning of the body from a different perspective so that we see it as Miller (1998) suggests: "The womb and the bowels, sexuality and shit, birth and death are tied up into one 'grotesque knot' of carnivalesque vitality" (p.2). Particular functions of the body can seem to be detached from their general all round purpose within the body and perhaps can even be seen to be more important, at least symbolically than in reality, other than as a component part of a complex and composite machine. Particular organs have attached to them distinctive language; the language of pun, curse, euphemism and a heightened importance due to their role in maintaining/building life. Around this are built cultural practices that acknowledge and celebrate their importance, both individually and as a part of the collective social body.

This is particularly true of the acts entailed in the removal of bodily waste. Urinating and defecating are very much scatological taboo subjects in terms of reading material for children but have historically had a cultural significance that is extensive. What is important to note here is that Rabelais also saw excrement as a light motif for death and as comic material to address the more terrifying aspects of human mortality. Historical attitudes have changed towards the symbolism of excrement, it has become less ambivalent and more closely aligned with an identification/association with the infantile. Puerile functioning represented as a negation only tends to limit text and character development in children's literature. Kristeva (1997) states of the role of excrement that:

> ...[E]xcrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death. (p. 260)

It is within this context and theory of cultural significance that some current writers for children use the machinations of defecating to shock and provide humorous impetus for their narrative. Current societal conception of defecating is simply a matter of waste disposal and has no vague, ambivalent carnival understanding. The removal of waste; urinating, defecating, vomiting and other bodily functions are framed in their visual context only and subsequently can be viewed in a purely negative light.

Viewed with no purpose in mind other than as a visual means of propelling plot, they can be seen as gratuitous. Griffiths takes this to an extreme creating a "marvellous" world around this very subject matter. Later we shall return to this theme.

Important to the nature of the carnivalesque and its connection to the grotesque is the role that food and drink plays. It defines the grotesque conception of the body, acts as a catalyst for the grotesque functioning of the individual corporeal body and the body as defined and understood by society. The intake of food or fluid is the stimulus, the trigger to distend the body and to sate it, to cause physical change or change its functioning. It helps the body to grow, provides impetus for change and motors its progression through life. Conversely, the want of food or drink works to the same effect, elevating the need to imbibe as paramount above all else and can be ritual itself. Visser (1999) states that:

> …[T]he food eaten, then, fits the culture; it carries out functions that go beyond the need for nutrition. People have to be fed, but a new food may feed them differently, and may feed them more poorly, in order to make time or space for other things – things the culture, or those who have exceptional power, have set as the important goals. (p. 126)

Inherent in this idea is the view that a role reversal has occurred in the production of food, its use and the views society as a whole have for its purpose. A carnivalesque understanding provides a perspective that suggests foodstuffs, produce and the fare of the table are celebrated and are an end point in the means of production, a freedom from the vagaries of nature and provide for sustenance that is substantive and bountiful. Commercial production of food at least in the western world has improved

in terms of yields, resistance to disease and storage. Transportation, the scope and extent of markets have enabled a change in attitude to food. The availability of food at all times has removed the importance of crops that traditionally have been sown and harvested at particular times of the year. The removal of doubt has had a massive influence on how we view food and its relationship to our culture.

This collective process resulted in celebration because of the effort involved for all of society who played a part in its production, comparatively in society today, the ritual of eating and food as a socialising agent is still important. As traditional ritual however, it has lost some of its symbolic power due to how and where we eat and the availability of various cultural cuisines independent of their original culture.

Food and its use within children's literature can be generally seen as symbolic and is not usually a major theme. The importance of food and its place within the text varies from being central to a particular event or scene, ritualised or merely as an addendum to the action unfolding within the narrative. For Jennings food serves as a prop to achieve a comic end and within the work of Griffiths it is decidedly ephemeral. For example, Bronson in "Second Copy" stumbles upon the cloning machine, and places a ginger bread man in the machine. Jennings uses the cloning of the biscuit in the machine to demonstrate the power and potential of the machine, not as a commentary on the type of food mentioned in the story.

The collection and cultivation of food has ceased to be the most important thing in westernised society. Once the food source is secure, the role of eating changes symbolically as we move from thankful to expectant. No longer is eating within this temporal context a feast; food can be fast or cheap or both, ritualised according to individual desires and needs and flexible in relation to other aspects of individuals' lives that have become more important, being inverted and becoming something of disgust. In Griffiths' bum series, there is one specific mention of eating and the ritual of food. It concerns the bum fighters going into the desert and eating a sickly meal of a particular plant that stinks. The comic element is that the producer of this food swears by it whilst the rest of the group try not to gag.

As mentioned earlier, the approach to food as ritual is broader, more fragmented and less of a cohesive element than it has been represented in the carnivalesque. Expectations about food fall to "experts" who influence how we see food, think about food and use food. Sokolov (1999) notes that:

> [W]e are told that the only effective way to diet is to change our eating patterns for life. The traditionalists, doctors or faddists may or may not think they are advocating a cultural revolution. But of course they are. They want us to abandon the whole panoply of culturally inherited eating, of traditional cuisine, if you will, for something new or healthier and more ecological and kinder to animals, in tune with our karma, balancing yang and ying, free of pesticides, untyrannized by agribusiness and soulless supermarket chains and taking a stand for sustainable agriculture. (p. 32)

The commonality of all these factors shows the significance of food today has changed when compared to the role of food in Bakhtinian carnivalesque. Food here is central to understanding, the lifeblood of individuals and communities and is at the centre of culture and ritual. The failure of crops or death of livestock means the end of a society, there is simply nothing more important. In Jennings "Spaghetti Pig Out" as an example, the young student Linda is horrified by the thought of an eating competition: "It's a disgraceful waste of food" (p.91). Her opinion counterpoints the position of excess that the narrative is taking, as if Jennings is noting the varied responses and philosophical positioning food production and consumption can have on individuals.

The grotesque element attached to food is distinctive in carnivalesque and is hard to separate from that of the body. With the image of the grotesque body as unseparated from the importance of food and the role it plays in its creation, food and body are often described as being a single concept. Bakhtin (1984) says of the grotesque and eating that:

> [I]n the act of eating, the confines between the body and the world are overstepped by the body; it triumphs over the world, over its enemy, celebrates its victory, grows at the worlds' expense. This element of victory and triumph is inherent in all banquet images. No meal can be sad. Sadness and food are incompatible (while death and food are perfectly compatible). The banquet always celebrates a victory and this is part of its very nature. (pp. 282 – 283)

Eating as shown in banqueting lent itself to grotesque appetites but always within a spirit of celebration for the bounty produced. The correlation between banquet times and church ritual, which was often paralleled to carnivalised ritual and harvest, added significance to the event. In Jennings, any ritualised event that includes the use of food is done so in the context of how it reflects on the individual and their reaction to the abundance or nature of the food provided.

Grotesque in the present sense has come to mean something misshapen - an ugliness, removed from a connection with exaggeration. The grotesque body of carnivalesque could become distended through overeating, represented in popular images as an exaggeration resulting from grotesque appetite. The connection was not severed. Current understanding and contextual use of grotesque from carnival form has lead to a separation between the body and its functioning and has limited the role food can play in its creation, usually through the fat/thin dichotomy.

Rozin (1999) says of contemporary food culture:

> ...[M]ost people have substantial choices in foods, over and above the "choices" made by their culture. As a result most people choose foods they like, and hence eating is for the most part, a pleasant, positive experience. (p. 15)

Its literal role has eclipsed its symbolic significance. The use of food means that with this significance lost, how it is used and its importance can be reconstructed for any purpose in a society that can relegate its importance to a lesser state. As Camporesi (1993) has noted:

> ...[I]n general, however, dietary codes and rituals are ignored; foods have lost their value as tokens of symbolic communication, as a mute subterranean alphabet of the senses (taste and smell) that lead us into the deep fragrant soul of things. (p.165)

It is important to consider then the roles of various parts of the body and bodily functioning with the holistic image of the body and the interconnected role of food. The nature of the body and its perception has changed in modernity as compared with

the Rabelaisian view and this has had implications for a phenomenological understanding and use of the material body. Barker (1995) states that:

> ...the modern body is forced down in front of discourse where it cannot realize incarnationally the central significations which the older body, in all its painful exactitude, was able to bear out; and not just because those meanings in a new age are now different, but because it is also a transformed and relocated body. Before this inception of the new order and of modern subjectivity, the flesh was the immediate, the unmediated site of desire and penalty. (pp. 57 -58)

Carnival understanding and representation of the body drew upon images associated with the physical body and its various states of development, decay and transformation but also reflected representations made in a metaphorical context through church teachings. These reflected the role and purpose of the body and to this end were instrumental in formalising ideas of the role of the body in this process but also ensured that the view of the body as vessel remained significant and primary. Modern interpretations of the body have allowed it to be viewed in a variety of contexts and changeable due to the influence of artistic, literary and socio-political areas. In Griffiths' *Bumageddon* series for example, human backsides have been represented as whole corporeal identities in their own right. Griffiths has also inverted physical properties, locales and the functioning of backsides to explore a multifaceted view of one part of the human body. This has allowed more creative means of developing transgressive text as it gives more roles to a part of the body that can be both absurdly comical and plays on the readers' understanding of the physical function of this part of the anatomy.

It has meant that the historical view of the body can be incorporated into these new arenas of identification to create new identities and new meanings. Aspects of its functioning can be used within the historical paradigm to create new views and ideas that draw upon carnivalised components and attendant means of expression such as exaggeration and grotesque humour. Consider the physical representations of the bums that Griffiths describes, they are separate entities, with separate lives from the rest of the torso. They have evolved and become detached. They have "spouted" arms

and legs to move independently of people. This represents a grotesque distortion of aspects of the body and allows an attendant humour in such an image:

> [T]here it stood. Two enormous white cheeks of pure menace - dedicated to nothing less than the downfall of humanity - propped up by two skinny white legs. (p. 12)

As well as the purely biological discourse that modern sensibilities have created for carnivalised ideals of body, they have also presented them as something contemporary or at least worthy of renewed attention and focus for narrative consideration.

Historically the act of defecating has been closely linked with death in many cultures and as such has in some instances acquired a taboo status. This may be what gives it its current appeal for writers, the historical significance given to this basic act of waste removal when related to the embarrassing physical machinations and taboo status gives it an ability to shock. This is significant when we consider the central role of defecating and associated body imagery with the works of Griffiths and others.

This fascination with bodily functioning extends to the act of urinating. Like defecating, it is seen purely as an act of negation making it seem a repugnant deed but which gives it versatility as a narrative device. It has elements of the comic and the grotesque and representation of the socially unacceptable. In Rabelais' (1955) *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, the river Seine is created through the pissing of Gargantua. As a pretext to this, Gargantua is pestered by Parisians upon his arrival:

> ...[T]hen, with a smile, he undid his magnificent codpiece and, bringing out his John - Thomas, pissed on them so fiercely that he drowned two hundred and sixty thoU.S.And, four hundred and eighteen persons, not counting the women and small children. (p.74)

The comic episode says something both politically about the Paris of Rabelais' time (or conversely the state of the river) whilst creating the exaggerated form of the character of Gargantua. This reflects the ideals of carnival and exaggeration. Importantly it has no overtones in its context of defining Gargantua against societal expectation; it merely parodies creation myths - in this instance the great flood, with

an earthier form of humour. Modern representations of urinating have a different impact and implicit meaning and the ambivalence of carnival is removed. Jennings for example in "Little Squirt" gives it a solely literal interpretation. Weesle is told by his mother to practice after he has lost the one hundred metre race to his brother. Jennings leads the reader to believe that Weesle has trained for the race however it is for the urinating competition in the toilets that he has actually been practicing. Weesle wins the competition by urinating up to the ceiling:

> [B]oy do I squirt. I pee higher than anyone in the world has ever done. Higher than my head. The kids' eyes bug out with admiration. "Wow" they yell. Sam, however, does not admire me. He is as mad as a hatter. He blows his top. He hits the roof. But not in the same way that I do. (p.31)

Important to note is the colloquial use of language, the rich secular language of the marketplace in describing the anatomy of Gargantua. This element has also been removed from current writing with an implicit understanding given that no body part is named through the act of urinating or defecating. For example, Griffiths uses a multitude of terms that are ambiguous - puns, double entendres that reflect an aspect of their physical appearance: "brown blobs", "brown holes", "great crack" (as in canyons). It is freely and directly connected with the readers' understanding of the insinuation. This area of conjecture is thus bypassed and the writing not directly linked to a subject that is still taboo. Therefore the only aspect of the physical functioning of body parts that children can be tentatively exposed to are separated from other more "adult" connotations. This is still dangerously close to drawing a correlation or rather attention to the sexualising of children through this implication.

The advancement of the rights of children in terms of child protection and the increasing alarm and notoriety given to "predators" of children means writers are constantly risking transgressing with a taboo that has repercussions that extend beyond the purely literary. As Warner (1998) notes of these new "Bogeymen":

> ...[W]e want children to be happy on our behalf, we want them to guarantee the possibility of innocence and goodness, not only in their own conduct and desires but also, crucially in the desires and responses they inspire in others. So children's physicality, their seductiveness, their appetite and curiosity have become one of the most painful and recurrent issues of the time, with denials

> of erotic feelings accompanied by ever accentuated sexualized representations of children's beauty, appetites and even economic power. (p. 385)

Further to this Warner also adds:

> ...[P]aedophiles have become paramount bogeys of our time because their practices condense a wider cultural pederasty that sanctifies the child and the condition of childhood and the state of childlikeness and infantilizes all of us in the pursuit of ideal humanity at the very same time that society fails to look after children's interests. (p. 385)

This thesis is not concerned with the idea of the role of children and ideas of transgression in relation to them; rather the point to make here is that the society of which writers are a part, and thus their readership, are placed very much in the centre of this societal context. When writers approach subjects that are culturally sensitive and push the boundaries of what is acceptable for both young readers and subsequently their guardians, they must be careful not to promote explicitly or otherwise the concerns that Warner has identified.

Traditional carnival ideas as developed by Rabelais were created from a very different cultural and societal tradition and drawing from these sources is fraught with misunderstanding, hostility and unintended and often detrimental comparison. In this regard it is perhaps fit to begin with looking at the popular works of Griffiths and how these concerns are mirrored and used in his "bum books" trilogy.

In Griffiths' *Bumageddon: The Final Pongflict*, the last in the trilogy, the hero Zac returns to fight the bums and in this particular instance, travel back in time to stop bums from coming through to the present to fight for the Great White Bum. The last book is a culmination of events and has increased in scale in terms of narrative development, plot ideas and complexity. Like the previous books in this series, Griffiths uses scatological humour to underpin the plot and propel the narrative.

The fact that Zac ends up in a prehistoric world is an opportunity to exaggerate the already excessive toilet humour and do so within the constructs of a setting that allows for grandiose presentation. Giant bums rule the planet, drawing obvious comparisons to dinosaurs, but also the interpretation that there is something primeval,

primitive about the functioning of the body. A reduction of the performance of humanity to this primal functioning removes ambiguity concerning the context through which we see Griffiths' representation of the role of bodily functioning. The innuendo generated from the events on the planet suit the carnivalesque idea of hyperbole and exaggeration.

Toilet humour across an entire planet is a large scale presentation of a scatological view of bodily functioning. This is emphasised by the punning on scientific concepts, black holes become "brown holes" and language itself takes on more abstract, colloquial uses associated for the body as exemplified by the books glossary. This use of colloquial language extends to the use of descriptors describing or relating human characteristics and traits to types of bums. The bum fighting team for example has various members known as "The Kicker", "The Smacker", "The Flicker" and "The Kisser". This metalanguage for the body parts and their functioning transgresses their purely physical role into the vernacular whilst, paradoxically, limiting the essence of what the reader is laughing at. It is not transformative or symbolic, it is an act that can only be interpreted as repulsive, an abject functioning in a society that places extra emphasis on the notion of hygiene and cleanliness.

This view may represent the observation that "the body is nothing other than the models in which different systems have enclosed it" (Baudrillard, 1993, p.114). In this instance the carnival ambiguity is removed, the body is not part of the cyclic events of events of life, regenerating and renewing but rather compartmentalised to heighten its negative connotations. It is simply horrid and becomes the enactment of something horrible:

> ...[P]ost modern horror lies just beneath the surface, it lurks in dark alleys, it hides behind a rational science, it buries itself in respectable bodies, so the story goes. (Halberstam, 1995, p.163)

By labelling and describing the acts within Griffiths' novel at a visceral level, the horror lies in the spectacle. The reader isn't confronted with a sense of dread at what may happen but is presented with the literal and accepts it as such. There is no other explanation to dilute the imagery presented. The reader's reaction is to laugh at that

which has been stripped of its symbolism. Halberstam (1995) notes that Victorian literature moved from the idea of horror being an internalised, morality-based concept, to the external and visual. Griffiths has continued this.

Carnival laughs in the face of such horror and removes the threat that may lie within the individual or the concepts that may cause society the most alarm such as authoritarian rule, uncertainty of food supply and the uncertainties of life expectancy and individual health. Griffiths marries this post modern conception of the unpleasant as almost monstrous whilst using prior reader knowledge to parody what current societal attitudes deem acceptable/unacceptable, especially in relation to reading material for young readers. For example, the great white bum marries Robobum in a traditional marriage ceremony and even though the ceremony is a ruse to trap the Great White Bum, the Robobum still wants the traditions of the ceremony such as a white wedding dress. The idea of two bums being married makes this point, in the one instance recognising a traditional cultural ceremony whilst being simultaneously ludicrous.

Many aspects of traditional narrative are maintained: good triumphs over evil, a happy resolution ensues and the structure of the hero quest is completed for Zac, as it does for his colleagues. Conversely, the giant bums are banished and defeated, they are removed from the narrative and become an absence. We must conclude then they have been destroyed or killed though this is not explicit. As Reynolds, Brennan and McCarronk (2001) note:

> …[M]uch of the fiction now sold as horror and written with a juvenile audience in mind is notable for the sense of security it ultimately engenders. Instead of ambiguous endings, the closure of these novels is typically a disclosure in which what was thought to be inexplicable is explained, and what seemed dangerous and menacing is made safe and often even comfortable. (p. 2)

Death is removed because it is an idea that is untenable for the hero/protagonist to consider and weakens the idea of physical and moral superiority to other characters. We have to some extent a knowing awareness of its implications but not as an absolute concept, which leaves it open to interpretation. It is a finality which isn't within the philosophical parameters of carnivalesque. Death is not feared but accepted

and this removes its taboo and places it on a par with other intrinsic aspects of the celebration of carnival.

In Jennings' *Round the Twist,* a collection of short stories, one particular story, referred to earlier, "Spaghetti Pig Out", demonstrates some of the belief systems inherent in the idea of the carnivalesque relating to the use of food. Briefly, a prize bike is offered to the winner of a spaghetti eating competition. The spaghetti is kept in buckets with literal references made to its appearance and its similarity to internalised bodily functioning. The story has many of the elements of Jennings; first person narrative, narrative revolving around a simple plot device to propel and provide humour, temporal shifts and the uses of nicknames for characters that represent power, in this instance an adversary and contestant known as "Rabbit". The narrator has a device, a remote control that enables him to fast forward or rewind characters.

The grotesque element involves over - eating and vomiting, then the rewinding of this act so that the vomit appears to be swallowed. In another carnivalised incident, the character of Rabbit becomes grotesquely oversized and engorged, similar to Rabelais' creation of Master Gaiter. Here the ritual of eating has lost its traditional meaning and becomes a means to an end in providing the comic element.

The symbolic power of food has become negated. Its gross abundance (the appearance on the floor in buckets) diminishes its importance, and is used only as a prop in the visceral act of "throwing up". Jennings presents this as sole focalisation to denude the act of any transformative meaning much like Griffiths' use of a faecal ridden plot. This particular story also represents a correlation between a good eater and a bad eater. Rabbit is unable to contain the food within and loses the contest. Consumption is given a moral coding which has become an intrinsic part of our western, largely Christian culture that:

> ...[U]nlike most of the world religions, Christianity does not observe dietary prescriptions: Christians are omnivorous. This has two broad effects, first, the imagery of eating pervades the very language of the culture, its beliefs and its rites; second, it provokes anxiety about impurity - an anxiety that used to be contained , for Catholics, by minor rules of abstinence, such as no meat on Fridays and fasting before communion, but is no longer.
>
> (Warner, 1998, pp.138-139)

This guilt and simultaneous obsession associated with eating becomes a form of degradation when it is primarily associated with a role of bodily functioning. Not only is it an example of gross excess, it transgresses social laws dictating decency, decorum and polite manner and it is done in a manner to repel or revolt the reader. What is worse than overeating than wasting what has been eaten? It reflects the maxim used by many parents of eating everything you are given and other values that try to instil a sense of importance in the relation to food and nutrition for children.

In Jennings' "Piddler on the Roof" the protagonists end the narrative by having a "piss fight" on the lawn. In common with other Jennings narratives, the author uses symbolic binary oppositions to accentuate the essential differences between characters. There is a subtext that concerns cleanliness as opposed to being dirty, wellness to that of being ill. Again there is a negative inference to the role of authority in relationship to the actions of the protagonist - Aunty Sue "forces" this to happen when the boys are not allowed to use the toilet. Similarly to other Jennings' texts an explanation is given that provides a means to rationalise the introduction of a taboo act and one that is frowned upon by society.

Urinating in public is arguably less offensive than other taboo acts, but as in the other taboo acts described in the work of Griffiths, it is what is inferred from the actions of the protagonists that are important. A "piss fight" suggests a struggle, tactics and the use of bodily parts to "win", again the act moves beyond the purely physiological to a carnivalised ideal. The carnivalesque element of the action in "Piddler on the Roof" suggests mock battles and jousts that imitate medieval narratives. As Bakhtin (1984) says of the character of carnival in this epoch:

> ...[T]he prevailing forms are the secular parody and travesty, which present the droll aspect of the feudal system and of feudal heroics. The medieval epic parodies are animal, jesting, roguish, foolish; they deal with heroic deeds, epic heroes. (p. 15)

Jennings elevates the acts of the protagonists to an absurd level, which contrasts the elements of mock heroic against the carnivalised use of body. The idea here is not to enter into discussion on the effectiveness of plotting device, but to show that this episode is in true carnivalesque style due to its comic exaggeration and focus on an essential tenet of 'material bodily stratum'. In "Piddler on the roof" for example:

> ...our two streams of pee crossed each other in the darkness like two watery blades fighting it out in times of old. Usually I ran out of ammo first and Dad would win. But tonight I beat him easily.
> "Well done, Weesle," said Dad. "You're amazing. You could beat a horse."
> (p.64)

Interestingly, the use of euphemisms never extends beyond an implication that the reader is invited to infer. For example, the many-faceted terms that Rabelais would use for defecating such as dung or shit among others, are never used in Griffiths' descriptions. Even though faecal matter is central to events and the propulsion of the humour Griffiths refers to generalised descriptions such as "great blobs". In this regard Griffiths uses the language of the marketplace in part but not all of its features, the use of abuses and curses usually marked by the profane, blasphemous and crude is eliminated so as to not cause obvious offence.

It is interesting to see that although the subject matter can be taboo certain conventions are adhered to, which leads one to ask, what is more important - the means of production or the implications suggested by the product itself? This is also true of the work of Jennings, with an almost "polite" use of terminology to describe various physical acts which when taken out of context are seen in themselves as being crude and outside societal propriety and convention. The reader is invited to make the connections themselves between what is being alluded to and the type of language deemed appropriate to be used.

This is an interesting development that moves away from the more graphic descriptive passages for older readers in presenting horror elements or those ideas that contain elements of the abject or horrible. Of this Kristeva (1987) says:

> ...[C]ontemporary post-war literature sets out never the less on a difficult course... its quest of the invisible, perhaps metaphysically motivated by the ambition to remain faithful to the intensity of horror down to the ultimate exactness of words, becomes imperceptible and progressively antisocial, and non demonstrative, and also, by dint of being anti spectacular, uninteresting. (p.224)

The horror has become more graphic and explicit, again demonstrating a move from a moral horror to the physiological in nature. Perhaps for younger readers this can only be intimated because the taboo surrounding representations such as these are deemed too extreme for the young reader. Graphic descriptions and depictions of violence or exaggerated acts on the body and the repercussions of these leave nothing to the imagination. There is no looking away from the explicit horror as well as the abject representation of acts that have no symbolic meaning, only literal interpretations.

In contrast the representations that the carnivalesque can construct with the body are multifaceted and are open to varied interpretations of their significance. The young reader is able to infer significance from the text but is also implicitly encouraged to imagine, as a natural extension, associations between acts and body parts. There is safety for the young reader in being able to interpret events to their perceptive level whilst also being allowed to enter at a universal understanding of the taboo being discussed. They are not pinned and judged because the carnivalised text has multiple meanings and is subjective.

It can also be represented through alternative and competing genres as carnivalesque allows for this ambiguity in comprehension and lends itself to parody, which adapts itself to reflect the form of the serious text.

Bodily functioning is a crucial component of the carnivalesque. Its representation takes on many guises and allows for this interpretation to be associated both with the various life stages that the body endures, such as birth, growth and death, and the importance biologically and symbolically of sustenance, food and drink. The grotesque body being transgressive and open to the world is ever changing and closely aligned to the machinations of the earth. All important deeds are thrust

downwards, and are an intrinsic part of the cycle of life and death, regeneration and degradation.

There is no completion to this metaphorical body; it is constantly in flux and in need of sustenance to maintain its relationship with the world. The appetites the body encapsulates are a natural extension of the concept of hunger and how this has been adapted over time to fit the society in which we live. It also has meant a shift from the purely physiological need of individuals to satisfy their hunger, to expanded and even metaphorical understandings of new forms of appetite. This then will be the basis of the next chapter.

V

Delineated Hunger: The role of appetite in the construction of Carnivalesque understanding in children's literature

The purpose of this chapter is to look at the role of appetite in relation to carnivalesque, some of the issues surrounding what we understand by the term appetite and how this is applied to selected children's texts. The texts discussed in this chapter are Eleanor Spence's *The Left Overs* (1982), Nadia Wheatley's *Dancing in the Anzac Deli* (1984), Victor Kelleher's *Taronga* (1986), Ruth Park's *Playing Beattie Bow* (1980) and Paul Jennings, *Unbelievable!* (1986). Thurley Fowler's *Wait for me! Wait for me!* (1981), Patricia Wrightson's *A little fear* (1983) and *Behind the wind*

(1981), Morris Lurie's *Toby's Millions* (1985) and Sonya Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs* (1995) and *Forest* (2001).

Appetite is a closely related concept to food but can also be applied to other aspects of human existence other than the purely physiological. To this end this chapter will predominantly look at both food and appetite as interrelated concerns, but also briefly discuss those areas in which some connection is apparent with appetite, such as eating disorders and body image, as well as the implications this has for the creation of and use of power. These concepts will only be discussed briefly in order to highlight the progression we as a society have made in food technologies, production methods and availability, as well as the psychological impact this has had on society overall the ways in which this differs from the philosophical credence food holds within the carnivalesque.

To look at the roles that appetite has played/plays in the field of children's literature, selected texts have been used. Issues such as body image will be discussed in relation to appetite and shown through the characterisations in Spence's *The Left Overs*. Food, as used by modern writers to accentuate cultural attitudes, beliefs and identity will be looked at in some depth through texts from Wrightson, Jennings and Wheatley. Also, the role food and appetite play when used as nostalgic metaphor, as used by Fowler, will be discussed. In contrast to this idealised ritual of eating, the post - apocalyptic view of a return to food uncertainty will be briefly discussed in Kelleher's *Taronga*. Finally, the issues concerning power and relationships in selected texts of Hartnett and the role that food plays within these will be analysed.

Food and appetite are both a continual source of inspiration to writing and an interconnected concept linked intrinsically; if you have no appetite you need no food, when you are hungry you can only sate this with food. The human body is always in search of energy to replenish, to rebuild and to grow. This search is constant and thus at the forefront of our daily needs. What has changed over time is the intrinsic connection between securing food supply and demonstrable abundance. Societal attitudes to the role food plays, and how our appetites have changed in relation to the new reality of ample provision has evolved from historical precedents. Society has gone from scarcity, poor quality of food an exposure to the vagaries that characterised

food production and distribution, to relative certainty of supply accentuated by overabundance, and at least in the west, issues of choice, waste and production means. This development is described by Roberts (1998) thus:

> ...[T]he earliest cultures recognised that food was power. How tribal hunters divided their kill, and with whom, constituted some of earliest social relations. Foods were believed to bestow different powers. Certain tastes such as tea could become so central to a culture that a nation might go to war over it. Yet such meanings were socially determined; scarcity required hard and fast rules about food and left little room for differing interpretations. How one felt about food was irrelevant. (p.34)

In Lurie's *Toby's Millions*, Toby sits down to a meal with his father that is made up of produce from the garden:

> [T]oby sat down at the table. They were having roast beef and roast potatoes and tender green runner beans, and a special strawberry tart with thick double cream to follow. The kitchen smelled wonderful. The whole house smelled wonderful. (p.117)

Lurie writes about the importance of ritual and the connection to the land in an age where food is hardly considered in terms of production. This particular episode is one of the culminating events of the narrative.

In the quote above by Roberts, a brief description about our attitudes to food from the earliest cultures is reflected in the context of our own. He provides some historical perspectives of food and the associated cultural beliefs that have supported them. To the earliest hunter-gatherer societies, food procurement was a matter of life and death. Uncertainty loomed in the face of securing enough food and there was inherent risk involved in the capture and slaughter of animals to provide food. The uniformity or variety of these early diets was dictated by what could be caught or gathered, dependent on the season and other factors such as availability, abundance of certain food types and the ability to overcome the physical challenges involved, especially in securing meat. The children's books utilised in this chapter represent a number of divergent views about the role of food and subsequent appetite. Appetite itself is often the subtext underlying the explicit ideas in the main text. These range from the

primitivism of Kelleher's post-apocalyptic world to an idealised agrarian culture, as created in Fowler, where appetite is the antecedent to the sacred ritual of the table.

This differs from the Rabelaisian perspective on diet and the subsequent symbolic role of certain foods and their attendant rituals. These centred predominantly on the desire for food, the appetite aroused by the long, detailed descriptions of different foods. Rabelais also fêted the procurement of food and the intrinsic enjoyment/celebration that the sating of appetite provided for people as well as the tantalising abundance of choice in the feast provided for all its participants.

Linked to the attainment of food sources is the intrinsic acknowledgement of the development of agrarian methods of production, the domestication of animals and the developing complexity of the preparation and presentation of food. It can be seen from a culinary perspective to fit Maslow's (1968) "hierarchy of needs" which incorporates the earliest views of food/appetite, as being the most basic need to fulfil. As Wolf (1998) noted:

> ...[A]t the bottom is survival where food is simply calories and nutrients. But as our knowledge and income grow, we ascend to indulgence - a time of abundance. 16 ounce steaks, and the portly ideal. The third level is sacrifice, where we begin removing items from our diet. (p.38)

This is not to say that this is the only correlation. Wolf's quote provides a loose parallel between the evolution in food and food production and the evolution within the individual of attitudes to appetite. Appetite has moved from being directly answered on a purely physiological level to being suppressed psychologically as the complexity of our relationship to food has developed and intensified.

The fact that certain foods become culturally significant acknowledges the development of the earliest cultures becoming dependent on the reliability and supply of certain food types within their culture. Wheatley notes this of traditional Greek foods and attendant banqueting and celebration in *Dancing in the Anzac Deli*, where particular foods within a culture become iconic. Contrastingly, in Spence's *The Left Overs*, the significance of food loses this importance when the culture is fragmented, fostered children only have the connectedness created through the ritual of eating

together. Throughout the novel the kitchen is a meeting place where the four orphans meet and discuss matters important to them and their day. These daily dramas are carried out often with food in its various forms, as motif and symbol for aspects of their lives. For instance, when Jasmine, Drew and Auntie Bill discuss various seeds that would be good for James:

> "...[D]id you know" Drew went on, forgetting his need to hurry, "that pumpkin seeds are healthy too? We've got about a dozen pumpkins in the garden - the seeds would keep James in lunches for weeks." (p.24)

The humour used in this situation highlights the familial closeness between the orphans under the care of Auntie Bill. Auntie Bill herself offers to keep and dry the seeds for James if he wishes. Strong emotions are conveyed through the use of food items and indicate the caring relationships that have evolved between the kids at Barnfield house.

From the culinary development of foodstuffs that become the staple of national diets, simultaneous cultural importance attached to these foods also grows. Indeed many cultures and their identities are intertwined with certain foods, especially vegetable-based fare. This importance and cultural significance applies to the ideas of the carnivalesque feast. Feasting, as has been previously suggested, celebrates the harvest or reflects religious observance, following periods of lent and abstinence.

Rabelais makes this apparent in the episode of Gargantua eating the six pilgrims. Here the sacredness and ritual of eating are made apparent by Gargantua's inadvertent eating of six pilgrims hiding under lettuce leaves. Interestingly in this comic situation Grandgosier notices the staff of one of the pilgrims and states that it is snail's horn and unsafe to eat, to which Gargantua replies "Why? They're all good this month."

Symbolically, the nature of eating is almost considered a holy act, it also demonstrates the growing awareness of what can be eaten and when, "they're all good this month." This small episode reflects the significance given to the ritual of eating and its importance to carnivalesque views of the role of food. Interestingly from this episode too, is the fact that although there may be inherent danger in eating what may be "snail's horn", Gargantua finds the pretext and reasoning to defer to his appetite. His

hunger is at the forefront of his motivation, it is not subjugated to any other consideration. This is the predominant underlying principle of Bakhtin's carnival in relation to food; the celebration of abundance, availability, grotesque appetite and the inherent pleasure in sating it with the widest variety of foodstuffs to tempt and tantalise.

If we look at the third part of the previous Wolf quote, the idea here is of the denial of pleasure and its removal from the physiological realm. We have discussed this in the previous chapter in relation to the removal of uncertainty of the food supply and the new overabundance. I have suggested that this has removed it from the forefront of our thinking and has removed it from a "survival mode" imperative. However it is also important to consider in relation to appetite as this too has evolved in relation to the development of the production of food techniques.

Large scale production of food has resulted in a philosophical shift away from attitudes that equated food with survival. With increased production as stated earlier, individuals and society as a whole have been able to relegate the need for nourishment to at least comparable pegging with less important, "want" category personal needs. The urgency of keeping ourselves alive has diminished and become an easily maintained routine requiring little thought, planning or care. As this ideology of eating has evolved so too have the choices of foods and the evolution of the materials that comprise diet. With the growth in supplements, added proteins and minerals, informed choices for consumers have already been made, whilst age old knowledge of food and food sources eroded. This is demonstrated in the context of many children's books where food and procurement often becomes an afterthought - unless, as in Wheatley's *Dancing in the Anzac Deli*, it is used as a cultural signifier.

It can also be inverted as an ideal as in Kelleher's *Taronga*; part of the horror lies in the regression to uncertainty of food supply and the intimation of what lengths the protagonists will have to go to secure it. For example, Ben is used by the outsiders from the zoo as bait so those outside the perimeter can get in to attain a large food source - the animals from the zoo.

With this development has come a shift in the perception of the role of food, of diet and consequently the social context in which it occurs. Individuals may no longer be concerned with where, when or what is associated with the comestibles they are eating, but are more concerned with the impact upon their health that ingesting something may have. As Roberts (1998) has noted:

> ...[T]he new obsessions with nutrition or hygiene marked a great step in the depersonalisation of food: the average person was no longer deemed competent to know enough about his or her food to get along. Eating "right" required outside expertise and technology. (p.35)

In contrast, the carnivalesque importance of food, appetite and irreducibly the body, has had a significance that modern society has removed by its structure and functioning. All carnivalesque labour works to the procurement of food, all layers of society rely upon it, it is absolutely central. In Wrightson' *A little fear*, the main character Mrs. Tucker moves to an isolated cottage despite her age. In no time she has vegetables and fowls and a form of subsistence lifestyle that seems highly improbable. Although the premise is hard to believe, the character of Mrs. Tucker demonstrates a connection to the land and subsequently the production of food which has been removed from the experience of many children. By making the improbable true, Wrightson provides an idealised version of rural living that is in essence a carnivalised ideal of food.

As Bakhtin notes of food in carnivalesque:

> [I]f food is separated from work and conceived as a private way of life, then nothing remains of the old images: man's encounter with the world and tasting the world, the open mouth, the relation of food and speech, the gay truth. Nothing is left but a series of artificial, meaningless metaphors. (pp. 281 - 282)

The question is if our appetites are always sated what does the significance of food become in the cultural context? This in itself could be a paper in its own right and I have no desire to go into great detail regarding these implications, only to suggest that this area of inquiry is removed from the philosophical underpinning of carnivalesque.

The point here is not to look at the issues surrounding food production but to point out that this gradual change for our society has been reflected in literature and the views we have held about food. This is important as the symbolism of feasting and banqueting in carnivalesque celebrated abundance and simultaneously grotesque appetite only in relation to certain feast days, in a limited capacity and at the ends of cycles tied to the natural order of life. In children's literature this idea is born out in the importance of food in celebrations of milestones or cultural identity; the many aspects of the carnival may have been reduced and changed but its significance remains for individuals and groups as demonstrated by the street party in *Dancing in the Anzac Deli*. The ritual of eating had a heightened importance in the everyday lives of people whose food supply could be scarce, of poor quality and in a dietary sense, monotonous. As Nikolejeva (1995) notes of food:

> [L]ike all mythical elements in literature, rituals around food have their origins in the most basic aspects of human behaviour, connected with archaic beliefs of life, death and rebirth, and hence also sexuality, fertility and procreation. (p. 12)

The emphasis on appetite for food has evolved to incorporate not only historical imperatives related to food but new attitudes and views that integrate the new abundance and security of supply. This development has allowed for food to be given a multidimensional role within narrative.

Korsmeyer (1999) notes of the similarity between the ritual of eating and narrative structure:

> ...[B]ecause of the temporal dimension of eating - and of tasting and the satisfaction of appetite - narrative contexts can furnish reflections on the meanings this activity avails. (Indeed eating has a plot like structure with a beginning [hunger and the wetted appetite], middle [the process of satisfaction, sometimes lengthy], and end [satiation and satisfaction].) It is the narrative artist who is likely to unpack and reflect upon the phenomena of tasting and eating to record the sensations, thoughts and recollections surrounding these events. (p. 186)

The significance of the completion of eating and the sating of appetite lends itself to carnival structure and also as a narrative device in children's literature. The

importance of eating both as physiological necessity and symbolic ritual is heightened in the realm of a child's existence as their means of procuring food is limited and is greatly reliant on the adults within their world. In Wheatley's *Dancing in the Anzac Deli,* the narrator explains an impromptu celebration at the deli:

> ...[M]anoli came running from the *kafeneion* with lots of tiny glasses of ouzo on a tray, and mama and Chris and Mr. Mac were emptying biscuits on to plates, and chopping cheese, and slicing salami, and piling the counters with piles of green and black olives, and Baba and Rowley were passing out chips and cans of soft drink - for if you're going to have a spontaneous party at eight in the morning, a deli is a great place to have it.
>
> (p.194)

Besides the description of the food items that embrace Greek and Australian cultures, it is interesting to note the excitement and enthusiasm for the event in the narrator's description. Here is something approximating the spirit of carnival in terms of the role of food and the inclusiveness of celebration.

Production has moved increasingly from practices that reflected natural seasons and supply to practices that have in some instances a tenuous link with their origins. We are less reliant on the forces of nature in determining supply than perhaps we should be. If evidence were needed one only has to look at the rise of dieting and the dietary industry to see a reversal in the attitude and philosophy of consumption for western society.

The scarcity of food has traditionally informed many stories concerning food and provided the impetus for the fantasy of abundance:

> ...[W]hen shortages and illnesses deeply imperilled infants' lives, and material scarcity shaped dreams and drives, the world of stories was one in which glowing, ripe plenty beckoned elsewhere. (Warner, 1998, p.136)

Warner elaborates on this theme by further saying:

> ...[S]heer physical hunger can explain the food fantasies in the stories: food, more food, more varieties of food, hotter, sweeter, juicier, flowing in an ever more easily available supply. (ibid, 1998, p.136)

It is interesting to note the change that this attitude has wrought on the subtext of many narratives within Australian children's books. Many short listed books that have focused on narratives centred on pastoral idylls or rural nostalgia emphasise the importance of food and the many implications of both its production and availability. Compare this to the less central concern of food to the carnivalised plots of writers such as Griffiths and Jennings and the more pressing concerns of bodily functioning and questioning prevailing cultural hegemony through treating taboo/scatological concerns as high order concepts.

Significantly, within religion there has been a correlation with the act of eating and associated practices defined in terms of sin or holiness. Binary oppositions such as fasting and gluttony have had a moral code which has tempered and conformed people's behaviour and practices. Gluttony is looked upon as an animal- like behaviour lacking in control, where in opposition, fasting has been deemed an act of holiness; one ironically feeds the soul by refusing to nourish the body. In Jennings' *Souperman*, the Superman (note the pun) gains strength through the eating of soup - the more he eats the stronger he becomes. Gluttony in this instance is seen as a virtue and makes evident again Jennings' challenge of convention. It is this subversive element that endears Jennings to his young readers, as authority as represented by the status quo is undermined.

This simple construct of the mores of eating suggests that when carnival, ritual or other celebration utilise and promote a wide variety and abundance of food, the response and emotional impact are heightened. As Rodgers (1994) notes of addiction:

> ...[A]nimals and humans share the same basic pleasure and "reward" circuits that all turn on when in contact with addictive substances or during pleasurable acts such as eating or orgasm. (p.33)

There is barely a page of Rabelais that does not have a central scene containing food or its uses as epithets and metaphors indicating its great importance. The consumption of food and the desire to eat until sated lends itself to strong emotions and, within a

religious context, aligns both positive and negative emotions with a moral state, that are intertwined with certain foods:

> Certainly shame and eating have a long - linked history in Western culture. All the way back in Eden, when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit (folk tradition has it as an apple) their immediate reaction was not delight or satiation, but humiliation: a crushing recognition of the exigencies of their bodies. Tellingly, they react by covering not their mouths - the organs of their eating - but their genitalia. The connection at any rate is clear: Eating equals shame. Eating equals sexuality. (Kessler, 2005, p.159)

This receding interest in the natural, physiological response to eating has allowed the psychological aspects of eating and its place within culture to develop in importance. These developments are significant to a fundamental understanding of the role appetite performs and how it has been portrayed and developed, suppressed or coaxed. A genealogy has been suggested by Kessler and others within a biblical construct of our world as demonstrated by the story of Adam and Eve. The idea of certain foods being taboo and forbidden, that there is an associated moral cost with sating one's appetite with certain fruits or flesh, have arisen from the earliest stories from organised religion.

These ideas, belief systems and customs have informed and guided the churches' teachings, and some may argue indoctrinated individual belief systems particularly within the Renaissance and Middle Ages. These belief systems were indelibly and deeply ingrained in times where church and state were one, penalties severe and the influence of the church, pervasive on all aspects of public and private life. The notion of appetite included all desire, not only for food and drink but for the flesh, and these usually existed outside belief and acceptable social behaviour. This notion is exemplified in the work of Hartnett where remnants of the sociocultural construct provide the scaffold to contrast modern perspectives. Her novel *Princes* contrasts the attitudes of the two main protagonists raised within a bourgeois culture.

Ravel and Indigo, the two brothers of the novel, have a relationship that deteriorates through out the novel due to the growing insanity of Indigo. The narrative tension increases through the story until the final showdown between brothers. All else falls

away and is denuded of meaning as we see only the psychological battle for survival between Ravel and Indigo. The battle between the sane and the unstable represents the control of urges and convergence with societal norms and opposingly, uncontrolled lust and an appetite for destruction. Early in the novel Hartnett describes the twins at birth as such:

> [L]ike many twins they were born prematurely, Indigo first and ferocious, Ravel, second and bewildered. Indigo was the lion of the pair, he was the one who gobbled up all the nutrients. This was the baby Kasbah and Annie had been expecting. The arrival of Ravel minutes later, was a rude interruption to the merriment of the delivery room. (p.6)

Hartnett makes mention of the physical appetite of Indigo and the complete physical domination of Ravel. As they progress and the narrative develops in complexity, appetite comes to be represented through psychological domination, Indigo's desires becoming more base and murderous.

Moloney (2005) states that "the idea that desire had undergone progressive refinement like other tastes was integral to their general histories of societal development" (p. 27). This notion is important to remember within the context of Bakhtinian carnival. The carnival life being outside the norms of everyday society celebrates the removal of barriers, whether in the forms of laws or unwritten distinctions based on class and status. Further, it encourages a grotesque reality, from the hyperbolic and exaggerated blazons, oaths and market language to the excess of the feast and banquet. These appetites are fulfilled within the context of a society deferential to and controlled by religious belief.

These periods of celebration of material habits, and of the material world in general, were born out in the context of Lent and celebration. Ritual with food was as significant as the sacred rituals of the church. The connection can be seen between the significance of periods marking the birth and crucifixion of Christ and associated ritual that allowed the individual to demonstrate their holiness.

The desire for food had to be controlled which more significantly meant that appetites had to be controlled. Kessler (2005) noted too that "Denying the body through fasting was one path towards purity, just as celibacy was another. Christian iconography only affirmed that denial." (p. 159)

Particularly within Christianity there are few prescriptive or regulated controls on what Christians may eat. This freedom within the culinary realm parallels closely the banquet table, with the removal of either enforced laws regarding eating or obstacles to producing a wide range of foods. This ambivalence towards food that has been created leads to a cycle of excess and purge. It has also evolved to our current irregular eating patterns, for example, the eating within Wheatley's *Anzac Deli* is ritualised and stands alone from many other contemporary children's books where there is an absence of any meaningful ritual around food, showing its lack of import. This in part may be due to the pressures and complexity of modern life but it certainly hasn't been hindered by the historical Christian view on the role of food, both within the religion and to the individual. As Roberts (1998) has noted of modern eating habits:

> [B]y replacing the notion of three square meals with the possibility of 24 - hour grazing, convenience has fundamentally altered the rhythm food once bestowed upon each day. Less and less are we expected to wait for dinner, or avoid spoiling our appetites. (p. 37)

Certain foods may be symbolic but they incur no moral penalty and as such we are free to eat as we will. This is important as firstly it creates a different set of priorities and issues regarding food that remove it from a religious context. However, it can move these same foods to the middle of other societal problems; supply, demand, quality, nature and manufacture as a new moral encoding for food. Secondly and importantly within the framework of this thesis, food and drink is central to carnivalesque, which reflects and supports official culture, whilst simultaneously parodying and mocking it, eating now replicates that of the carnival table in terms of freedom of choice and choice without stigma.

The separation of the importance of food and consequently appetite has removed it from its carnival foundations. For instance the majority of books discussed in this

thesis use food as a metaphor for wider concerns and commentary about the nature of contemporary society. If food is used specifically, it is to highlight the failings of character within a particular episode or to position the reader to make distinctions between the various moral codes they represent. Hartnett's Indigo and Ravel represent decay and decline, symbolised by poor and sporadic diet; Spence's orphans have food as central to daily ritual. The banquet is not represented and the leisure of eating is not represented, more often being a perfunctory role for characters.

Within this context we must also consider the manifestations that appetite has taken. With the litany of difficulties associated with food in a traditional sense removed from the forefront of concern in relation to existence, other perceptions of appetite have taken their place. Roberts (1998) uses American society as an example when he talks of the manifestation of anxieties that new views of food have taken, though the following could be applied to any western nation:

> ...[T]he fact is, Americans worry about food - not whether we can get enough, but whether we are eating too much. Or whether what we eat is safe. Or whether it causes diseases, promotes brain longevity, has antioxidants, or too much fat, or not enough of the right fat. Or contributes to some environmental injustice. Or is a breeding ground for lethal microbes. (p. 31)

These anxieties then manifest themselves within the process of eating and the outcomes that ensue. Individuals are forced to "deal" with transgression that eating may incur within the body. In this sense the carnivalesque tone of grotesque appetite has been subsumed by the idea that the consequences are now to be considered, the certainty of secure food sources has eliminated the need for concern about this security. For an example of this "grotesque" appetite, one has only to look at Kelleher's *Taronga*, where an inversion of this current perspective of eating is established, death reigns, and humans are the food.

Significantly too, this shifting perspective has had a major impact on the relationship between food and women, perhaps to a larger extent than that for men. It is not hard to see within a religious context the greater onus placed upon women and a negative association with food, where sustenance has implicitly implied power in relationships, gender construction and identity. If woman according to the Bible initiated the

downfall of man through tempting him with forbidden fruit, the template was set for a relationship with food that was intertwined with negative interpretation and long association with guilt. As Warner (1998) states:

> ...[H]owever, the tensions around feeding and being fed, as distinct from eating and being eaten, have been registered most acutely be representations by women, who are after all so often cast as the mistresses of ovens and kitchens and spoons and cauldrons and larders and stews in mythic materials. (p. 74)

To make the connection more apparent, the utility of desire must be acknowledged. I don't wish to go into the complex and extensive arguments that surround gender constructions and the related discussions of subjectivity/objectivity based on this. I only want to make the point that body image and food and indeed sexuality have seemingly been co-opted into the complex relationships that women now have with the process of eating and food. To this end I wish to make a few observations briefly about desire, body image, and how power is formed and viewed in a carnivalesque context.

The carnivalesque appetite concerned itself with a process that involved the body corporeal. Individuality was subsumed by the role carnival played, subjectivity as represented by the individual came later. This character of carnival and all attenuate appetites was not gender-specific but more a free wheeling enterprise, it was hard to characterise because it was unstructured, all inclusive and removed all codes, norms and etiquettes that were culturally constructed.

In children's literature we see gender construction sublimated to plot construction and narrative development. That is not to say it hasn't been addressed or doesn't exist, rather that in terms of carnivalesque, a sense of equality exists between all participants and the focus is with authority figures as recognised by traditional society. In Hartnett's *Sleeping Dogs*, the intruder Bow talks to Oliver about Michelle:

> [B]ow laughs. "So your father is a man of tradition," he says. "Fathers are supposed to like their daughters best, aren't they? Their precious, pretty little girls. And they're supposed to be much tougher on the boys, revenging their sense of failure through them – isn't that how it goes?" (p.69)

Bow states the stereotypical view of the relationship between father and daughter. What is interesting is the use of the terms 'precious' and 'pretty' together implying the notion that females may be ornamental and this is dependent on their looks. The stereotype of male power is addressed through the rather cynical comment about punishing males for the father's failure and the fact that they are expected to succeed. Gender roles can be seen to be attributed to individuals and thus "carnivalised" views of participation are annulled.

Moloney (2005) states that sexual appetite was viewed "classically" as "weak and unfocussed" (p. 237). He also noted that whilst animals obeyed the dictates of nature, humans as moral agents had an obligation to restrain them (p.242). As opposed to carnival, humans had the power to control their desire. Desire was manifest in many forms and the role of the individual was to live in denial, whether this is through the act of fasting, celibacy or adhering to the strict moral codes determined by the church or in some instances, in response to a generalised and suggested collective guilt:

> [E]ating involves putting things in our bodies, and usually when things get put into our bodies (through whichever orifice) or come out of our bodies (through whichever orifice) the activity is done in private. Eating transgresses the boundary. (Kessler, 2005, p.257)

The connection between food and sex is not difficult to observe. In the carnivalesque conception of the body its myriad functions are open to the world; it is incomplete, malleable and transgressive. These ideas were not associated with guilt because their symbolic nature was understood and its functioning acknowledged as important, renewing and universal, beyond the moral constraints of official society and sanctioning. Desire was a part of carnivalesque; the desire to eat, to celebrate and rejuvenate. Desire was never an internalised individual response or if it was it didn't belong to the individual in the public sphere but was symbolically portrayed in the language of carnival.

Desires as represented in most children's books, is manifested non - sexually through appetite and power. In Spence's *The Left Overs*, the children's appetite is for belonging and remaining together. To stay together will give them a collective power that would not exist for them as individuals. As Drew muses about the house:

> [H]e was awfully tired of trying to keep this crazy household together, especially as three fifths of it didn't seem to care what happened to it. He thought of that afternoon at the festival, and the sheer joy of amusing himself and letting the rest go hang. But you had to have some kind of family to come home to after the fun and games were over. Otherwise, there was nobody to talk to about what you'd been doing. (pp.79-80)

Food fuels and feeds the individual, it makes them what they are. In turn through controlling the appetite we may be able to control the way in which we look. This particular view, which underlies many of the philosophies concerning eating, appetite and constructed gender roles today, has particular resonance for women as body image and associated guilt has been a way of enforcing power hierarchies. As Silver (2002) noted of Victorian writers:

> …[I]deologies of body image in literature, on the other hand, are far less overt than in texts that explicitly attempt to convince women to wear particular kinds of dresses or corsets. Nevertheless, the same ideologies that are discernable in non–literary texts - such as the idea that a woman's sexual purity is coded by her body shape - appear in the work of many canonical and non canonical Victorian authors. (p. 51)

This subjectivity is a means of control over women and has historical precedents that centre on the "evil" that women's bodies exert on men. This view expressed by the writers of Victorian fiction (it could be argued) applies equally today though the forms of delivery of this ideology may have changed to include more complex structures and communication means, particularly within the mass media. In Park's *Playing Beattie Bow*, it is interesting to see that Abi, who travels back and forth through time, has reached sexual maturity upon her return. She has physically changed as she has come through her ordeal. Encompassed in this idea is her growth into a woman and an implied loss of innocence, replaced by self awareness and knowledge.

If an individual is acculturated to believe this view then taking back power over ones' body is imperative. Bergstrom and Neighbours (2006) state that the conception of what constitutes body image is difficult to define but is generally multi constructed and the major problems are with a self recognition of body image (at least in the unhealthy), combined with body size distortion and body dissatisfaction (p.976).

To exercise control, the individual looks to control appetite. As the means to refuse food is increasingly within the psychological realm, food is always available in various quantities, types and across a spectrum of cultures and seasons, modifications and tastes. To this end, a condition such as anorexia is possible in this new-found unhealthy eating economy if one is to accept the perception that body image can be controlled, modified or improved through the use of food. This also implies, consequently, that the onset of maturity can be contained, slowed or denied through the implicit choices that lie within. For example, James in *The Left Overs* is described as "fat".

Silver (2002) states that:

> [T]his valuation of sexual innocence over experience inherently privileges the girl over the adult woman and, in turn, vales the body of the girl over the body of the woman. If 'purity' is an essential attribute of female beauty then maturity must bring a fall from the true beauty of the young girl. Such ideas about girlhood dovetail neatly with anorexia nervosa, which ... many theorists believe reflect a girl's disgust at the impending sexual maturity symbolised by her changing body. (p. 52)

This disgust or repulsion operates from a socially constructed schema that consists of mores and laws, rules and etiquette that we are implicitly encouraged to obey. Moral disgust in essence has been constructed from religious and legal institutions. Olatunji and Sawchuk (2005) note of this that:

> ...[C]ultural influences may shape otherwise normal elicitors of disgust to take on moral evaluation. In certain religions, for example, sustaining the purity of the body is a moral duty and disgust reactions are embedded into these religious moral codes. (p. 943)

In the carnivalesque concept these responses were suspended in relation to normative moral codes as the principles of carnivalesque inverted natural order and society.

Disgust could not be observed as a separate entity as all participants were regulated within the same moral framework, a framework that celebrated excess and exaggeration. In Fowler's *Wait for me! Wait for me!* , this exaggeration is applied to the ritual of the family dinner where it is tradition for the family to eat together. Amidst the children's tumultuous lives, it almost has a sacredness attached. Episodes that concern food are described in detail, from the combinations of food to the preparation. Even when the children are preparing travelling lunches there is a level of detail that is greater than that described in other aspects of their daily routines.

The children's reactions and reminisces are also exaggerated to great effect:

> "Beautiful…Luscious…if I never eat again, life would have been worth living", Martin breathed. "Did you ever taste anything like that bun? perfection!"
>
> (p.32)

This exaggerated response to the procurement of food may have been as a result of the hard rural life the family leads.

In chapter two, I focused on the views and reactions to authority that were embodied in carnivalesque. I briefly return to this to acknowledge that power hierarchies exist in any institutionalised structure and so it is with the provision of food. Put simplistically, carnival celebrated the season cycles, regeneration and the accompanying abundance as a victory over the uncertainty of life.

As Bordo (1989) notes, power hierarchies are culturally constructed, oppressive in an institutionalised and structural way, whilst the privilege dispersed is unquestioned, emanating from practices, technology and institutions (pp.13–31). I mention this to draw attention to the fact that the power of food has moved from its availability and the control of its supply in a paradigm shift that emphasises the subjective, individual choices of eating as it exists today.

Power may still lie with the manufacturers of our regulated food supply but the emphasis has shifted onto the choice that the individual, as a consumer, has in an overcrowded market place. Starvation is not the issue, at least to western society, but

the consequences of the choices we make in terms of what we choose to ingest have implications for society as a whole. This places the individual consumer at the forefront of a reconfigured power hierarchy. It is with this in mind that we turn to how the following writers and texts reflecting these concerns.

In Spence's *The Left Overs* (1982), James is one of four children who wish to stay together as a foster family. James is an Aboriginal child who is identified throughout the story as an overeater. There are links throughout the story making the connection between James being accepted and having to lose weight. At various times he tries unsuccessfully to enter into different eating regimes such as eating toast and pumpkin seeds. What is interesting in this portrayal is that rather than view James as being able to sate his need for food, his being overweight is considered a problem. He is not identified as being morbidly obese nor having contingent health problems, he is, it seems, entirely unencumbered in any physical capacity with this problem except on a psychological level.

Further into the narrative an interesting contrast is established between the settled, relaxed and adored home life of James and the "Beachwood" health resort. Located by the sea, the way to gaining fitness and subsequently control over one's body is through embarking on and battling through an enforced exercise regime. Spence implicitly suggests the difficulty in retaining ideal weight results from the pressure that society places on individuals to conform to a socially constructed body ideal, where thin is equated to attractive and obesity to a level of undesirability or repulsion - a modern grotesque.

Yet this modern interpretation of grotesque imagery itself differs from the Bakhtinian understanding of its role. Bakhtin (1984) stated of this transformation that:

> ...[T]he abstract idea distorts this nature of the grotesque image. It transforms the centre of the gravity to a "moral" meaning. Moreover it submits the substratum of the image to the negative element. Exaggeration becomes a caricature. (p. 62)

We hear little other evidence, circumstantial or direct about how or why James became/is fat. His appetite is presented as a problem for him and a moral framing of his character is attained.

The role of food itself has often been depicted within the framework of a moral coding for the individual. Just as we are lead to criticise James for his appearance and implicitly connect this problematic relationship with food, food itself has been portrayed within a moral context to reflect society's changing attitudes and beliefs, to its role as physiological need consequential psychological issues.

Wrightson's *A Little Fear* and *Behind the Wind* make use of Aboriginal dreamtime stories and elements of folk culture. What is interesting in these particular texts is the view presented, an idealised lifestyle of which food is a central tenet. In these particular texts I wish to look at two specific views that feature as subtext, both concern a romanticised, abstracted observation of eating and of securing food.

In *A Little Fear* the main protagonist, Mrs. Tucker, comes into contact with a "Njunbin", a hairy man, drawn from Aboriginal legend. The story revolves on the tension created through Mrs. Tucker moving to a remote spot to be on the land and coming into contact with this ancient being, presented as a guardian of the land. Mrs. Tucker has fled her nursing home, to live with dignity and as such has returned to nature. Her simple, pure life involves raising chickens and tending to her garden, in an effort to become self sufficient. This is presented as relaxed, ritualistic and therapeutic.

This Arcadian fantasy of self sufficiency and reward through toil with no serious afterthought given to the failure of food crops, devastation by disease or health factors such as advanced years, are a product of modern society's acceptance of, and complacency towards, all aspects of the production of food. Appetite has been sated and a romanticised, a retrospective rendering of its purpose the outcome.

Similarly in Wrightson's *Behind the Wind*, Wirrum, in relation to his propensity to collect food, is never hungry and is always provided for by the bush. This suggests

that the Australian bush is bountiful and also alludes to the power of the Aboriginal people to eat heartily and healthily from its provisions.

What is interesting about both of these accounts is the removal of appetite and the underlying urgency that attends to sourcing food for the individual, it is assumed supply is steady and plentiful. This could be the result of a historical view that changed perceptions and uses for starving, due to its commonality and wide spread prevalence.

Vandereycken and Van Deth (1994) state that:

> ...[T]he principal causes were wars, but more often the loss of harvest because of extreme drought, rainfall or frost. But outside these periods of extreme famine all societies knew people who teetered on the verge of starvation. In spite of these occasionally dreadful experiences, or perhaps in response to them people have learned to make a virtue of necessity. Quite early in history people became aware of the uses of going without food could be put. (p. 14)

Moral codes promoting virtue or repulsion in relation to how food could be used have existed then since societies have related to the availability of their food supply. It is interesting to see how this is represented viewed through a modern paradigm in relation to the issues surrounding food and connected concepts (production, power, body image and illnesses) when applied to historical interpretation.

In *Toby's Millions* by Morris Lurie, much is made of the connection between the bounty of Toby's garden with riches. Lurie presents a highly romanticised, pastoral view of simple village life that gently pokes fun at the authority figures within the village. The symbolism of food usually portrayed in big meals for celebrations and recorded in some detail is lovingly suggested. There is no question of shortage or rationing, limited diet or varying quality. Individual foodstuffs also serve metaphoric purposes and reinforce positive ideals that good food represents. Toby serves his father poached quail eggs and kippers; quintessentially English, reaffirming and identifying the national character.

Toby and his father bond at the end of the story over gardening. Divisions are healed, symbolised by the 'golden' oranges that grow from the buried treasure. Food is both sustenance and bond and meals symbolically portray this camaraderie; the victory over hunger, the suppression of appetite, much as the role of the banquet in carnival.

Revisionism also allows for culinary experiences to be honed and sharpened over time, with certain meals elevated to mythical status or the traditions that brought the best food acknowledged and revered.

In Fowler's *Wait for me! Wait for me!* and Wheatley's *Dancing in the Anzac Deli,* the contrast between cultural food traditions is explored as well as within a framework of celebration. In Fowler's work German fare is compared to traditional Australian fare with wonderment. The reader is introduced to this through the comparative Christmas dinners that the Australian and German families have.

Within this story too is the idea of over supply and abundance, with the orchard providing almonds and oranges. Christmas is associated with overeating and descriptive detail is given on the different meats that arrive at the table. This in itself is not the story of Fowler's book but is a central device in bringing the subplots together, such as acceptance of difference and cultural understanding, the banquet table brings all together. It perpetuates an archetype of plenty, the banishment of hunger that elevates and perhaps distorts the truth to such gatherings:

> ...[W]hen history falls away from a subject we are left with otherness, and all its power to compact enmity, recharge it and recirculate it. An archetype is a hollow thing, but a dangerous one, a figure or image which through U.S.Age has been uncoupled from the circumstances that brought it into being, and goes on spreading false consciousness. (Warner, 1994, p.239)

The detailed description of Wheatley's Greek celebrations and importance of food introduce the central tenets of the culinary culture. By naming and describing it, it becomes evident that abundance will defeat physical appetite. The reason for the feast seems inconsequential in that it has no specific value in the story but serves as a means of introducing and contrasting cultural perspectives on food and reaffirming

these through their acknowledgement. The narrative reinforces the idea that there is a lack of want and that what is central is not the quantity of food but the variety available to all participants if they so wish.

Similarly in Park's *Playing Beattie Bow*, a story where the main protagonist journeys back to early colonial Sydney specifically The Rocks, food has a symbolic role. The Bows work in a sweet shop, there are descriptions of the uses of old remedies for ailments, for example, the use of comfrey leaves known as "boneset" and descriptions of different sweets. The narrative use of the sweet shop as location parallels the sweetness of the developing relationship between Abigail and Judah and subsequently portrays food positively.

As Bakhtin (1984) noted of the popular festive form in relation to eating:

> ...[T]he popular images of food and drink are active and triumphant, for they conclude the process of labour and struggle of the social man against the world. (p. 302)

The Bow's shop is their labour, their means of providing for the sustenance of their clan and as such signifies the importance and positive aspects that foods plays in their existence.

Contrastingly, Kelleher's *Taronga* removes the element of civility from the act of eating. Ben has the "calling", a gift that enables him to communicate with animals. It is a post - apocalyptic world sometime in the future. Ben finds himself in the midst of this decay with the main action occurring at Sydney's Taronga zoo.

The use of food here is portrayed differently from the other novels cited. The elements that until recently have dogged the western production of food are given full vent. There is no production or steady availability of food, humanity has descended to scavenging in a vicious, brutal world. The animals at the zoo feed on anyone who is out of doors at night. Here appetite is paramount, with the urgency and uncertainty of food and its availability central to the motivations of most characters.

A sense of urgency in relation to appetite need not be limited to physical hunger and the need for sustenance. Appetite for power is a cause for brief review as this relates generally to the manifestation of appetite as a by product of a society that has overcome traditional issues of survival, most importantly, housing, healthier lives and secure food sources. We have moved in essence from providing for ourselves or kin, to the idea of securing prestige, power and status through the control of not only food but any aspect of our connected lives that may give an individual power over another.

I wish now to consider some of these ideas contained in Sonya Hartnett's novels to highlight these points. This is by no means extensive or intends to be a critique of the particular novels used but brief examples of important underlying themes that are both interconnected between Hartnett's novels and are predominant in the structure of her writing.

In Hartnett's *Princes* the twin protagonists at the centre of the story, Ravel and Indigo, are locked in a battle of wills to determine which twin will have ascendancy over the other. The novel is concerned with the psychological repercussions of their actions and how this contributes to the complexity of their relationship. It is quite clear that the twins are in possession of a large fortune and with this pretext being made apparent, it becomes obvious that the normal concerns, at least on a physiological level, can be easily met and therefore relegated to a less important role than the need to seize and maintain dominance through power.

In relation to the needs of the body the twins' actions are viewed through the paradigm of opulence and excess. Everything is available if needed, directing the reader to concentrate on the apparent lack of physical appetite and how this is subjugated by the protagonists. There are mentions of their appearance which suggest lithe bodies that transform to a modern ideal of physical perfection, they are thin and free of physical appetite.

This idea in itself separates it from the Rabelaisian counter point of the need to sate physical appetite, to partake in victuals due to the uncertainty of future meals and to do so with gusto. Appetite has transmuted into an unhealthy appetite of the mind feeding from the control of others.

This "power hierarchy" is also prevalent in *Sleeping Dogs* where the patriarch Griffin Willow maintains strict control through social isolation, rigidly defined routines, moral codes and violence. Again there is an absence of food and subsequently a correlation between the happiness of the family, there is little contentment in the living arrangements of the family. Food serves a secondary, almost perfunctory role compared to the need for Griffin to dominate and maintain his family.

Hartnett's focus on the psychological appetite is also evident in her novel *Forest.* Again concern lies with the power hierarchy of the animals and the moral codes that enforce the conditions under which the animals fight for their status within the community. Every animal is bound by this code and violence is the means by which this code is maintained and enforced. Though this novel concerns many ideas surrounding its basic premise of domestic/feral, comparing the ideas of captivity and servitude, with wild and dangerous freedom, the premise presents another view of the appetite for power. Domestic cats such as Kian are ridiculed for their upbringing and are perceived to be weak and vulnerable, according to the moral code of the book. Food again settles as secondary concern to highlight the differing power structures within the story.

In these three instances, Hartnett is predominantly concerned with the rituals surrounding power. The point I wish to make here is that these concerns are valid because the issues of hunger and appetite, the availability of food and production have been addressed elsewhere. It is no longer a primary concern and this allows for other ideas arising from the concept of food to be explored more roundly. Indeed with each of the authors and their texts briefly discussed here, food is ornamental and secondary rather than central and crucial to narrative.

Appetite then is a closely related concept with food and is important to consider in relation to the evolution of social values related to matters of its procurement and production. Food has come to mean more than the feast. The feast can begin at any time under any circumstance and for any reason and thus has lost much of its cultural significance, at least in relation to western society. Abundance is no longer connected

specifically with what a local society produces, instead we approximate and adapt but all the while consume.

It has been important to consider then how food has moved from the centrepiece of carnivalesque to merely another component of modern life. What has developed in its place are multitude ways of viewing its place in terms of its psychological and social roles, as we have been freed from the constant anxiety and fear that famine or other calamities may produce, and have taken it from the purely physiological realm.

It was stated at the beginning of this thesis that the carnivalesque knows no boundaries and that all are participants. I have provided a broad background for the main components of the Bakhtinian ideal of the form of carnivalesque and its complex, often misunderstood nature.

To this end the chapters so far on the roles of both authority and laughter, of food, appetite and the role of the body, contain often interrelated material that is difficult to separate, but each has significance for modern children's writers. The historical nature of carnivalesque and its many components provide rich source material for writers and as such I have attempted to address this. In each of these chapters, themes and ideas that highlight these correlations, variations or distortions of the attributes of the carnivalesque have been discussed. How these are then addressed in Australian children's literature with specific examples from selected texts have been considered. What remains is to address the influence these particular areas exert on contemporary writing for children and to discuss some of the questions that have been raised through the paradigm of carnivalesque and its implications for writing for children. This will be the purpose of the concluding chapter.

VI

The Carnivalesque influence: Conclusions concerning the role of Carnivalesque in contemporary children's literature

This concluding chapter will discuss some of the questions that have been raised in previous chapters and the influence of elements of carnivalesque upon Australian Children's literature.

It also points out that there is a new reality and notes the significance of this in relation to the nature of carnivalesque. New forms of media and social media are increasingly impacting upon children's reading habits and, arguably, the books that

are being produced. Furthermore, the increasing influence of carnivalesque has facilitated the interaction and participation of children in text through increasingly popular social media sites such as Facebook, Myspace, YouTube and Twitter.

This leads to questions concerning the nature of new texts in a changing media environment and the relationship to the Internet's enveloping influence on the planet and its natural alignment with the philosophical tenets of the carnivalesque.

This is significant because of the enveloping and immense influence of, for example, the Internet and young people's access to, and means of access to, social and mobile technologies. New players in digital and social media can be perceived in themselves as having carnivalesque overtones. Barriers and boundaries are blurred as individuals can post their own "laughing truths" any time.

Australian children's books cover a wide range of topics and subject matter. Many of these books utilise aspects of Bakhtin's idea of carnivalesque to develop character, narrative and to instil a sense of place. The nature of the carnivalesque also allows for the development of plot, themes and philosophical premises that question the status quo. Carnivalesque allows for Australian authors to exploit traits that many would regard as particular to Australia, such as the idea of "cultural cringe", support for the underdog, mateship and a fair go.

The first chapter was a general overview of the main tenets of carnivalesque with acknowledgement that the term itself was broad and difficult to define. The idea of the carnivalesque is the main aspect of Bakhtinian theory employed in relation to this thesis. In the second chapter the nature of carnivalesque authority and the impact that this has had on many Australian books was discussed. The third chapter explored the nature of laughter and the various means employed within narrative to disrupt and amuse.

The fourth chapter discussed bodily functioning, its increasing popularity with young readers and how these once taboo areas had been brought to the forefront of Australian children's books, predominantly through the work of Griffiths and Jennings. The fifth chapter discussed the role and symbolism of food and the

changing societal attitudes to the acquisition, production and consumption of food. It also looked at how these attitudes have impacted upon the writing of various Australian writers and the philosophical standing it had within their work. The fifth chapter discussed the role of appetite, both physical and psychological and its importance within a carnivalesque understanding. Appetite and food are closely related concepts and often interwoven in the texts analysed here.

Australian children's books (such as the various collections of Paul Jennings' short stories or Andy Griffiths' "bum" trilogy) make use of features such as the grotesque body to poke and prod, to make fun and satirise individuals "above their station", in authority or those who represent power. Laughter follows to disempower, to undermine and subvert. The use of language is particular and pointed. Some authors use the language of the playground, a practice that has identified links to Bakhtin's idea of the language of the marketplace. It is also identifiable that these language sources and their conventions are subverted and made anew. The collapse of the rules of language, language that reflects the playground and societies that these protagonists inhabit, introduces new terms and idioms and brings back forgotten colloquialisms that constantly reinvent and reinvigorate language.

The books discussed throughout this thesis have been identified as having many means of subverting the dominant discourse. With the undermining of authority and representative authority figures has come the disintegration of traditional boundaries. Authors such as Griffiths, Jennings and Gleitzman have pushed back these boundaries to reach the taboos that lie just beyond. We are at that crucial preliminary stage where we question the wisdom of such challenges. Time will tell how quickly they remain, become changed or where these challenges may lead. The certainty that change will come is apparent through the literacies now being used to embrace these new ideologies and narrative choice.

Opportunities have arisen that give the reader and especially children the opportunity to participate in new literacies that challenge traditional orders and are changing the very nature of how the individual as reader/viewer/participant interacts with new media. In particular the role of the Internet as a predominant form of media as

arguably the most changing force upon the world in which we live and the ways in which we access and use information within its realm.

The nature of the World Wide Web can be viewed as democratic as it allows individuals to post information, often without censure, for the benefit of other users. As individuals have the means and ability to provide new knowledge on the web, what becomes apparent is the nexus between the philosophy of web U.S.Age and tenets of carnivalesque writing. Associated with this are the changes that have arisen to traditional forms of authority associated with writing. This is important as it is this idea that ties it closely to carnivalesque and in some part explains its increasing popularity.

Children, having little control in a world created for them by the norms of adult behaviour, take the opportunity to create the conditions under which they operate when at all possible. The power of certain texts is that the structure of the text allows for the dominant power hierarchy to be questioned and undermined. Texts that can be viewed as subversive, equalise this power imbalance by both simultaneously recognising existing power hierarchies whilst also serving to ridicule and undermine them. As Lambeth (2003) states:

> [S]ubversive texts may be perceived to have the potential of working against adult responsibility of teaching, mentoring and initiating children into civilised society; one based on self control and reason. (p. 11)

In the limited, defined physical world of the child, the body is both objective and subjective form. The child has the immediacy of their own physicality, an awareness of their existence and their interactions upon the world around. It is with this limited knowledge and experience that children enter the domain of the Internet where their corporeality is left behind. Many Australian authors and publishers have been quick to recognise this and have entered this. "Hits" count just as much as the questionable (at least immeasurable) reach of traditional advertising. Colonising web space has given writers such as Jennings greater influence and added to their power as commercially viable authors and at the forefront of writing for children.

The subjective lies for the child in the physical changes that are wrought upon the body, coupled with the growing perception, awareness and education of the individual. The transition to adulthood is a concept that can both thrill and terrify the child and is manifest in varying form according to the individual. Many novels discussed in this thesis such as Sharp's *Blue days* and Aldridge's *The True Story of Lilli Stubeck* tackle the coming of age issues of children growing into adolescents.

Changes to the body are at once natural and somehow unnatural; a grotesque distortion of physical existence. Lypp (1985) noted:

> [T]he grotesque exaggeration of the physis, the dramatisation of the corporeal, is a recurrent theme in humorous children's literature. This is because of the child's bodily growth and the regulating of bodily functions by education. (p. 185)

Of course this view of the body and bodily functioning as we have seen fits an archetypal view of carnivalesque. In its truest functioning, the dominant discourse is diverted and misrule reigns. All involved in carnival are participants neither completely outside nor within the parameters of its working. This greatly appeals to participants who traditionally have little power, status or communal standing. All are equal and all attenuate ritual such as feasts and those involving laughter and oaths, reinforce this equality and deference to the natural world. This view of the carnival world appeals to children as they are both equal and a part of its functioning. The ideals that carnivalised writing can offer provide a means of, time and again, entering this world and having some control over it. As Bakhtin (1984) says of Rabelais;

> [R]abelais' images have a certain undestroyable non official nature. No dogma, no authoritarianism, no narrow - minded seriousness can exist with Rabelaisian images; these images are opposed to all that is finished and polished, to all pomposity, to every ready made solution in the sphere of thought and world outlook. (p. 3)

Authors such as Griffiths embrace this ideal, the power to provide laughter will always undermine any official view and will be renewed each time a new reader decides to open the text. It also allows for the creativity of the child to shine through, to remove the certainty of response embodied in an adult's reaction to the same

stimulus. Conformity of response is promoted when the production is guided by or limited to an adherence to the rules. As Silver (2002) noted:

> ...[C]hildren's literature often resists and parodies hegemonic cultural values, and the utopian and subversive tradition of children's literature has a long and distinguished history. (p. 51)

As suggested in chapter two, rules and laws are determined and regulated by the dominant power clique within a society - children are not a part of this.

The dominant discourse has often excluded children and for many reasons, acted against the tastes and interests of children. Reynolds (1994) expressed the view that much of what children are interested in and by, may be construed by adults as "rubbish":

> ...[M]ost popular forms of "rubbish" ... overtly mock the values and behaviours which often seem to obsess parents, teachers and adult run institutions. Foremost among these are the need to be tidy, hard working, polite, studious, careful about money, uninterested in sex, socially acceptable and so on. "Rubbish" of what this sort is part of a subculture to which all adults once belonged. (p.72)

This values - laden interpretation and judgement of much of children's literature comes only from an adult's perspective and belongs to a moral framework resulting from the movement away from the experience of childhood. Reynolds noted of this that:

> ...[I]t changes very little from generation to generation, and serves as a healthy reminder that growing up has traditionally involved forgetting the value systems of childhood. (ibid. p.72)

This has also been manifest in not only the legal restrictions placed upon many areas of a child's life (including the reading material of children), but often in a misguided notion of protecting children and choosing their interests for them. The rise in popularity of Griffiths' "bum" books exemplifies the misguided notion of censoring. As mentioned in previous chapters, the narrative structure and plotting devices are traditional, however the fact that this type of book exists sends a clear message that

taboos, as considered by adults for children, are beginning to break down. Commercially, children have taken to these books because their existence and content can be seen as transgressive.

Censoring certain types of books because of their subject matter or their writing style implies that children are unable or are not responsible enough to choose for themselves. Prevalent too, is the view that children need to be protected from making "poor decisions", that their appetite for inappropriate material has to be controlled. Warner (1998) states that this appetite defines the bogey and that acts within themselves have a deeper metaphorical disguise which addresses deeper fears (p. 10). These fears address issues all individuals face, of authority, procreation and rivalry, issues of identity and self.

These deeper fears are inherent in the character of humanity and will always need to be addressed. How they are viewed depends greatly upon the means of the day, available technology, popular culture and the remnants and traditions of a literary culture that allows for adaptation and interpretation, which can be reconfigured and rediscovered. For example in Jennings "Spaghetti Pig Out", "Rabbit" is the bully of the piece inspiring fear and loathing amongst the other kids. The idea of a bully tormenting and terrorising other kids is a recurrent theme for Jennings as are unyielding and humourless authority figures such as teachers and principals. They are the "bogeymen" of the day and the popularity of Jennings amongst many children would indicate that he is on to something!

Long (1993) states that:

> [I]n the early post war era, publishing houses understood that the market for fiction was a general, middle class one. By the end of the 1950s and increasingly during the following decades, television supplanted reading as the mass entertainer; reading novels was more and more a pastime of the highly educated, the academics and professionals, who maintained a more jaundiced view of corporate capitalism than the organisation men and women themselves had. (p. 460)

There are a few relevant points to consider here in relation to this changing paradigm when stating the importance of carnivalesque writing in relation to children's

literature. The trend towards television and away from reading enabled entertainment to move at once from a pursuit that required skill and discipline to a transaction that was predominantly passive, requiring lesser mental exertion than reading. It also created a sense of community and a shared experience that could be understood, appreciated and discussed on a level that hadn't been possible from the world of letters. In terms of children's books it has "freed up" the authors' discipline by allowing them to adopt many similar traits embodied in the narratives in television shows, such as shorter writing that sketches characters rather than providing in depth analysis of characterisation that novels have traditionally done.

Again Jennings was one of the first in this country to have his work adapted for the small screen. His *Round the Twist* stories were filmed for children's television in the early nineties.

As Johnston (2003) noted of the influence of television:

> [I] would claim that that soapies are modern versions of fairy tales - tales of *the folk*, oral stories told and retold by many tellers, endlessly repeated variations on common themes. After viewing, their stories are subsequently retold by multiple tellers in coffee shops and school playgrounds. (p.30)

Whether they were in a fictional role or drama, a television newsreader or personality, characters could be made to be empathetic through their defined roles and scripted actions. The role of monologues were lessened on the screen as they couldn't be represented to display motive, and instead became a stream of caricatured, coarse expressions of emotion that simplistically displayed the intent of the protagonist. With these simple though revolutionary developments in how the masses were entertained, a revolution occurred in how this entertainment could be produced, packaged and maintained.

Also important in the Long quote is the identification of a split between what may loosely be referred to as these different audiences coming to represent "high culture", books and novels and "low culture" new media to represent and repackage ideas at a baser level than those found in novels or "serious" literature. Stevenson (1996) states of this view that:

> ...[I]n broad contemporary discussions of the power of the arts and information, literature itself plays the role of the ancients and television that of the moderns: literature is hallowed and respectable, television, flashy and nouveau. (p. 305)

I don't wish to discuss the merits of these overly stereotypical views of both literature and television, just to acknowledge some of the popular perceptions that simplistically locate one medium in relation to the other. Indeed this very issue is what lies at the heart of the resistance to books that embrace what some may consider "low brow". Awards from institutions tend to be from institutions that are associated with "high brow" interests.

We need only consider the popularity of Jennings and Griffiths as compared to the other authors whose work I have cited here. Whilst print runs are usually limited, the work of Griffiths and particularly Jennings is often repackaged, rebranded and resold with great success across different media.

When considered in this context, the popularity of television lends itself to the major tenets of carnivalesque. It is adaptable and changeable, it utilises available resources, and is generally equitable in that with such a large audience, a variety of programs that cater for various viewer interest can be made and maintained. In this way it is open to the input of more people than those involved in the publishing and writing of novels. Publishers of children's books have realised this early have taken a large part of the market share in this new medium. This in turn has had a symbiotic relationship with traditional publishing, more hits means greater awareness of what exists and then to read what exists and to do so individuals can check the website.

The power base is also widened and whilst I am not suggesting the inclusion of all who wish to be involved is possible, it is still a medium more open to input from individuals outside existing power structures. For instance, publishing a novel outside the limiting factors of a publisher and writer excludes on the grounds of mastery of language and inherent associated ideas, education, status and time as determined by the relative freedom to write that income allows (though I acknowledge that this isn't always the case).

The point here is that with television and now the rapidly increasing dominance of the Internet, elite power isn't exclusively siphoned off to a select subgroup that traditionally have held and maintained power, especially when considered in relation to the Internet. While the content may be enormous and sometimes questionable in its quality, anyone has the ability to enter this domain and post personalised responses, information and writing.

This has enormous implications for carnivalesque style writing and has subsequently contributed to its growing popularity, especially in those books with subjects and themes that target children. For instance, both Jennings and Griffiths have popular and professional websites to answer fan questions and to promote their books. Both sites receive many thoU.S.Ands of hits a month and to advertisers it is profitable to be affiliated with these authors, or to advertise on these sites. It is also a form of

endorsement and validation for the books and subject matter and it is children who are dictating their preferences through these "hits".

As Hambledon (2004) noted:

> …[A]lthough scientists tell us that our world is round, children know that it is really square for their view of the world is shaped by TV and the movie screen, and it is wired for electronic sound. Their values are being shaped by untold hours of NYPD Blue, The Simpsons, rock videos and action toys that provide experiences that obliterate thought, distort reality and deaden sensibilities. Whether we like it or not, children today share a common electronic culture. (p. 4)

This immersion in an increasingly technological age is the reality to which many children adapt and in which they live. Traditional text sources, archetypes of stories and literary traditions exist alongside newer technologies as well as dwell within them and media technologies compete for the interests and time of children. This means that the source of material available as content for both books and the Internet is the same. However it should be noted that the digital realm has become increasingly a source for subject matter itself. For instance, Rubenstein's *Space Demons* was one of

the first books to deal with issues associated with technology and also to be critically acclaimed. Interestingly, the message the book seems to send is one of fear, fear of the long reaching negative influence of technology on the young. No new archetypes have been produced with the creation of a new means of delivering information. The Internet provides wider resources and faster means of locating information needed, it hasn't greatly changed the essential composition of text though there are increasing experimental forms.

What this entails is firstly a vast amount of information readily available. Secondly, it also means a way of locating and drawing together disparate information. Importantly it means that the body of information is contributed to by many people which can effectively dilute any one individual's power, though this may change. It also means that the quality of material available is inconsistent and variable. In essence for children, the books in which they are interested (increasingly authors whose subject matter have been pioneered by writers such as Jennings and Griffiths) are available because the medium now exists to an extent, outside the reach of those traditional power sources who would traditionally censor. Parents and teachers for example, find it difficult to stop access to all content, children make their own choices.

This then is the basis from which an increasing number of children are engaged in literacy. This "online" literacy is self directed, determined on interests and general "surfing" of the net; that is browsing that changes direction according to mood, access, web links and interest. What it entails for the child is an encounter with a variety of literature and varying quality. It should be remembered however as Newkirk (2006) phrases it:

> …[I]t is illogical, however, to treat media narratives as though they are completely unrelated to school literacy. TV shows are after all, usually written. They are built on scripts that include characterisation, plot, dialogue and often humour - the very elements we want our students to include in the stories they write. And these narratives often speak to children's fantasies of power, exploration and conflict. (p. 64)

There is some correlation between what we would traditionally consider appropriate in the literature provided in both the cognitive and moral realms for children in these

two mediums. Television shows can educate along the lines of traditional literature, good triumphing over evil, reinforcing the predominant moral codes of a society. This has been recognised in some of the earliest novels discussed in this thesis. For example, in Spence's (1982) *The Left Overs,* the children make an appearance in the audience of a daytime talk show. The character Jasmine is beside herself with happiness at the chance to meet the star of the show and the guests who may be "punk rockers and junkies". Spence interestingly introduces the dimension of star power to the formula of information and entertainment. Even at this early stage in the revolution of new media sources, the idea that television could evolve is suggested.

Television can also allow for the development and extension of the traditional structures of narrative, which in turn allows for a more comprehensive development of plot and character and this advance can be termed "momentum". The sagas of television and indeed published books have this as a core development, as commitment of ideas to paper or celluloid are unchangeable but provide a starting point for the serialisation of core ideas and narrative concerns. Mackey (2006) states that:

> ...[M]omentum plays a prime creative role in the inexorable forward movement of character and plot. Because of serial publication, whether of books or television episodes, early decisions can not be erased or improved upon.
> (p. 156)

In this way the idea of character development can be seen to have mutated to suit its new literary environment and engage the interests of a new generation of viewers/readers. What is apparent is the development within new mediums to adapt and build upon traditional sources to impart the same messages. Take for example Klein's *Hating Alison Ashley*. This successful novel has been republished, made into a stage play and a feature film. In the film, Alison is played by a popular "soapie" actress and performing artist. As a result of the popularity of this performer and the boost given to the movie, the flow on resulted in another reprint of the book with a new cover to "cash in" on the popularity of the film due in large part to the star power of the actress playing Alison.

With the advent of the Internet, stories can be transformed by new media. The marketing of new books has continued to change as the online market has increased in consumers/users. The democratic process of posting or access to edit and produce content has broadened what is acceptable and also hinted at the possibility of tastes that have traditionally been viewed as subversive, odd or simply different. There is an absence of morality in part due to the unregulated nature of much of the content. Users are free of the guilt perhaps associated with their choices; people don't create what they view, or if they do are able to simply do so anonymously. This is also true for children, filters only block so much as children surf and move around sites. Parents are aware of this as are publishers who can then create sites that on one level engage the child but also have the implicit consent of an adult This "disembodiment" frees the individual from ethical and moral constraints. As Wertheim (1999) states of cyberspace:

> ...[N]ot being an overly religious construct is in fact a crucial point in its favour; for in this scientific age, overt forms of traditional religion make people uncomfortable. The "spiritual" of cyberspace lies in precisely this paradox: it is a repackaging of the old idea of heaven but in a secular, technologically sanctioned format. (p. 23)

It is the view of an inclusive realm that correlates to the ideals of communal carnivalesque. Individuals enter a world that is accepting and non hierarchical; you enter and leave as you please and determine your own path. This to an extent was adapted by Jennings and Gleitzman in their *Deadly!* series of books. Each wrote alternate sections that were built upon. In this way the writers are able to adapt and change similar to the web; Pages come and go, sites pop up and disappear and content is changed and modified continually.

With each development within these technological fields, the reach of new media extends and "converts" more individuals. Its embrace of popular culture has granted access for children to engage on their own terms and through their direction. Brabazon (2006) notes that this hasn't always been the case;

> ...[T]hroughout the history of schools, universities and formal education, popular culture has been intentionally and actively excluded. The separation of pop from art, without overtly addressing embedded class-based notions of

> cultural value, served to disenfranchise generations of students from their own social frameworks and literacies. (p. 291)

Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque spirit can again be seen to fit within the parameters of the Internet in terms of a philosophy. It shares many of the features that have been discussed in this thesis; anti-authority, unrestricted licence and participation as equals. As a perfect fit then, Australian children's books that reflect these thematic concerns, through narrative devices employing comedy and taboo subjects, seem to be the most successful.

Unlike traditional text, which can be seen to exclude less capable students, the Internet opens the forum to all comers. Literacy in this sense need only be limited to a technological literacy which is increasingly becoming easier for individuals with the development of integrated systems. As has been mentioned earlier, the books drawn upon for this thesis were chosen from those shortlisted by the Children's Book Council. These novels predominantly concern serious subject matter and as such follow specific conventions. Books such as Carmody's *Obernewtyn* and Vaughan Carr's *Firestorm* are serious in nature to the point of being dour. It is no surprise that these texts represent a challenge for anyone other than the most studious of readers, which then excludes a large number of child readers. The Internet by contrast allows all children to be able to use chat rooms, blogs and send emails. This increase in 'net traffic' is widening what we may construe as literature. We are able to read each others thoughts on personalised web pages or through sites such as "YouTube" and "Facebook".

As a natural consequence of the increased traffic between individuals, to stand out more risks are needed to be taken in terms of content and often humour. With no moral filter upon sites, individuals can visit with impunity and often without comment. However, the visit is recorded and as such becomes "popular" without the associated moral or ethical framework to consider. Without the consideration of these traditional concerns (such as moral outrage) being able to be expressed on an individual, face-to-face level, almost anything goes. It should be noted too that it is within this framework that many of the books concerning scatological humour fit comfortably. The dilemma for those in authority is that it is exactly these sites that are

the most "hit" by children. This is also evident in the traditional book publishing field where authors such as Griffiths and Jennings remain among the most popular from this country. Their subject matter continues to push at the boundaries; urinating (Jennings' "Piddler on the Roof", "Little Squirt"), defecating (Griffiths' bum trilogy), vomiting (Jennings' "Spaghetti Pig Out"). All have a place on the web along with more serious works for children.

Traditionally, education has dictated to children, has told younger readers what they can and can't read, what is "appropriate" and what is not. Children have had little autonomy in the choices they have been able to make in relation to their reading materials. With the phenomenal increase in the availability and use of the Internet, new markets have opened of which children are but one. The parallels to Bakhtinian carnival in this instance are apparent; children become part of the performance and thus equal participants. With the barriers down so to speak, works containing elements of carnival have increased not only on the Internet but in traditional productions of text. It is as Blake (1989) notes of fiction:

> ...[F]ictional literature can be seen as active within society, as being aimed at particular readerships within it, of presenting, to that specifically chosen audience, certain types of information and attitude, and helping to form or change attitudes and behaviour. (p. 8)

With a wider readership and market discovered through the net, traditional publishers of books have been able to regain market share. They have tapped the spaces of the net, determined the interests of children through their visits to popular sites and transcribed the character of these places into a new style of book. Bainbridge (2001) notes that with this globalization, children's book publishing has been "globalised" as well. She states too, that only a handful of corporations run this publishing field and are not interested in quality literature for children, but rather the marketing and "meaning brokering" of their books (p.13). Again this is another example used in relation to the "high brow"/"low brow" argument against those children's books that are considered or defined as "low" in subject matter. It also means through natural attrition, that less books will be published, or that they will stay with us for shorter periods of time if they fail to capture the targeted demographic. Consider the novels

of Hartnett; she is an author with a growing reputation and prestigious awards. Yet with her growing critical profile an Internet search engine registers only around six thoU.S.And hits. Conversely, Paul Jennings registers around eight hundred thoU.S.And.

This economic reality whether we like it or not runs parallel to the quality of the published work. Economics are seen as the driving force behind many publishing companies becoming or staying viable. It is little wonder then that large publishing companies are turning to the net to gauge interest, create "a buzz" or to research where potential readers/consumers are heading.

This is not to say that adaptations haven't been made by the child reader to use these new technologies to suit their own interests. Marlow (1993) holds the view that dominant technologies create organisational changes in a culture and that whilst these may create total environments they are not necessarily defined by the content of the technology (p. 308). The burgeoning impact of the Internet has created a forum from which individual access determines the trends upon which corporations trade. The number of visits to a site is a direct indication of the interest from a user. So although the structure may be determined by websites put up by individuals or corporations with commercial interests, these sites survive or fall by the "traffic" they attract.

In this way small changes are made over time, similar sites appear with small variations or are based upon the original material of interest. Eventually these changes are noticeable and the evolution of the "web landscape"' continues. It has an influence as well on the traditional structure of books.

It is into this environment that the child can enter as an equal, being the disembodied user with a profile that can be different from the actual self. In this regard then corporations or individuals must target on the presumption that all users are a potential market or customer. Jenkins (2004) sees this as children being active participants in their own lives with their own desires and agendas and that they actively transform the elements that adults impose upon them to make them meaningful within the context of their use (p.414).

The breaking down of barriers between social networks and forms of communication has had an impact upon the literacies that children are engaged with. New forms of media have had an impact upon not only the ways children and especially teens communicate but the styles with which they do this.

Wilson (2000) comments that:

> [T]eenage culture, it would seem, has always had a strong social dimension to it, from music and dance to cinema and television. At this age we are engaged in probably a more intensive period of social negotiation, investigation and experimentation than we are ever likely to know at any other time in our lives. Sharing time, space and experiences seems to be a defining feature of teenage culture. (p. 3)

Whilst Wilson concentrates on teens, the Internet has extended this level of knowing further and to a wider demographic, to include those children who have been traditionally the target of junior fiction. Some innocence has been lost as the barriers with which certain knowledge has been denied to children have been increasingly removed. That is not to say that restrictions and filters are not in place for the protection of children, but that the reality of media barrage for children is a greater awareness of more adult-oriented content and easier access. Along with the ability to utilise new technologies children have greater power than ever before. Compare this traditionally to the availability and suitability of books, limited resources and fewer outlets predetermined what children could read. This made it easier for adults to control choice, access and subsequently content.

Tied to this relative freedom of access is the ability to incorporate subsequent new - found knowledge to new modes of communicating. Katz and Rimon (2006) note in particular of the web that the social links that took place in the community face to face are now carried out over the web. Also when the restrictions that time places on meetings are removed the quality of communication between users is similar to that of people who meet in person (p.31). This has allowed for a faster revolution in the vocabulary that children used. It would seem that many new terms, for example "wicked" or "sick" become part of normal child/teen communication. These terms are older now but demonstrate the rapidity of change affecting language. With greater

change the grammatical rules for the correct use of English have been eroded. This has created new language terms and terminology, as well as establishing a new code of understanding for both written and spoken English.

In Gleitzman's *Worry Warts* for example, characters use a number of terms and expressions that are incorrect or modified forms, "gunna", "rack off" and "daft bugger". Griffiths especially uses puns and often crudity to undermine traditional words; "arseteroids", "World bumination" and "Univarse" are but three examples that subvert and amuse readers whilst having meaning in the context of the story.

Other platforms for the creation of communication exist outside traditional means as Brabazon (2006) noted:

> ...[N]ew modes of living, thinking and writing are created on dance floors, in darkened cinemas and hypertext. Intellectual standards in research, writing and scholarship must not be confused with reactionary determinations of cultural "quality" and value. (p. 293)

Graphic novels for example utilise the best of comics and the conventions of reading to engage otherwise reluctant readers. The point of digressing here is to suggest that new mediums have added an element to what constitutes what is acceptable to read. Subsequently this creates an environment to ponder upon the notion of quality and who best decides this. Are children able to decide this or do parents, concerned adults and those in positions of power? As Stevenson (1996) comments:

> ...[O]n one hand, children are different from adults, so we can template restrictions and permissions specific to them without considering it hypocrisy or unfairness. On the other hand the state of being a child is a universal experience – we were all there, so we insist that gives us both knowledgeable experience and freedom from prejudice. (p. 306)

New media, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, lends itself so readily to the philosophical assumptions that underlie Bakhtin's notion of carnival and its related written history. The difficulty lies with breaking from a tradition that has largely ignored its existence or has dismissed its claims to legitimate literature usually through its subject matter and the subversive subtext that this writing implies.

As I have alluded to earlier, the writing style and subject matter of writers such as Griffiths and Jennings are a case in point. There are many texts that have been used in this thesis and many more that would have easily demonstrated the correlation between key carnivalesque ideas and those expressed by these authors. Jennings has a number of short story collections, such as *Unmentionable*, *Unseen*, *Tongue Tied*, *Unbearable* to name a few, that contain stories with many of these carnivalesque elements. Rather than revisit those ideas their influence on popular writing should be considered briefly.

Paul Jennings originally wrote stories to engage the reluctant reader. The primary concern was to get readers, generally boys, to pick up a book. From these beginnings Jennings has had phenomenal commercial success. A visit to the official Paul Jennings website "The Paul Jennings File" reveals just how many *reader* awards he has won; especially in the B.I.L.B.Y's (Books I Like Best Yearly awards) and K.O.A.L.A (Kids Own Australian Literature Awards). It is extraordinary. What is also extraordinary is the initial lack of critical acclaim for these same titles from his peers and the Australian Children's Book Council.

In the broader picture this may suggest a number of things. Firstly that there is still, despite the proven popularity of such texts, reluctance from traditionalists to accept that the type of writing that Jennings and others of similar style are valid, or is of literary value. It may be that this categorisation and subsequent dismissal by those traditionally in positions of power to judge merit is a result of judges using different indicators to those of the readers themselves. It is as Brabazon (2006) noted:

> …[T]he trap of these categories is that teachers, writers and researchers spend too much time legitimising the choice of topic against the faceless forces of the elite, rather than exploring the political impact of these representational formations. (p. 292)

In Australia at least, established power sources still exert a large influence over reader choice through various control means such as production, authority in the form of "expertise" created through education and the investment in tradition. Change can be

seen as gradual but the introduction and evolution of the Internet has shown this to be otherwise.

In a similar vein it is important to note that these rapid technological changes have brought about an increase in the production of knowledge and more importantly, its availability to the masses. This exerts pressure on existing hierarchies and structures, breaking them or at least forcing them to change. Holding power then becomes crucial and those with it go to greater lengths to protect it, keep it and remove it from becoming available to others not yet in power.

In the technological age in which we live where knowledge is power, perhaps the only means of protecting certain knowledge, is to rank its importance as it is available to everyone. Certain knowledge and certain styles can more readily be linked to elitist ideals that act as a barrier to a wider and perhaps disenfranchised mass.

The exclusion of a group of people through these means may be the last bastion of defence for traditionalists unwilling to accept the reality of new literacies and their availability and agency for those who have been traditionally disenfranchised. Interestingly it seems that books often deal with the outsider but the writer cannot be. Spence's *The Left Overs*, Phipson's *A Tide Flowing* and Park's *Playing Beattie Bow* all focus on a central character outside the mainstream of society. Contrastingly the world that Jennings creates is recognisable in some respects but is greatly exaggerated as is the case with Griffiths. Subsequently this allows these authors the freedom from convention to invent.

Books that were once traditionally sought by readers, acquired through taste and acquired due to the readers education, are now freely available and open to greater interpretation, reinvention and reconfiguring due to the Internet's reach; the traditional forms have been pierced, the barriers broken. Zizek (1997) states that:

> [T]echnology no longer merely imitates nature, rather it reveals the underlying mechanism which generates it, so that in a sense, 'natural reality' itself becomes something 'simulated' and the only real is the underlying DNA. (p.133)

Technology is broadening the parameters of knowledge for humanity whilst also creating new hybrid forms of technology, communication and their interface with the "real world". Marlow (1993) notes that dominant media creates knowledge empires that ultimately go into disequilibrium and that the diffusion of technology into a culture takes time and the process is evolutionary. From this state of flux before boundaries are established, demarcated and clearly defined, new literacies such as that encompassing the World Wide Web are changing every aspect of our life at a rapid rate. The rate of change makes it hard for individuals to keep apace with all developments or to place with any great accuracy stores of knowledge. As such, the equilibrium has been established through all users who have access to this medium continually adding to it.

Bakhtin noted that for individuals the society in which they lived, the laws they obeyed and how it impacted upon them was their primary life. Outside of this a secondary life existed that celebrated excess and the base, the physical and the natural cycles of life. The primary life was adherence to rules and carnival life inverted these, ignored them and deferred to misrule. In our current society the popularity and expansion of the web seems to have rules made as it is developing. Authority attempts at times to intervene and force change, the net moves around these, mocking these attempts as carnival does. Carnivalesque writing for children thrives under these conditions and becomes increasingly important as by its nature it is adaptable to whatever the medium becomes or rather what it is defined as. The books of Griffiths and Jennings reflect this change as both authors have continued to mine a rich seam of material, once taboo, that has become increasingly mainstream reading for young readers. Narratives that centre on defecating or vomiting, urinating or various "gross" acts, that are stock plotting devices for these Australian authors, have become more prevalent and in the context of web use, less controversial as the parameters of acceptance widen with greater Internet U.S.Age.

This thesis has discussed elements of the carnivalesque in specific Australian texts, noting that it is a broad, hard-to-define concept concerned with living and celebrating its many facets through birth to death. Many of the key tenets are often interrelated and difficult to define as distinct aspects. Central to carnival though, is the role of the

body, of birth, of dying and the machinations that keep it alive. It celebrates the connection to the cycle of life, as natural and essential without an imposing overlaying moral framework. Carnival does this through laughter, puns, oaths and blazons, the mockery of officialdom, plays mimicking the sacred rituals of authority and often inverting the social order, as demonstrated by Klein's character of Erica Yurken and her attitude to and comments about the perceived superiority of Alison Ashley. Central too is the role of food; the banquet, the feast, the rituals celebrating harvest and marking religious festivals and observances. This celebration of food is evident in much Australian children's literature, from the ritual of the family meal in Thurley's *Wait for me! Wait for me!* to the descriptions of foods used in traditional celebrations in O'Neill's *Deepwater.*

The idea of carnivalesque then has much to offer for children's authors in our modern society. The central concerns that underlie carnival, of freedom both social and individual, inclusion and participation, celebration of life and all its glories, hasn't changed. Nor has the ability to reflect on hardships and the thrill of overcoming them, challenging and subverting authority hasn't changed either. Aspects are lost, time changes others, but what is apparent, is an acknowledgement of the human spirit and a championing of the human condition. Carnivalesque ideas have much to offer a new generation of readers with many of its central tenets evident in many forms of popular art and media, and its notions increasingly used as the embodiment of plot, particularly in commercially successful Australian children's books. Increasingly questions may be asked to what level of popularity will carnivalesque rise and what subsequent influence will it have on both the publishing domain of children's literature and subject content? Will taboos concerning the body be further eroded due to the nature of carnivalised writing and its many "grotesqueries" central to the Bakhtinian understanding of carnivalesque? It may be interesting to observe how carnivalesque writing develops within the context of a more democratised publishing sphere as provided by new media.

Increasingly carnival elements have grown in influence and popularity in Australian children's literature as this analysis has shown. This increased influence has encompassed many aspects of popular culture and particularly the books available for young readers. For example, this has been evident in the fact that Jennings and

Griffiths are two of the highest selling authors for children in Australia. Cultural validation may be closer than we realise for a style of writing based on the main components of carnival, the body and humour, feasting and rituals that are inclusive of community and encourage wider participation. Whilst this study has focused on Australian children's books it is very likely that these carnival elements have also found their way into children's literature of other countries. It is this development that may have implications for further study and questions concerning how pervasive will the influences of the carnivalesque become and how will this be reflected in the books published for children in the context of the widening influence of the Internet both in Australia and the world.

For the reasons outlined above, the carnivalesque is likely to increasingly influence Australian children's literature. Carnivalesque philosophy will continue to grow as a predominant influence through which the dominant discourse can be subverted, both for writers and for readers who wish to be taken outside and beyond the margins.

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