Terry Pratchett's Discworld

An Annotated Bibliography

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References


In investigating intertextuality within the novels of Discworld, Anderson discovered that it functions to comment, reflect, parody, and satirize the world, human folly, and other texts. She finds this pattern is largely relevant to Pratchett’s reoccurring theme of identity, as intertextuality allows Pratchett to awaken his readers to “fixed features of language as well as [to] issues dealt with on a thematic level” (79-80). This thesis is incredibly in-depth, even though it focuses on several Discworld titles. However, its usefulness is dependent on extenuating Anderson’s conclusions to what intertextuality offers readers (see Ma, 2002, below).


Butler argues that Pratchett thematically combines an atmosphere that is carnivalesque with *bildungsroman* plots so as to simultaneously empower characters and the world characters’ inhabit. As such, Butler says this kind of writing is normally counter-cultural and it allows Pratchett flexibility in creating the familiar journey of maturity known as *bildungsroman* (see Gruner, 2009 and Walsh, 2003, below). Although I was initially unfamiliar with the context of Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais* used by Butler to articulate his case, he does a good job of introducing and logically proving Pratchett’s appropriation of similar meanings in his
writings. Because this article introduces the idea that Pratchett writes
bildungsroman type stories, it provides evidence that Pratchett is interested in
positively empowering his characters and readers.

(Unpublished bachelor’s thesis). University of Plymouth, Plymouth, United
Kingdom.

Approaching postmodernism from the perspective that it is interested in originality,
repetition, simulation, and (hyper)reality, Bryant argues that Discworld novels
present a postmodern depiction of reality around two expository points.
Consequently, Bryant says Discworld depicts a world that resituates traditional
fantasy and parodies the human experience in a postmodern mode. The
theoretical foundation of this article is its strongest element—Bryant presents an
articulate overview of the complexities of postmodernism, while also exploring
representations of the “real” in Pratchett’s texts. In sum, the legitimacy of this
article is a result of its attention to the details, complexity, and application of
postmodern concepts to fantasy literature.

Cockrell, A. (2006). Where the falling angel meets the rising ape: Terry Pratchett's
“Discworld.” *Hollins Critic, 43*(1). Retrieved from
http://go.galegroup.com/ps/start.do?p=LitRC&u=jama62549

This article attempts to survey Pratchett’s adult novels and argue that they are valid
members of literature’s canon. Cockrell tries to identify the “deeper, more
substantial life” found within Pratchett’s novel to highlight what makes these
novels compelling. However, this is a largely informal article and an overly
ambitious task to complete without a great deal more analytical depth. As a result, this article provides a good introductory treatise to the vast numbers of themes, allusions, and literary elements used employed by Pratchett in his Discworld novels, but cannot be used for further study.


Using the series of witches Pratchett has developed in Discworld, Croft explores themes of free will, right and wrong, and the ethics of power as epitomized by these characters. This article explores all but two of the witch novels, and thereby provides a good overview of the common connections and threads throughout; similarly, Croft explains the very use of “nice, good, and right” as they appear textually in these novels. She has a very effective argument, and readers can easily grasp the problems of moral responsibility presented by these characters. Croft discusses ideas of power and empowerment, and as such, her analysis is an effective vehicle for discussing the ethics of “rightness” over “niceness” (162).


Thematically following her previous article, in this article Croft makes the case that the depiction of education within these novels by Pratchett and Rowling reflects social anxieties and uncomfortable ambiguities. Although these two literary worlds seem polarizing, both problematize gender, education, and power. While this article does not immediately address issues of empowerment, it still suggests
ways in which Discworld openly addresses such modern problems and presents an effective argument. In addressing these issues, the article proves constructive to understanding another facet of Pratchett’s worldview.


This article attempts to broadly summarize and analyze the depictions of learning throughout children’s books, so as to demonstrate the continued emphasis on didacticism and pedagogy, and how this emphasis fails children. Focusing on magic children, because they are already agents in their worlds, Gruner makes the argument that traditional educational systems fail to develop children’s gifts and that new systems need to be developed. Gruner’s positive reading of fantasy literature is unusual among scholarly articles, and she passionately argues the ways in which fantasy novels offer greater empowerment to their protagonists. This article is a valid part of understanding some of the broad themes of Pratchett’s work, such as the subversive ways he situates children and teens as protagonists. Peripherally the article addresses the humanism that imbues Pratchett’s works and the positive means of empowerment that he offers his readers. This kind of reading is a useful mode to amplify meaning within Discworld.

Ma complex argument states that reading uses and multiplies the senses and “raise[s readers] into the realm of creative, selective, and fantastic sensation.” Although never addressing this empowerment overtly, Ma explained this as an active process that enjoins the reader to a created world. Moreover, Ma is more interested in the power of literature toward individuals, rather than toward self-contained literary characters. The depth of Ma’s literary analysis, combining both literary events and reader response, is unique and effective. Accordingly, this article is an invaluable aid to understanding the broad work Pratchett affects when readers enter Discworld.


This critical overview of Pratchett’s works takes a biographical perspective to emphasize Pratchett’s position as a satiric author and ironic observer. Chronologically surveying Pratchett’s bibliography, Miller highlights Pratchett’s curiosity, skepticism, and absurdism, all which position him (says Miller) to uniquely observe the mores and society of the twentieth-century world. Enthusiastic and well-written, this article expertly contextualizes Pratchett’s writings. Although the article is introductory, it is not simplistic and would prove useful in understanding the underpinnings of Pratchett’s work.


Written by the author himself, this lecture discusses Pratchett’s use of folklore, his understanding of reading and literature, and the relation of both to the “real”
world. In his normal engaging style, Pratchett spells out the elements of folklore that most influence is work, such as witches (the crone, the mother, the daughter) and the Morris Men, and what impact folklore has had on his writings. The article gently reminds readers of the importance of folklore, while only whetting the appetites of those not familiar with the motifs Pratchett’s mentions. This article is beneficial for being one of the rarer academic articles by Pratchett, and because he is expertly weaves his own ideological perspective into the article. He hints at the need for folklore, fantasy, and science fiction, and speaks outright to what reading has brought to his life. Lastly, his explanation of “narrative causality” suggests a very interesting connection to humanism that is begging for further analysis (166).


The theoretical work of Paul’s “Feminism revisited” addresses the way in which feminist readings and treatment of texts have changed in the past fifteen years; however, this point is not the primary use of Paul’s essay in terms of understanding Pratchett’s works. Rather she looks to redeploy feminist analysis to unpack the confines of children’s literature and to examine constructions of the individual. What Paul makes obvious with this critical piece is the importance of themes and complexities of identity construction. Taking Paul’s point to heart requires that a critic recognize the instability of any reading of any text because the construction of the subject changes through reading. Understanding this method of mapping
ideology onto texts is important in understanding the ideological importance of Pratchett’s works as pieces of literature and their value to readers.


Walsh argues in this comprehensive article that typical analyses of children’s literature are overly concerned with what is good for a child, rather than the “aboutness” of a text, and therefore these analyses neglect properties of language. She suggests this kind of analysis needs to be performed to understand the constructions of “child” and “irony” because doing so breaks down the boundaries of objectivism and modernism. Walsh highlights an important aspect of literary studies of children: that of the supposed truism of the understanding “child” as representational and whole. Any study of children’s literature shows that a much more discursive and destabilizing representation of children is very present. Although this article never addresses Pratchett’s work in any direct way, it presents ideas on how Pratchett’s novels for children and young adults are examples of more radical writings for children. His work never attempts to pigeonhole children’s forms as so much of literature tries to do, and as such, the references and comments in this article would be a valuable resource to an analysis of Pratchett’s works.