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Fantastic Society: Social Themes in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*

Fantastická společnost: Společenská témata v zeměplošských knihách Terryho Pratchetta

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KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Terry Pratchett, Zeměplocha, fantasy, rasismus, náboženství, feminismus

KEY WORDS

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ABSTRACT

Terry Pratchett is best known as the author of *Discworld*, a series of more than forty books and several short stories set in a world that is often described as humorous fantasy. Pratchett, however, uses this genre and its imaginative and satiric opportunities not only to tell stories, but also to mediate his own views on some of the major social themes such as feminism, religion, or racism. He uses the stereotypical fantasy roles and settings and subverts them to point out real world problems and issues.

The rise of popularity of the fantasy genre, especially satirical or humorous enables Pratchett to present his views to a broader audience, and to create a world mirroring and distorting the real one as to show the importance and impact of these issues on society. The fantasy setting also gives Pratchett the opportunity to create a world in which these themes can be illustrated and discussed freely.

The first chapter sets up Discworld as a Secondary World and presents the topics that will be discussed.

The second chapter deals with the many forms of racism in *Discworld*. The first part of the chapter discusses the standard, human-human type of racism, which is illustrated in the book *Jingo*. A subchapter is then dedicated to human-nonhuman and dwarf-troll racism, illustrated in *Thud!,* where Pratchett employs the possibilities of fantasy to reference real-world racism and its dangers. The second subchapter then briefly touches upon human-undead racism.

Religion is discussed in the third chapter. Pratchett's stance is illustrated using the novel *Small Gods*, which deals with faith and institutionalised religion. Pratchett's views on the relationship between humans and gods is addressed, as well as his approach to religion in general, which is twofold – on one hand he is aware of the importance of religion for society, on the other he calls for caution in the case of institutionalised religion

and blind faith. A subchapter is dedicated to the depiction of the afterlife in the novel, with emphasis on the power of an individual and of one's character.

The fourth chapter looks at the portrayal of feminism, and in relation to it sexism, in the books *Equal Rites* and *Monstrous Regiment.* Both these books have a female protagonist who struggles in a male-dominated world, and concentrate on the injustices inherent to a patriarchal society. One subchapter discusses the use of crossdressing to further illustrate the differences between the treatment of females and males in society, with those two experiences being put into immediate contrast. The second subchapter then examines the differences between witches and wizards, the unequal treatment of witches, and need for balance between the two – and, subsequently, between men and women.

This thesis aims to evaluate Pratchett's views on the issues of racism, religion, and feminism, their presentation in his works, and to argue that they constitute a part of his literary thesis, the goal of which is raising awareness about these topics and offering some personal opinions on their causes and possible solutions.

While the books mentioned are the primary sources for this thesis, other works from Terry Pratchett's bibliography are also referenced.

ABSTRAKT

Terry Pratchett je známý především jako autor Úžasné Zeměplochy, což je řada čítající více než čtyřicet knih a několik povídek, které jsou zasazené do světa často popisovaného jako humoristická fantasy. Pratchett nicméně využívá tohoto žánru a jeho možností pro představivost a satiru, nejen aby vyprávěl příběhy, ale také aby zprostředkoval své vlastní názory na některá z největších společenských témat, jako je feminismus, náboženství nebo rasismus. Využívá stereotypních rolí a prostředí žánru fantasy a převrací je, aby ukázal na problémy skutečného světa.

Nárůst obliby žánru fantasy, obzvláště satirické či humoristické, umožňuje Pratchettovi předkládat své názory širšímu publiku a vytvořit svět, který odráží a pokřivuje ten skutečný, aby ukázal důležitost a dopad těchto témat na společnost. Zasazení do fantasy světa navíc umožňuje Pratchettovi vytvořit svět, v němž tato témata mohou být volně ukázána a diskutována.

První kapitola představuje Zeměplochu jakožto druhotný svět a představuje témata, která budou probírána.

Druhá kapitola se zabývá mnoha formami rasismu na Zeměploše. První část kapitoly rozebírá standardní typ rasismu mezi člověkem a člověkem, což je ilustrováno na knize *Jingo*. Další podkapitola je pak věnována rasismu mezi lidmi a nelidmi a mezi trolly a trpaslíky, který je ilustrován na románu *Thud!*, kdy Pratchett využívá možností fantasy, aby poukázal na rasismus v reálném světě a jeho nebezpečí. Druhá podkapitola se pak stručně dotýká vztahů mezi lidmi a nemrtvými.

Náboženství je rozebíráno ve třetí kapitole. Pratchettův postoj je ilustrován na knize *Small Gods*, která se zabývá vírou a institucionalizovaným náboženstvím. Pozornost je věnována Pratchettovým názorům na vztah mezi lidmi a bohy, stejně jako jeho přístupu k náboženství obecně, který má dvě strany – na straně jedné Pratchett uznává význam náboženství pro společnost, na straně druhé volá po opatrnosti v případě

institucionalizovaného náboženství a slepé víry. Podkapitola je věnována vyobrazení posmrtného života v tomto románu, s důrazem na sílu jednotlivce a jeho charakteru.

Čtvrtá kapitola se věnuje vyobrazení feminismu a také sexismu ve vztahu k němu, v knihách *Equal Rites* a *Monstrous Regiment*. Obě tyto knihy mají ženské hrdinky, které bojují se světem dominovaným muži, a soustředí se na nespravedlnosti, které jsou vlastní patriarchální společnosti. Jedna podkapitola rozebírá použití tzv. cross-dressingu k dalšímu vykreslení rozdílů mezi chováním společnosti vůči ženám a vůči mužům, kdy jsou obě tyto zkušenosti dány do okamžitého kontrastu. Druhá podkapitola pak zkoumá rozdíly mezi čarodějkami a mágy, nerovné zacházení s čarodějkami a nutnost rovnováhy mezi těmito dvěma skupinami – stejně jako mezi muži a ženami.

Tato práce si klade za cíl zhodnotit Pratchettovy postoje k tématům rasismu, náboženství a feminismu a jejich prezentaci v jeho díle a dokázat, že jsou součástí jeho literární teze, jejímž cílem je upozornit na tato témata a nabídnout své osobní názory na jejich příčiny a možná řešení.

Ačkoli výše zmíněné knihy slouží jako primární zdroje, je odkazováno i na jiná díla z Pratchettovy tvorby.

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1. Introduction

Sir Terrence David John Pratchett became world-famous for his series of humorous fantasy books best known as the *Discworld* series. In this series, spanning over forty books, he created a unique fantasy world full of cynical humour, sarcasm, and plots that subverts the traditional tropes of the fantasy genre. Fantasy has long been regarded by some as juvenile, as "children's" literature, as Ann Swinfen points out in her study *In Defence of Fantasy*, where she notes that this label can be "grossly misleading"[1], but also that many critics "condemn the whole genre with a passion which seems to have its roots in emotion rather than objective critical standards.[2]" J. R. R. Tolkien, in his essay "On Fairy-Stories", also notes that fairy-tales, which he regards as the basis for modern fantasy, are usually treated as stories for children, yet he challenges this view: "Is there any essential connection between children and fairy-stories? Is there any call for comment, if an adult reads them for himself?[3]" Pratchett himself has remarked, in his 2001 Carnegie Medal award speech, that "everyone knows that fantasy is 'all about' wizards, but by now, I hope, everyone with any intelligence knows that, er, whatever everyone knows… is wrong."[4]

Although fantasy is still sometimes regarded as more trivial – even the collection of academic works on Terry Pratchett's writing being part of an edition entitled *Critical Approaches to Children's Literature* – Pratchett uses the genre of (humorous) fantasy to create what Ann Swinfen calls a Secondary World[5] in which he can not only tell stories

[1] Ann Swinfen, *In Defense of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2019) 15.
[2] Swinfen, 16.
[3] J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories", *Tree and Leaf* (London: HarperCollins*Publishers*, 2001) 33/34.
[4] Terry Pratchett, "2011 Carnegie Medal award speech", *A Slip of the Keyboard* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2014) 171.
[5] Cf. Ann Swinfen, *In Defense of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2019) 110.

of imagination, but also create contexts in which to point out various contemporary issues and offer his own view or criticism of them.

The world of Discworld, called by Pratchett "a world and a mirror of worlds"[6] is exactly that – a secondary world that has, however, a strong basis in the real one and, as Marion Rana remarks, "the relationship between Discworld and our own 'Roundworld' is a highly complex one, with the former both mirroring and distorting the latter[7]", which is then used to better show the importance and possible impact of those themes on society.

The themes discussed in this thesis will be racism, religion, and feminism respectively. This thesis aims to present and evaluate Pratchett's view on them, and to assess whether they constitute a part of his literary thesis.

The theme of racism will be discussed mainly on the books *Jingo* and *Thud!*, both of which deal with different sides of racism, its rhetoric, its impact on the common people and society as a whole, and the possibility of change to a more open-minded society.

Pratchett's attitude towards religion will be illustrated chiefly on the book *Small Gods*. Here, Pratchett explores the importance of faith, the role of religion in human society, but also the dangers of religious extremism and indoctrination. Pratchett's view on the relationship of gods to their believers is one of co-dependence, the impact of which is the central point of *Small Gods*.

The last theme considered is that of feminism. Pratchett is using the standard tropes of fantasy and subverts them to point out the sexism both of those tropes and of modern society. One such trope, the relationship between gender, witches, and mages, drives the plot of Pratchett's third novel, *Equal Rites*. The status of witches has been touched upon by Pratchett in several books, but it was *Equal Rites* that not only began

[6] Terry Pratchett, *The Last Continent* (London: Transworld Publishers, 1999) preface.
[7] Marion Rana, "Shedding the 'Light Fantastic' on Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: An Introduction", *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: From Giant Turtles to Small Gods*, ed. Marion Rana (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018) 3.

what is now known as the Witches sequence, but which also tackled the inequality of the sexes through the stereotypes connected to magic and its users in fantasy novels. Another way of looking at feminist ideas and the issues feminism deals with, is through crossdressing. In *Monstrous Regiment* the protagonist Polly Perks has to cross-dress as a boy in order to join the army and break free of the conservative attitude towards women that is pervasive in her country. Corporal Nobby Nobbs dresses as a woman in *Jingo*, although for vastly different reasons, which leads him to understand the everyday sexism heretofore unknown to him.

2. Racism

In *Witches Abroad*, Terry Pratchett says: "Racism was not a problem on the Discworld, because – what with trolls and dwarfs and so on – speciesism was more interesting. Black and white lived in perfect harmony and ganged up on green." Although speciesism is indeed an important theme in the Discworld series, and will be discussed in the following sub-chapter, this quote is disproved later in the book *Jingo*. In it, a war is threatening to erupt between the city state of Ankh-Morpork, which is a melting pot both of ethnicities and species, but whose majority of citizens is white, and Klatch, a vast empire modelled after the European idea of the Middle-Eastern world. It is fuelled by the resurfacing of the lost island of Leshp, to which both rivals lay a claim. This impending conflict brings out the racial tension between the white majority and the Klatchian minority of the human populace of the city.

This racism is used by the citizens of Ankh-Morpork to fuel their sense of righteousness in the conflict, taking on the stereotypical racially motivated phrases: "They steal our fish, they steal our trade and now they're stealing our land!" Later on, one of the incidents caused by the mounting racial tensions leads to a formation of a mob of citizens, one of whom says that people have been killed, but when asked who exactly, he fails to provide details and instead goes yet again for this rhetoric: "'[…] everyone *knows* they've been killing people! […] Who do they think they are, coming over–'[1]". Pratchett is frequently working with this idea of public mindset of general knowledge. In his interpretation, it is this unquestioning acceptance of subjective views presented as objective facts, that is the most dangerous aspect of racism. He illustrates this on the character of Sergeant Colon, one of the recurring protagonists from the City Watch

[1] Terry Pratchett, *Jingo* (London, Transworld Publishers: 1998) 127. All subsequent quotations from this book are from this edition and will be indicated in parentheses in the text by title and page.

sequence. After his very first sentence that presents his views on the Klatchians, which are full of racial stereotypes, Colon is described as being an absolvent of "the School of My Dad Always Said, the College of It Stands to Reason, and was now a post-graduate student at the University of What Some Bloke In the Pub Told Me." (*Jingo*: 40) He then presents various examples of the inferiority of the Klatchians, but when asked any questions that challenge them, he is not able to find a reasonable answer and instead deflects with yet another stereotype. In the end, his final argument turns out to be the root of racism: "[…] when all's said and done, they ain't the right colour, and there's an end to it!" (*Jingo*, 189) and when asked by his friend, Corporal Nobby Nobbs, what, then, is the right colour, he responds: "White, of course!" (*Jingo*, 189)

This exchange between Colon and Nobby is, however, immediately used by Pratchett to show the ridiculousness and short-sightedness of racism, when Nobby inquires further, pointing out that neither he nor Colon himself are exactly white. Colon's answer is potentially very disturbing – according to him, white is a "state of mind". (*Jingo*, 189) The dangers of this lie in that it is extremely open to any interpretation. Pratchett does not leave Colon with this dismissive and ambiguous attitude, as Corporal Nobbs yet again follows with many questions that are seemingly stupid or simple, but in fact challenge every bit of what Colon takes for granted. Finally, Colon's answers point out how easy it is to use racism for political goals: "You *know* we're better'n Klatchians. Otherwise, what's the point?" (*Jingo*, 190)

The city's officials have not held back with their views as well, which leads to the rise of racially motivated crimes. First, a bottle full of flammable liquid is thrown into the home of a Klatchian family that has resided in Ankh-Morpork for over ten years. The absurdity of this is accentuated when the son of the family later points out that he feels more like a Morporkian than a Klatchian, when his family is forced to return to Klatch.

This attack is also one of the almost literal incentives that help Samuel Vimes, Commander of the City Watch, to take a firmer stand against racism.

Vimes is shown as being not on the side of Ankh-Morpork, or the Klatchians, but on the side of what is right, or what he, and potentially Pratchett, perceive as right. It is the memory of the ordinary, vulnerable family of people guilty of nothing more than a different ethnicity huddling together as their home is set aflame that prompts Vimes to sternly reprimand Colon when the sergeant uses a racial slur in front of him. He is shown briefly considering letting it go for the time being, as he is supposed to lead the ceremonial Convivium in a few moments, but his sense of right is stronger. What is said to Colon is never really shown, as Vimes speaks to him behind closed doors, but what is interesting is that the sergeant seems visibly shaken as he leaves Vimes's office, despite Vimes never raising his voice to more than a "low murmuring". (*Jingo*, 69)

Vimes's sense of justice, however, is used against him by the Klatchian prince as he plots the assassination of his own brother to successfully start a war with Ankh-Morpork for a better reason than territoriality over Leshp, although laying claim to the island is indeed his real aim. He hires a Morporkian hitman to shoot his brother on his diplomatic visit, but he also tries to camouflage this attack by hiring a second man and framing the situation as if he was hired by Morporkians posing as Klatchians. He utilises the racial stereotypes, and so sand is found in the fake assassin's flat. Fred Colon, who is put on the case, once again displays the dangers of unquestioning attitude and human stupidity, when he assumes that the sand must have been brought in by the Klatchians. This fake clue is so obnoxious that Vimes even remarks: "The only things they hadn't found are the bunch of dates and the camel hidden under the pillow." (*Jingo*, 114) When he later learns the truth about the attack from 71-hour Ahmed, the Prince's brother's bodyguard and the Klatchian harsher equivalent of himself, Ahmed points out this side

of Vimes: “After the attempt on the Prince’s life, I suspected *everyone*. But you suspected only your own people. You couldn’t bring yourself to think the Klatchians might have done it. Because that’d line you up with the likes of Sergeant Colon and all the rest of the Klatchian-fags-are-made-of-camel-dung brigade.” (*Jingo*, 339-340)

Ahmed, the Prince, the Prince’s brother, and the leader of one of the Klatchian tribes called D’regs, Jabbar, have made use of the prevalent racial stereotypes for their own purposes. As they are aware of the prejudices Morporkians hold against them, it is easy for them to play along and thus utilise them. Whereas the Prince uses them to derail Vimes’s investigation and frame Ankh-Morpork as the assassins, the remaining characters, who are mostly presented as positive, use this to evaluate the others in terms of trustworthiness and open-mindedness.

The most prominent scene in terms of this evaluation is the Unseen University Convivium. It is a ceremony celebrating the relationship between the University and the city (while subtly reminding each other that it has not always been this peaceful) and Vimes is there as the official representative of the city. Because of the ceremony’s importance, every nobleman currently in the city is present, which involves Prince Khufurah, the aforementioned brother of the ruler of Klatch, and his bodyguard Ahmed. The Prince takes advantage of the racist stereotypes about Klatchians and asks every nobleman he is introduced to about the meaning of a racist slur he has been called on the street. Vimes is the only person who actually gives him an answer – the word is “towelhead” and it refers to the traditional Klatchian turban. The Prince plays dumb and asks whether it is a joke. Vimes is certain the Prince knows the answer, and even more certain that he knows that Vimes knows, too, and he chooses to be honest, telling the Prince it is an insult. Later in the same dialogue, the Prince asks Vimes about his wife, Lady Sybil Ramkin, and offers twenty camels in exchange for her. Vimes, by now, is

aware that a game is being played, and his answer is: “This is another test, isn’t it…?” (Jingo, 77) He is, therefore, aware of the rampant racism prevalent in the city, recognises the stereotype and, most importantly, refuses to take part in it.

The Prince, however, is not the only one testing Vimes and his attitude towards Klatchians. 71-hour Ahmed speaks with a heavy Klatchian accent, and his sentences are in a somewhat broken Morporkian, on top of that he chews cloves to appear even more outlandish. He offers more camels for Lady Sybil and wishes Vimes “may your *h*loins[2] be full of fruit”. (*Jingo*, 79) He is much more effective in his disguise, as is revealed later in his dialogue with Vimes – Ahmed can speak fluent Morporkian and has attended the Morporkian Assassins’ Guild school, yet Vimes was fooled both by his faked accent, and his outlandish wish of full loins, as he admits:

> Vimes took a deep breath. ‘You know, you really fooled me,’ he said. ‘“May your loins be full of fruit.” That was a good one. I really thought you were just–‘ He stopped, but Ahmed continued:
>
> ‘–just another camel-driver with a towel on his head? Oh, dear. And you’d been doing so well up to now, Sir Samuel. The Prince was very impressed. (*Jingo*, 337)

This shows that even Vimes, however much he is trying to resist stereotyping Klatchians, is not entirely immune to prejudice. When he later catches himself yet again succumbing to prejudice – being surprised to hear that Ahmed had attended the Assassins’ Guild school – he very quickly questions his own thoughts and realises the absurdity of this prejudice. His change in attitude to the more open-minded and his conscious effort to stop himself even from the tiniest signs of racism is shown clearly, adding to Pratchett’s anti-racist message.

The character of Sergeant Colon, however, is less susceptible to change. Even after being reprimanded by Vimes for his racist remarks, he still acts more surprised by

[2] In the book, a different font is used for the here italicised *h* to signify a foreign accent.

Vimes's approach, than showing any signs of change. Pratchett has often described Colon as stupid, slow, misinformed, and prone to being prejudiced, but he also shows that even people of this disposition – not inherently evil, but too stupid to think past their own bubble – are able to change their views for more open ones. The change, however, requires a stronger, more direct incentive than the small change induced in Vimes, who was already actively trying for it. Colon, therefore, is put in direct contact with the Klatchian culture.

As a part of a reconnaissance mission, carried out by the ruler of Ankh-Morpork, the Patrician Havelock Vetinari, Colon and his friend Corporal Nobbs are abducted and given orders to join said mission. Because the order came from the Patrician himself, they have no choice but to oblige, and the mission takes them to one of the big coastal Klatchian cities. There, Colon, Nobbs, and Vetinari disguise themselves as Klatchians to try to find out more about the military situation in Klatch, and Colon is therefore directly exposed to the Klatchian culture.

He quickly learns that his prejudices are ill-founded. For example, in a way typical for Pratchett, one stereotype is quickly debunked. Colon perpetuates the stereotype (which can be observed in many Czech families as relating to the Chinese) that the Klatchians burp when they have had a good meal. When he does this in a Klatchian pub, though, Pratchett follows it with "From the looks he got from everyone else, he was the only one who'd heard of this common Klatchian custom." (*Jingo*, 322) This points out the stupidity and absurdity of the stereotype, and even Colon in his obliviousness feels he has made a mistake. In the end, he is not completely open-minded, nor is he fully free of stereotypes, but he returns home with plenty of Klatchian (or at least what he perceives as Klatchian) souvenirs, and later on when on patrol with Nobbs back in Ankh-Morpork they pass the pub called The Klatchian's Head, which sports a wooden head on a pike,

they both decide to go drink elsewhere. This is particularly striking, because before their mission to Klatch, when the same characters were discussing this very pub, Colon remarked that his grand-grandfather remembered the time when it was a real head, and when Nobbs seems rather horrified by the idea of putting a human head above your pub, Colon brushes it off, saying it is just spoils of war and that it will "[t]each 'em not to do it again." (*Jingo*, 188) His change of heart is thus apparent, as this scene shows he came to view the Klatchians as truly equal human beings and not some barbarians whose lives did not matter.

There is one more aspect that is showing the different civilisations as equally human, although with a very different tone. The character of Cut-Me-Own-Throat Dibbler is what many citizens and visitors alike consider uniquely Morporkian – he is one of the first things Ahmed remembers and mentions about his education in Ankh-Morpork. Dibbler is most recognisable for his terrible "sausages inna bun" (*Jingo*, 338) and willingness to sell anything. When in Klatch, however, Colon and Nobbs encounter a man who, although undeniably Klatchian in appearance, shares with him an uncanny resemblance that is immediately recognised by Colon. It is important that Colon is the one to recognise him, as it once again places him in conflict with his views of Klatch as absolutely different from Ankh-Morpork. There is, however, yet another, rather cynical point Pratchett is making. Al-jibla, Dibbler's Klatchian doppleganger, is not the only iteration of a Dibbler-like character – in *Small Gods* there is an Omnian version, in *Interesting Times* the Agatean one, and *The Last Continent* mentions more than one other version. This goes to show a point that, while anti-racist in tone, is also very cynical about the human nature, and very typical for Pratchett – that no matter one's ethnicity or culture, one can still be a greedy crook, willing to sell anything, preferably of low quality and initial cost, to anyone for as much profit as possible.

2.1.Speciesism

As the quote from *Witches Abroad* mentioned in the previous sub-chapter shows, speciesism, rather than racism is the important social issue on Discworld. It also allows Pratchett to show the problems of racism from an almost outside point of view, because in some instances the human protagonist stands outside the racial issue, rather than being a part of it as well.

In *Thud!*, the question of race is the main drive for the plot, as centuries of racial tension between dwarfs and trolls threaten to culminate in a war that would claim as a collateral damage the city of Ankh-Morpork. The book begins with a passage from a dwarfish holy book *Gd Tak 'Gar* (*The Things Tak Wrote*). The passage tells the dwarfish myth of creation – Pratchett's dwarfs believe the world was written by Tak. It is remarkably similar to some of the Native American myths. According to the dwarfish lore, Tak wrote five things: himself, the Laws, the World, a cave, and a geode. From said geode, three races were born: the dwarfs, the humans, and the trolls. The humans left the cave, did not find the Laws, and grew too tall. The dwarfs remained in the cave, found the Laws and remained the right height. The trolls, however, are described as "some of the living spirit of Tak [that] was trapped in the broken stone egg, and it became the first troll, wandering the world unbidden and unwanted, without soul or purpose, learning or understanding[3]". This very beginning shows that there is a dwarfish holy text, which many consider the proper teaching of a sense of dwarfishness, that not only paints dwarfs as the superior race, but also depicts trolls as the lowest of low, worthy only of contempt, and what is even more dangerous, one of the dwarf religious leaders called grags,

[3] Terry Pratchett, *Thud!* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2006) preface. All subsequent quotations from this book are from this edition and will be indicated in parentheses in the text by title and page.

Hamcrusher, is actively preaching against trolls, even advocating killing them: “To kill the troll is no murder. At its very worst, it is an act of charity.” (*Thud!*, 38)

The grags themselves are the book’s main antagonists. What makes Vines pursue them is a murder, first of Hamcrusher himself, then later it is discovered they had some of their own workers killed. The reason for those second murders was a discovery of an ancient mechanism called a Device, or precisely in this case a Cube, which is capable of recording and keeping sounds for an indefinite period of time. The Cube, in this case, holds records that prove that the ancient dwarf-troll animosity was meant to come to an end during an event known as the Battle of Koom Valley, which, instead, became a monument to it. The grags were searching for the Cube, so that they can destroy it and maintain the *status quo*.

The grags are an especially dangerous group, because whereas in the case of the Klatchians in *Jingo*, the hate-speech was coming from people of the same social status, therefore leaving room for those less susceptible to peer pressure, or more open, to form their own judgments, in the case of the dwarf community, the grags hold a position far above (or, from the dwarfish point of view, below) the rest of the dwarfs. They vow never to leave the darkness of the underground, and when they have to travel, they keep their carriages light-proof, and they interpret the holy texts, give blessings, and make decisions that can shape the way the dwarfish culture will take. When they come to Ankh-Morpork in search for the Cube, many of the Ankh-Morpork dwarfs, who until then were model citizens, are reminded of how far from the mines they are, and the grags encourage this feeling of unwanted distance, taking advantage of it and seizing power over religion and, by extent, the dwarfs themselves. The city dwarfs then feel compelled to come to them for guidance, to “*help [them] stay a dwarf*”. (*Thud!*, 77, Pratchett’s cursive)

In this, Pratchett shows the danger of a figure of authority promoting hate towards any other ethnicity or, in this case, race. The racial issue becomes much harder to dismiss for a regular dwarf when it comes from someone traditionally respected as a source of authority and truth, than if it was merely a fellow dwarf. Pratchett notes that "[y]oung dwarfs listened to [Hamcrusher]" (*Thud!*, 37), which emphasises this very problem – the younger dwarfs are taught to respect their elders, and above all to listen to the grags. They are, therefore, indoctrinated from a young age to hate the trolls and actively seek to harm them.

Pratchett, however, offers a rather hopeful view on the future. In contrast to the indoctrinated dwarfs following the grags, and the trolls hot-headedly responding with violence, over the course of the book Vimes, who is once more the protagonist, finds his way into a board game club. The board game played there is the eponymous Thud, a game meant to represent the Battle of Koom Valley. There, Vimes meets Mr Shine, a diamond troll who, due to being a diamond, is automatically the king of all trolls. Unlike the grags, however, Mr Shine is progressive and interested in working towards a more inclusive society. The beginnings of this society can be seen in the board game club: humans, dwarfs, and trolls alike are peacefully playing the game that was meant to represent the ages-old hatred between dwarfs and trolls, and instead turning it into an opportunity for making friendships and exploring each other's cultures. Mr Shine tells Vimes to look around and note some interesting points several times. The first thing Vimes notices is that everyone else in the club is young. This helps to show the possibility of a more understanding future – Pratchett posits that it is chiefly the younger generation that holds the power to reshape the society and possibly even the views of their elders. Thud being a strategic game not unlike chess, it also goes to show that the senseless prejudices of race

can be put aside if one only thinks, something that has been at the centre of Pratchett's writing since the beginning – the biggest villain being human (or dwarfish) stupidity.

The second times Vimes is prompted by Mr Shine to look around he spots a troll wearing a troll-sized dwarf helmet and drinking out of a horn, which is a dwarf custom. Mr Shine then tells him about other trolls adopting parts of dwarfish culture and vice versa, some even being better at playing the other's side in Thud, finishing with:

> To study the enemy you have to get under his skin. When you're under his skin you start to see the world through his eyes. […] And thus we wear down mountains. Water dripping on a stone, dissolving and removing. Changing the shape of the world, one drop at a time. (*Thud!*, 261-262)

This not only shows Pratchett's belief that understanding each other's differences is the key to a more progressive situation, but also refers directly to the end of the novel, where Vimes finds the place the Cube's message originated from. It is an underground cave in the Koom Valley, where the leaders of the opposing armies, the Old Troll and B'hrian Bloodaxe, were swept by a flood. Both of those legendary leaders are found cemented in stalagmites, sitting over a crude improvised Thud board. Neither of them was winning and it seemed they both were playing as the other's race. As the Cube later makes clear, the original purpose of the Koom Valley meeting was a peace treaty, not a battle, but the weather caused both armies to perish. Th Cube also contains the same passage from *The Things Tak Wrote*, except here the part depicting the creation of the trolls is different: "Then Tak looked upon the stone and it was trying to come alive, and Tak smiled and wrote: 'All things strive'. […] And for the service the stone had given he fashioned it into the first Troll and delighted in the life that came unbidden." (*Thud!,* 418)

This is a drastic change from the quote at the beginning, where the part about trolls is noted to appear to have been written later and by a different hand. Here it shows that even the things that can be considered given or certain, may not have always been so, and also the danger of dogmatism and religion in the issue of race. All the racial tensions were

caused by someone deliberately changing the meaning the holiest of dwarf texts, and with the discovery of this new one, along with the testimonies of the Old Troll and Bloodaxe, comes the promise of another change, this time a positive one. The tradition many of the dwarfs and trolls have called upon when excusing the many crimes committed against each other is revealed to be based on a lie, on a fabrication intended to stir hatred between the two races. Pratchett, therefore, warns against blind acceptance of traditional values for the tradition's sake only, and against those using tradition as their main argument.

With Vimes as his hero, Pratchett once again does not only place the issue of racism at the centre of his book, but also in Vimes's character. As before with the Klatchians, Vimes is keen on being as fair and just as possible, viewing everyone not as humans, dwarfs, trolls, or any other race, but first and foremost as Ankh-Morpork citizens. He investigates the murder of Hamcrusher in relation to Morporkian law, although some of the grags and their advisors suggest the dwarf law may have a different view on the situation, and he does not accept all the clues as given, being well aware of criminals clever enough to leave behind fake ones. That is why he insists on investigating even after there is proof a troll was present at the place of the murder, because he does not want to give in to the stereotype the grags are perpetuating. He, however, still makes some mistakes, oversights, or is being prejudiced.

One example is when Vimes, angry after his home was attacked by some fanatic dwarfs, confiscates the weapons of a dwarf delegation to him, on the sheer ground of them being dwarfs as well. Weapons are a crucial part of dwarfish culture on Discworld, so this order is a drastic violation of their custom. Vimes immediately recognises this and backs down a little by letting the dwarfs keep their axes, although it is still very strict. Although his behaviour can be attributed to his house being attacked by someone he believes to be tied to this group of dwarfs, and Vimes's belief they came to the Watch to

complain about his unknowingly breaking some code of theirs, it is still harsh and disrespectful – although in Vimes's case it is not racially motivated, because he would probably attempt to hurt anyone treating him in this way, regardless of race, he uses racial and cultural aspects to harm them. However, he very quickly learns about his grave mistake, as the dwarfs not only came to help, but one of them has actually lost a son to the grags' scheme. This puts Vimes out of his anger and helps him recognise the dwarfs once more as less of "community leaders" and more of citizens that have been wronged.

Vimes's occasional insensitivity towards other races does not stop at dwarfs, however. Before Vimes goes to meet with Mr Shine in the board game club, he tries to find out about his whereabouts from Brick, a young troll left at the Watch headquarters by Mr Shine himself. This prompts Sergeant Detritus, a troll, to lash out at Vimes, accusing him of favouritism towards dwarfs: "Wi' the dwarfs you have pussy feet, must not upset 'em, oh no, but what you do if dey was trolls, eh? Kick down der door, no problem!" (*Thud!*, 247) Because Detritus has never been this angry at Vimes, he immediately realizes his mistake and apologises. When it is revealed that Mr Shine actually does want Vimes to find him, Vimes asks Detritus if he should bring anything, inquiring about the troll custom when meeting someone important. Detritus responds: "No […] but maybe dere's some finkin' you could leave behind." (*Thud!*, 249) Pratchett thus once again shows that even the protagonist, someone trying to be just and fair, can be prejudiced or act in a way that is harmful towards a different culture. He never lets Vimes get away with it completely, though, as with the dwarfs he is put back by the news of one of the victims being the son of those he's trying to harm, leaving him with a cold feeling, and in the case of the trolls the backlash of Detritus, which does not let him be inconsiderate anymore and makes him think more of his actions and their consequences.

At the board game club, when Vimes finds out that because Mr Shine is a diamond, he is automatically the troll king, he asks if Mr Shine could stop the war by just ordering it. Mr Shine tells Vimes:

> You really know very little about us, Mr Vimes. You see us down on the plains, shambling around *talkin' like dis.* You don't know about the history chant, or the Long Dance, or stone music. You see the hunched troll, dragging his club. That's what the dwarfs did for us, long time ago. They turned us, in your minds, into sad, brainless monsters. (*Thud!*, 257)

Vimes tries to defend himself with a rhetoric not dissimilar to that used on Earth in similar situations: "Detritus is one of my best officers!" (*Thud!*, 257) This remark is followed only by silence and then a change of topic, which can be seen as a response in itself.

Throughout the whole book, Vimes is yet again taught to see that even he can make prejudiced mistakes, to learn from them, and to learn more about other cultures. Pratchett never makes his behaviour in these situations seem acceptable, although he does sometimes offer a partial excuse for the harsher cases, as with the dwarfs and their weapons. He illustrates that even if one tries to be open towards other cultures and ethnicities, there is still the possibility of a mistake or even an intentional breach of the boundaries, and that one should never stop educating oneself about other cultures and ethnicities in order to increase understanding.

2.2. Vitalism

Vitalism is an issue that is seldom at the centre of attention in the *Discworld* books. It is a term describing discrimination against the undead, which are a very small minority in Ankh-Morpork, where this issue is usually encountered, but make up a majority of the inhabitants of the country of Uberwald. There are four major types of the undead on Discworld: vampires, werewolves, zombies, and Igors, a race of servants or lab assistants reminiscent of the many assistants of mad scientists in horror literature. The prejudices against Igors are shown very rarely – as in *Monstrous regiment*, where Corporal Strappi

protests against one Igor enlisting in the army, using many stories about the dreadful things they do as his main argument. This is met with Igor being completely unfazed, dismissing all the stories as "vile calumnieth[4]", and Sergeant Jackrum enlisting him anyway, without giving Strappi much notice. It is also worth noting that Strappi is portrayed as a stupid, prejudiced man with no courage or moral values, therefore by having this character argument against other species in this way, Pratchett effectively makes his own argument about the nature of such prejudice once again.

When it comes to zombies, Pratchett is usually treating them more with humour than anything else. It seems that to many characters zombies are simply people, except lacking life, but still easy to treat almost as regular people. There are virtually no real issues with zombies depicted, save for one undertaker being upset about Reg Shoe, a zombie constable of the Watch, although that is mostly because of Reg's wandering on and off the graveyard. Reg Shoe himself is, when it comes to the undead, usually portrayed as a somewhat comical character. He joins the Watch because he claims the policemen were harassing some bogeymen, but then all the complaints to the Watch from the undead increase, and all are against Reg Shoe. He is very vocal in fighting for the rights of the undead, but he usually misjudges the situation and forces his fellow community members into awkward situations.

The issue of vampires and werewolves is a more complicated one, especially because of their history of hunting and killing humans. Because werewolves are not common outside the borders of Uberwald, there is little to no discrimination towards them shown in the books, and all the issues Angua, a werewolf officer of the Watch, faces, stem from her trying to adjust in a predominantly human city, her being a werewolf being

[4] Terry Pratchett, *Monstrous Regiment* (London, Transworld Publishers: 2004) 33. All subsequent quotations from this book are from this edition and will be indicated in parentheses in the text by title and page.

unknown to most citizens. The vampires, while also adjusting to the coexistence with humans, mainly by forming the Uberwald League of Temperance, are much more common outside of Uberwald, thus facing more discrimination. In *Monstrous Regiment*, when the vampire Maladict also wishes to enlist in the army, it is once again Corporal Strappi who protests, listing possible harms the vampire could inflict on him. This time he is stopped by Jackrum, who points out Strappi's stupidity and prejudice by retorting to his worrying about Maladict wanting to suck his blood: "Well, he'll just have to wait until Private Igor's finished looking for your brain, won't he?" (*Monstrous Regiment*, 36)

It is not always stupid, malevolent characters like Strappi who are shown being prejudiced towards vampires. Samuel Vimes is, at the beginning of *Thud!*, forced to enlist a vampire in the Watch, and his dislike is shown throughout the whole beginning. First he refuses to shake hands with the President of the Ankh-Morpork Mission of the League, later he arguments strongly against a vampire in the Watch, trying to pull every logical argument he can think of. Deep down, though, he knows the real reason, as is clearly stated to the reader as well: "[…] you hate bloody vampires. No messing about, no dissembling, no weasel words about 'the public won't stand for it' or 'it's not the right time'. *You* hate bloody vampires and it's *your* bloody Watch." (*Thud!*, 22, Pratchett's italics) No context is given for his dislike, and he himself realises it is not rational and accepts a vampire named Sally in the Watch. Throughout the book, Vimes is made to recognise Sally's worth as a police officer and his view on her is slowly changed from a hated vampire to simply a respected police officer. When at the end he finds out she is working for the Low King of the dwarfs, he does not take this chance to fire her, but instead makes it clear to her he considers her a police officer first and foremost now.[5]

[5] Cf. Mel Gibson, "'There Is No Race So Wretched That There Is Not Something Out There That Cares for Them': Multiculturalism, Understanding, Empathy and Prejudice in Discworld", ed. Marion Rana, *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: From Giant Turtles to Small Gods,* ed. Marion Rana (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) 67.

3. Religion

Terry Pratchett's relationship with religion was a complicated one. Marc Burrows notes in his biography of Pratchett that he was raised a member of the Church of England, but "only because most people were[1]", which Pratchett himself mentions in his article "The God Moment". Therein Pratchett states that he was never a believer, and by no means a real Christian: "I don't believe, I never have, not in big beards in the sky[2]". But what is important is, that despite this rather dismissive approach he notes the positive values of Christianity such as reason, kindness, and decency and their prominence in the life of the Pratchett family. He, however, notes that the "right actions were taught by daily example.[3]"

It is this mindset that is crucial for Pratchett's *Discworld* novel *Small Gods*, which is concerned mostly with religion, both in the spiritual sense, and in the sense of an established institution. Its main themes are the importance of religion for humans, but also the dangers of institutionalised religion and blind faith.

Belief stands at the centre of the novel. It is in various forms the driving force behind most of the actions both of the protagonists and of the book's villain. The book essentially has two protagonists, the Omnian novice Brutha, and his god Om, who is however currently stuck in the shape of a tortoise, and a villain named Vorbis, who is the head of the Omnian Quisition, an organisation mirroring the real-world Spanish Inquisition. Each of the characters has a different relationship to belief and religion, which is used by Pratchett to illustrate his opinions on institutionalised religion, faith, and the relationship between gods and humans.

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[1] Marc Burrows, *The Magic Of Terry Pratchett* (Barteley: Pen & Sword Books, 2020) 4.
[2] Terry Pratchett, "The God Moment", *A Slip of the Keyboard* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2015) 262.
[3] Terry Pratchett, "The God Moment", *A Slip of the Keyboard* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2015) 262.

The god Om is held by the Omnians to be the only god, wielding titles such as the Great God, and is said by them to be omnipotent, omnipresent, omnicognisant (Pratchett's version of omniscient), with many references made to him smiting any non-believers. As vast as the Omnian Empire is, with its thousands of supposedly devout believers, Om finds himself almost powerless after attempting to walk on the Discworld in the shape of either a bull or a swan, and instead spending three years as a tortoise with no recollection of being a god.

Here Pratchett introduces a concept of god-believer relationship rather unique for the *Discworld*: "what gods need is belief, and what humans want is gods[4]". The way faith operates on Discworld is twofold: humans need gods for guidance, stability, or certainty, but on the other hand, gods need humans as a form of spiritual sustenance. With this concept, Pratchett gives more power in the hands of the people, as they may worship the gods and obey their commandments, but it is ultimately the people who create the gods and even give them shape and purpose. This is illustrated, with a rather comedic effect, on the Ephebian goddess of wisdom, Patina (a reference to the Greek goddess Athena), whose statue was meant to be holding an owl, but due to the sculptor's incompetence ended up holding a penguin, and because it is humans who give the gods their shape, the actual goddess now indeed has a penguin.

By this system of the number of believers being equal to the god's might, Om should be amongst the most powerful of gods, yet he finds himself unable to change shape back from the old, one-eyed tortoise, and every single of his curses or orders is virtually powerless. He realises quite early on in the novel that this is because even though he has a great number of devout followers and in Omnia the belief in Om is obligatory and heavily enforced by the Quisition, in reality he only has one believer.

[4] Terry Pratchett, *Small Gods* (London: Transworld Publishers, 1993) 11. All subsequent quotations from this book are from this edition and will be indicated in parentheses in the text by title and page.

This paradoxical situation is caused by the Church of Om, and more specifically by Deacon Vorbis, the head of the Quisition. Vorbis uses the religion as a tool for his own goals, which are mostly the usurpation of more power and the expansion of Omnia under his rule. By enforcing the belief in Om and the following of every rule the Church devises, Vorbis created a deeply religious country which, instead of the god, believes in the punishment, be it divine or earthly. The difference between the divine and earthly is blurred, because the Quisition is viewed as carrying out the will of the god, and therefore anything they do is in perfect accordance with the god's wishes. When Om, terrified after seeing the tortured people in the cellars of the Quisition asks Brutha about the possibility of the exquisitors (a more dangerous branch of the Quisition, responsible for the arrangement of everything the Quisition does) being wrong, Brutha replies: "They can't be wrong […] They are guided by the hand of… by your hand… your front leg… I mean, your claw". (*Small Gods*, 89) This belief in the Church's direct relationship with the god, and the cruel effectiveness of the Quisition are what leads directly to Om's decline. Brutha in the second half of the book, when he sees the rift between what the Church is teaching and what the actual god thinks and says, points out what the problem of the loss of faith lies in:

> 'You could have helped people,' said Brutha. 'But all you did was stamp around and roar and try to make people afraid. Like… like a man hitting a donkey with a stick. But people like Vorbis made the stick so good, that's all the donkey ends up believing in.' (*Small Gods*, 278)

Vorbis's danger lies in two key factors. The first one is his personality, which is both strong and threatening at the same time. Although his first description is concerned with his appearance (tall, with almost completely black eyes, and entirely bald), the description soon turns towards his personality: "He didn't menace. He never threatened. He just gave everyone the feeling that his personal space radiated several metres from his body, and that anyone approaching Vorbis was intruding on something important." (*Small Gods*,

17) It is this strength of personality that makes Vorbis an exceptionally dangerous individual, because as a holder of a rather powerful position in the Church, he is able to shape the way the country of Omnia is going, and the power the Church itself is holding over the people. Pratchett, therefore, underlines the danger inherent to any institution relying on charisma and strength of leadership, which is the possibility of a puppet regime or a cult of personality. The power Vorbis holds becomes clear when Om calls to Brutha, a moment which is both comical and unsettling: "It wasn't Vorbis, it was only God". (*Small Gods*, 130)

The second factor contributing to Vorbis's power and dangerousness is his own mind. It is described by Om as a "steel ball of a mind" (*Small Gods*, 89) and something "impenetrable". (*Small Gods*, 115) Vorbis is absolutely convinced of his own truth, to the extent that his mind is untouchable by any god, which becomes apparent when he and Brutha are stranded in a desert and swarms of small gods try every day to take Brutha's belief for themselves. When Om does not want to give his only true believer up, he offers them Vorbis instead, but the gods reject him, saying his mind is "dull, hard, enclosed, shut-in". (*Small Gods*, 264) This is particularly interesting because the small gods, i.e. gods that have no believers but theoretically a potential to gain some, are shown to be rather desperate for possible followers, but Vorbis's mind offers them no chance to get the belief they need.

From this mindset of Vorbis arises a question which Brutha asks himself when he realises he is the only true believer in Om: "Who did Vorbis talk to when he prayed?" (*Small Gods*, 202) An answer presents itself later, as the books conclusion draws near. All Vorbis can hear in his mind is the echo of his own thoughts and thus he is effectively talking to himself all the time. This, along with the previously mentioned line when Brutha is called by Om, creates the image of a man believing himself to be as close to

god as possible, or even considering himself above his god because he does not truly believe in him, and using religion as a mere tool for his own advantage.

This culminates when Vorbis is chosen as the eight Prophet of Omnianism. This does not strike anyone in Omnia as surprising, because Vorbis was rumoured to be the obvious choice right at the beginning of the book, but it shows how much power Vorbis holds and how disconnected the Church is from their own god. The Prophet is taken to be someone Om spoke to and gave his commandments to, but it has been previously established that Vorbis is utterly unable to hear any voice in his head except his own. Even more ironically, he is named as the Prophet after his return from the desert, where he is said to have saved Brutha from dying, even though the truth is the exact opposite. Brutha is, furthermore, the only one the god Om speaks to and therefore should be chosen as the Prophet. However, because the Church has long lost any real connection with Om, the truth has no real meaning, because, as Vorbis points out, what he calls the "*fundamental* truth" (*Small Gods*, 195, Pratchett's italics) is essentially what the Church says or, in his eyes, needs.

This greater importance of the Church over the god himself is discussed between Om and Brutha after they have managed to talk to some Ephebian philosophers about the nature of gods and borrowed a book from the Ephebian library, a place which once again draws attention to the dogmatism of the Church – while in Ephebe, a country resembling ancient Greece, the library contains hundreds of books on various topics, in Omnia the library contains a single book, the Omnian equivalent of the Bible, thus pointing out the censure and uncritically blind faith of the Church. Om then finds a passage in a book by a philosopher called Abraxas, who is well-known for his atheism. The book likens the god to a shellfish which builds a shell of the Church around itself. Initially the shell is for protection, i.e. securing the belief in the god, but Om expands on this metaphor: "It makes

a bigger and bigger shell until it can't move around anymore, and so it dies." (*Small Gods*, 191) It is what happens to the god Nuggan, the only god of Borogravia, in *Monstrous Regiment*, and it is what almost what happens to Om – he is on the brink of inexistence while the Church gets stronger and stronger.

Ultimately the book climaxes with a clash between this empty religion, serving only the purpose of giving more power to the clergy over the believers, and a true belief, giving a sense of certainty to the believer. As Vorbis is to be inaugurated as the Prophet, and Brutha is chained to a metal turtle which is slowly being heated as a way of public execution, Vorbis takes time to attempt to mock Brutha, being absolutely sure of his power. Brutha, however, being able to hear the voice of the god, knows Om is getting near and utilises this to at least temporarily channel some real belief in the god. It is when Vorbis is at his most powerful when he is hit and killed by a falling turtle – the god Om – which leads directly to a surge of belief in the god and his reinstatement to full power. Vobis is therefore directly killed by the god he has abandoned in pursuit of his own agenda for which he, however, still uses said god, at the moment when he almost triumphs, which would cause the god himself to be lost.

Even though Vorbis is killed by Om, it is Brutha who is responsible not only for this victory of true faith over religion used for personal gain, but also for the change of the Omnian religion and its god. Brutha begins in the story as a very simple boy driven mainly by his faith in Om, but he is soon faced with the reality of his religion, having to come to terms with both Vorbis's despotism and Om's detachment from his followers. Brutha's biggest strength lies ultimately in his humanity, which is illustrated in the book several times. The first instance comes when he cares for Om despite not fully believing him to be his god – he is not comfortable with the mental picture of a tortoise being cooked alive and so he saves Om from the kitchen. Although this act may also have been

motivated by his curiosity, he does not immediately use this opportunity to ask for answers in exchange for saving Om's life. Vorbis, in contrast, upon meeting Om the tortoise, turns him on his back and wedges a few stones under his shell for the sole purpose of watching what happens to the tortoise when it is left in the scorching sun.

Brutha's humanity is even more visible in relation to Vorbis. Even after he is faced with the man's cruelty and can see how far Vorbis is willing to go to achieve his goals, when Vorbis is left unconscious after a shipwreck, Brutha saves him and refuses to heed Om's orders to leave him to die and later to use him as bait for a hungry desert lion. When, at the end, Brutha sees Vorbis before the desert of the afterlife, paralysed in fear of having to cross it on his own, he steps to help him. Death reminds him of all the terrible things Vorbis has done, and Brutha replies: "Yes. I know. He's Vorbis […] But I'm me." (*Small Gods*, 380)

It is this compassion of Brutha's that leads to Om changing his views. In the beginning Om behaves as a proud god, despite being stuck in the body of a tortoise. But the prolonged contact with Brutha slowly changes his mindset, which he notes when he is trying to reason with the Queen of the Sea. In the first half of the book, he makes a deal with the sea goddess to spare the ship Brutha is travelling on, but when the Queen warns him the price will be high, Om assures her it will be paid. He assumes this means that some cities will get flooded by the sea and considers it insignificant – after all, he is a god whose follower just got saved. But towards the end of the book, when he realises the price to be paid is a small boat containing two philosophers and a soldier, he tries to get the Queen of the Sea to spare them. He says it does not seem fair, and upon being explained to what the word means, the Sea Queen replies: "Sounds like a human idea to me." (*Small Gods*, 233) When Om tries to argue the humans in the boat did nothing to deserve to die at her hands, the Sea Queen seems shocked at this way of thinking: "'*Deserve*? They're

human. What's deserve got to do with it?' Om had to concede this. He wasn't thinking like a god." (*Small Gods*, 234)

This passage shows that spending some time in the proximity of someone embodying some of the human virtues such as compassion is enough to change the mindset of a god who was initially not too keen on such concepts. This later becomes even more apparent when Om returns to his full power but is stopped from first smiting the unbelievers and then destroying the armies that came to destroy Omnia after it tried to take over Ephebe. The god, who is at his strongest and fully capable of very mighty deeds, is stopped by a single, virtually powerless human because Om has learned to realise that what seems like weakness is actually a virtue, whereas strength may not always be, as Brutha points out: "Deal with me in the weakness. Or one day you'll have to bargain with someone in a position of strength. The world changes." (*Small Gods*, 349) Brutha, therefore, is ultimately victorious not by strength, by divine help, or, on the contrary, by rejecting religion, but by remaining true to his own beliefs and principles.

Pratchett, despite his cynicism and often humorous take on religion, does not ultimately reject religion. It is made clear several times in the book that religion and strength of faith can help one get through many perils, and Pratchett notes: "I think [religion] has some purpose in our evolution[5]". He, however, goes to great lengths to place most of the power over the shape of the world and society into the hands of the people, rather than a god. This is done both in cases of positive and negative impact. In the case of Vorbis, despite him claiming to be following the word of god, it is shown that Vorbis has no connection with the god, and that such connection is even almost impossible. This, therefore, leaves all his terrible actions as his own, rather than manifestations of any greater power. Vorbis is a direct manifestation of Pratchett's belief

[5] Terry Pratchett, "The God Moment", *A Slip of the Keyboard* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2015) 262.

that most wars are "manifestly done by mad, manipulative, power-hungry men who cloak their ambition in God.[6]" In this, Pratchett shows that religion is easily used for other purposes as a great manipulative tool, especially in the context of an institution.

With Brutha, while his connection with the god is well-established, it is Brutha's actions that shape the narrative, and his own strength of character that make the climax of the book and later the reinvention of Omnia possible. Brutha echoes Pratchett's reminiscences about religious practices in his family when he was a child: "Belief was never mentioned at home, but right actions were taught by daily example.[7]" In the end, Brutha is being kind and compassionate not because his religion tells him to, but because he believes it is the right thing to do, and the right thing for the religion to preach. With this approach, in contrast to that in the case of Vorbis, Pratchett argues that religion can be used as a way to a kinder society, if in the hands of kind people who truly believe and do not want to use their religion as a tool.

In both cases, however, it is the people who are acting and bringing about change, for better or for worse. Religion is used more like a way of channelling one's ability, be it for manipulation of kindness. Even though gods are very much real on the Discworld, it is always people who remain in Pratchett's focus, and who hold the power to shape both the world and the gods themselves.

3.1. Death

While Death as a character has a strong relationship with human belief as well, he is decidedly not in the centre of any religion depicted in the *Discworld* series, and therefore stands outside the discussion about religion. However, the idea of death and the possibility of an afterlife is central to many religions in the real world, and those are echoed by the

[6] Terry Pratchett, "The God Moment", *A Slip of the Keyboard* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2015) 262.
[7] Terry Pratchett, "The God Moment", *A Slip of the Keyboard* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2015) 262.

religions of the Discworld. Even here the power of the human belief plays a strong role, because the shape of one's afterlife is that of what he or she believed in.

In *Small Gods*, this takes on another layer. Not only is the afterlife itself shaped according to one's faith (e.g. Valhalla or a reimagining of the Muslim paradise), but even the specifics of said afterlife are influenced by one's beliefs.

Over the course of the book, four characters are shown dying and entering the Omnian afterlife. It is a vast desert that one has to cross in order to get to the afterlife itself. The way the characters handle this task directly echoes the way they lived and, more importantly, thought.

The first one to reach the desert is General Fri'it, who was killed by Vorbis and his men for plotting to kill Vorbis. When Fri'it realises he has died and has arrived at the desert o the afterlife, he thinks to himself:

> It was just you, and what you believed.
>
> What have I always believed?
>
> That on the whole, and by and large, if a man lived properly, not according to what any priests said, but according to what seemed decent and honest *inside*, then it would, at the end, more or less, turn out all right.
>
> You couldn't get that on a banner. But the desert looked better already. (*Small Gods*, 101)

This part sums up Pratchett's general stance towards religion. The General was not a firm believer, quite the contrary – he sought to undermine the Omnian Church and to spread the word of what he believed was the truth, which was also contradicting many of the Omnian doctrines. He had, however, lived as well as he could, and to stay true to his values, and the desert of the afterlife reflects that. It is, therefore, once more an example of how the people in Pratchett's books shape their destiny regardless of the religion involved.

The second one to die is Private Ichlos, killed by his own superior officer, Sergeant Simony, to be stopped from killing the philosopher Dydactilos instrumental for the

revolution against the Church. His death is significant not only because Pratchett uses it to give one more example of the afterlife, but also because this very minor character is given his own closure, reminding the reader that it is also a human being whose story has now ended. Ichlos is described as being "less sophisticated" (*Small Gods*, 207) than Fri'it, and having an advantage: "He'd had even less religion than the general." (*Small Gods*, 207) He faces the desert not only with a certain level of optimism, as Fri'it did, but genuinely looking forward to perhaps meeting some of his old friends along the way. His lesser amount of religiousness, therefore, helps him to shape the afterlife even more in his favour and to regard the desert as little more than an ordinary part of death.

Before Brutha and Vorbis arrive at the desert, there is one more instance where the worlds of the living and the dead collide. This time, however, it is not only a singular character, but an entire ship that has been destroyed due to Vorbis's ruthless orders. The crew is a group of possibly the least religious characters to die in the book, with the exception of Vorbis, whose relationship to religion is, however, more complicated. When the sailors die, they also enter the world of souls where Death speaks to them, but in their case, there is no desert. Instead, there is a sea which they are rather free to explore. The way their belief shapes their afterlife is shown clearly on several examples. Firstly, their ship is also present in this ghost world, which stems from the belief of many sailors that ships themselves have a soul. There is also the instance of dolphin ghosts, which goes hand in hand with a superstition of the sailors depicted earlier in the book, relating to porpoises, and a real-world myth about the souls of the drowned turning into dolphins and other sea mammals. Most importantly, though, there is the absence of the Omnian desert of the afterlife, and the presence of choice between other afterlives. The sailors recall two other possible afterlives they have heard of, one reminiscent of Valhalla, and the Klatchian paradise, which is inspired by some accounts of Jannah, the Muslim

paradise. As the sailors think about those alternative afterlives, they think that it may not be possible to enter those, as they are for the followers of different religions, but also about the unfairness of their religion being oppressive while they are alive, and then offering little to no reward afterwards. With that, they set off in search of a different afterlife. This is the most literal case of taking matters into one's own hands, when it comes to death in *Small Gods*. Dissatisfied with their religion, the sailors choose to find their own way after death, and even though the scene ends with them sailing on, possibly dooming themselves to sailing as such forever, they seem to prefer the eternal voyage to the afterlife of Omnianism.

Vorbis's and Brutha's deaths have been mentioned above. Vorbis, however disconnected from his religion he is, still believes in the afterlife, and as the book notes: "The desert was what you believed." (*Small Gods*, 354) As the afterlife is meant to echo one's beliefs and worldviews, Vorbis's self-isolation becomes his ultimate undoing, as he is forced to walk the desert utterly alone, because nothing else but himself could ever enter his mind. He is therefore barred from making any shaping decisions, as he is locked inside his own head and has no one and nothing else to help him cross the desert. That is, until Brutha dies as well and takes pity on him, allowing his compassion to shape his way once again, as it did during many of the events of the book. Brutha is reminded by Death of Vorbis's monstrosity, and even half-urged not to help him, but he makes a choice and shapes the experience of the afterlife not only for himself, but for Vorbis as well.

4. Feminism

As Peter Hunt notes in the introductory chapter to *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* that "[t]here is, however, one area of formulaic writing that is increasingly difficult to justify" and that "[t]he hero tale, still the staple of contemporary fantasy, has been essentially a male preserve[1]". He also quotes Ursula K. Le Guin as stating that "[a]uthority is male.[2]" Pratchett, however, takes this supposed fact, and once more subverts it to point out not only its questionability in the genre, but also the real-life sexism, its manifestations and effects.

The two novels considered in this chapter allude to the topic already by their titles. The earlier *Equal Rites*, with its homophonic wordplay, suggests an initial inequality, the levelling of which will be the focal point of the novel. The later, and possibly more feministic *Monstrous Regiment* is a direct reference to the 16th century text by John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women*, which argued against female rulers, the concerns of which Pratchett reverses to an extreme. While *Equal Rites* deals with feminism and sexism with a more genre-based approach, and will be discussed in a later sub-chapter, *Monstrous Regiment* concerns mostly the personal contact with sexism against women.

The protagonist of the book, a young girl named Polly Perks, enlists in the army of her country, Borogravia, with the aim of finding her brother. Borogravia is a deeply religious country, and as such is also very strict about its traditions. Those are mostly aimed against women, and so, while it is partially from love to her brother that Polly decides to join the war, it is also from a merely practical point of view. In Borogravia, women can own hardly any property, therefore Polly hopes that by finding her brother,

[1] Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* (London: A&C Black, 2004) 3.
[2] Ursula K. Le Guin, quoted in Hunt and Lentz 2003, 3.

she effectively gets to keep her family inn – her brother would be the owner, but in reality she would run everything. Polly is therefore motivated to join in a life-threatening conflict, where the odds of her success are slim while the odds of her death are alarmingly high, because the patriarchal society of her country leaves her no other choice if she wants to keep some semblance of independence and freedom – her other choice for keeping the inn would be marriage, which she does not consider a viable prospect.

Because of the strict Borogravian rules, Polly has to enlist in disguise as a boy. On the first few pages, she notes several things to learn if one is to pass for a boy, some of those showing the negative effect masculinity can have if overdone, like "never hug anyone and, if you meet a friend, punch them," (*Monstrous Regiment*, 12) or the way young men try to look tough both for appearance's sake, and for protection.

Polly, however, does not stop encountering sexism as soon as she is in disguise. The book is full of small lines that, nevertheless, point out the everyday sexism not so far from that of the real world. She is sure that when attempting to enlist, she would not be recognised, because the men do not notice the girl who served them, but also that the corporal "*had* tried to pinch her bottom, but probably out of habit," (*Monstrous Regiment*, 14) a rather disturbing line, because it suggests that harassing waitresses (or women in general) is a normal, daily occurrence.

It is, however, not a coincidence that the character who attempts to pinch Polly is Corporal Strappi, one of the closest things the book has to a villain. He is a "political", a man set up to spy on his fellow soldiers, and throughout the books he commits many despicable acts. Therefore, putting this action in the hands of the Corporal, Pratchett subtly denounces it as immoral.

Another instance when Polly encounters someone disrespecting her boundaries because she is a woman is when the inn where her regiment is staying is being searched

by enemy soldiers. They are looking for her regiment, being tipped off by Strappi (one of the cases Pratchett shows Strappi's immorality). To avoid being discovered, Polly dresses up as a barmaid and acts scared and abandoned. The captain of the Zlobenian platoon at first tries to flirt with her, in a rather aggressive way, trying to simultaneously scare her into revealing the whereabouts of her regiment. Both the captain and the sergeant of the enemy squad then try to force themselves on Polly. While the sergeant is taken down immediately by a barman's cudgel that Polly finds under the bar (being a skilled barmaid), the captain still refuses to take the situation seriously, thinking himself superior to the girl: "he hadn't drawn his sword, and he was *laughing*". (*Monstrous Regiment*, 126, Pratchett's italics) That proves an underestimation on his side, as Polly knees him in the groin, incapacitating him for the rest of the skirmish, which leads to the capture of his entire squad. This is even more poignant, as the captain calls Polly "girl" in a condescending manner right before being kneed. The end of the paragraph points this out: "'What did he try to do to poor little you?' 'Patronize me,' said Polly". (*Monstrous Regiment*, 129)

The most obvious example of sexism, however, comes towards the end of the book. Polly's fellow recruits are revealed throughout the book to also be women in disguise, and at the end, when they are captured by the enemy, they are exposed. It is, however, much worse when they break out of the prison, free their superior officers and help start a new wave of fighting, because as soon as they are revealed to be female to their side as well, they are quickly arrested and put on trial.

This passage is full of instances where Polly's regiment is said to have done well, for women. This is blatantly sexist and patronizing, as what they have managed to accomplish is something none of their compatriots were able to, and if being women had anything to do with how they did, it was mostly their experience with sexism or abuse

that granted them the skills necessary for escape. There is even the following dialogue between one of Polly's fellow recruits, and an officer interrogating them before the trial:

> 'Would we have gotten a medal, sir, if we'd been men?' Shufti demanded.
>
> 'Yep. Certainly. And Blouse [the regiment's lieutenant] would have been promoted on the spot, I imagine.' (*Monstrous Regiment*, 417)

In this, Pratchett points out the double standard for men and women, a moment when the protagonists are at their most defeated and angry, thus revealing the sense of injustice.

There are several instances where both the enemy and the allied sides try to resolve what they perceive as a problematic situation. First, Lord Rust, who fought against Borogravia on behalf of Ankh-Morpork's alliance with Zlobenia, offers to send them home quietly, which is met by a hrad no from the regiment, as half of them do not have any home to return to, in the first place, and had joined the army to escape. Later, when they are put on trial by their own countrymen, the offer they get is to "avoid any suggestion that you were in fact acting as soldiers. Brave Borogravian women going to the aid of a gallant hero" (*Monstrous Regiment*, 428) (a suggestion similar to what happens to Tiffany Aching in *Wee Free Men* after she saves the Baron's son). Even though this is possibly an even more insulting offer, as it would ask them not only to go away quietly, but to publicly distance themselves from all that they have done for the sake of a male superior officer, the decision on this offer is much less unanimous than on the first one. Some of the women want to give up, be it because they feel resigned, or because one of them is dying. Polly objects, both because she feels it unjust, and because she believes their dying friend, and possibly the Duchess who possessed her, would not want that. Another one that very definitely wants to reject the offer is, rather surprisingly, Lieutenant Blouse, the only male member of Polly's regiment and the superior officer to whose benefit this decision would be. He objects that without the women, none of what

happened would be possible, and that it is “dishonourable”. (*Monstrous Regiment*, 429) Because more people are against, the offer is rejected as well, the ones that were for deciding to be loyal to their friends.

The third offer comes after the legendary sergeant Jackrum, who also lead the recruiting party that evolved into Polly’s regiment, practically blackmails almost half of the high command with knowledge he gained from doing them favours, which is that all present in the room are actually also female. The offer is that Polly’s regiment could stay active in the army, but they would have to be discreet, i.e. keep up the pretence that they are males. Polly, however, speaks up against it, and, while stating that she only speaks for herself, says that she kissed the Duchess, that is enrolled in the army, and “she knew what I was and she… didn’t turn away, if you understand me.” (*Monstrous Regiment*, 442) Polly is, therefore, proud of being a female, and despite knowing she may not get everything she asks for, because even the current offer was almost impossible to get, she still wants to fight on for full recognition.

As a clash of wills seems imminent, the situation is resolved by the Duchess herself speaking through Polly’s friend Wazzer. The godlike figure appeals for an end to the war and the reclamation their own country, which gives Polly and her friends enough leverage to get exactly what they want, and even to get some closure with Strappi and the Zlobenian captain, who was revealed to actually have been the Zlobenian prince in disguise. As Polly holds quite a lot of power at that moment, she punches Strappi with no repercussions, and mimics kicking the prince again, so that he recoils and leaves her alone. Shufti, who enlisted to find the father of her yet unborn child is presented with a man matching the description, but recognises that he has been using her and that she is strong and independent enough, and denies it is the right man, also rejecting the offer for a widow’s pension, wanting to keep herself untethered even to a fake late husband.

Pratchett uses this divine intervention to get his heroines a happy ending, but also shows that in real life such perfect endings are borderline impossible to get if the opposing side is not listening and feels like allowing half the rights the other group has is being generous, as is illustrated on major Clogston, who acts as the regiment's attorney, saying that the High Command are being kind. When Polly seems bewildered by it, Clogston specifies: "Well, they think they're being kind." (*Monstrous Regiment*, 430)

Pratchett, however, does not leave at this perfect happy ending. As the women are sent back after the peace treaty is signed, they are given uniforms with appropriate ranks, but the uniforms are designed specifically for them, complete with a skirt, and Polly realises: "We *were* mascots." (*Monstrous Regiment*, 484) Pratchett shows that despite everything, including the High Command's promises, they still found a way to lessen Polly's regiment's worth as soldiers. Polly, however, rises to the tasks of her rank when a new war becomes imminent, and she decides to use her rank to lead a new regiment of recruits in the same way that sergeant Jackrum lead hers. There are girls enlisting in her regiment and she makes it known they can enlist as women and that she will take care of them, therefore utilising her power to give more power to other women.

By having his protagonist, along with more than a half of her squad, refuse the offers and continue the fight for equal treatment, Pratchett expresses his stance on the problems that feminism deals with. He presents the inequality as thoroughly unfair, pointing out several times that were they men, the whole situation would be vastly different, and the ultimate victory of the story is that the all-female regiment receives full recognition for their deeds. This victory, however, is presented as temporary and as only the first of the many steps that can lead to full equality in a society deeply rooted in patriarchy.

4.1.Cross-dressing

In *Monstrous Regiment*, a major role both for the plot and for the illustration of the inequal treatment between the sexes is placed on cross-dressing. It stands at the centre of the novel, from Polly dressing up as a boy to be able to enlist in the army, to the revelation that all her fellow recruits are also female, to the final plot twist where almost a half of Borogravian High Command is also revealed to be female. It also allows Pratchett to show the inequality in treatment through the eyes of the characters.

First, Polly notes the difference between the behaviour of males and females. As it has been noted above, some of them are potentially harmful for the males, as it bars them from freely expressing emotions or pressures them to appear tough for their own protection: "The boys tried to walk big in self-defence against all those other big boys out there." (*Monstrous Regiment*, 12) Later, the women note the differences in their treatment when they are perceived as men:

> 'Have you noticed men talk to you differently?' said Lofty shyly.
> 'Talk?' said Polly. 'They *listen* to you differently, too.'
> 'They don't keep looking at you all the time,' said Shufti. You know what I mean. You're just a… another person. If a girl walked down the street wearing a sword, a man would try to take it off her.' (*Monstrous Regiment*, 174)

Pratchett, therefore, uses crossdressing to put both the female and male experiences in contrast, and thus to further emphasise the differences in the society's approach to men and women. It is not purely the female side that is shown, but also the male, seen, however, through the eyes of someone with the experience with the treatment of women. The male perspective is shown as being taken more seriously, or even more human, as exemplified above, but also as almost freeing in certain ways, because men are allowed to behave in a much looser manner as pertaining to their bodies and behaviour. This is shown when some of the women are exposed to Polly because of the way they curse, or rather do not curse, because while the male soldiers are free and almost expected to fully

curse, women are restricted to more “lady-like” behaviour, censoring curses and their overall behaviour.

This later creates a rather humorous scene when Polly’s regiment is detained when trying to infiltrate a fortress in disguise as washerwomen. The captain detaining them supposes they are men in disguise because of all the little traits they picked up in order to keep up their original disguise, which leads to them proving quite definitely they are female, much to the captain’s embarrassment.

This assimilation of male signals could be seen as the regiment’s way of gaining recognition, but Pratchett does not stop at implying that women can be equal only if they behave similarly to men. As is shown above, when the actual offer comes to keep up the pretence of being men, just like the High Command has done, Polly speaks up against it, showing that the ultimate goal is full recognition without any concessions to make the men seem superior. The crossdressing is, therefore, used as a tool of showing the possibilities of equality to the regiment, helping to firmly set the goal to strive for, and to illustrate to the reader the need for feminism. That is made clear by showing that the only thing that changed people to treat the women of the regiment differently, with greater respect, was them suddenly being perceived as male.

Not every woman in the army is willing to put away her disguise when the opportunity arises. Those are all the member of the High Command, who seem to have got used to their new identities and still live more by the old traditions than Polly and her friends. Part of their remaining in disguise also seems to stem from fear of losing their hard earned respect, as General Froc, the highest ranking officer, says: “But for those of us that went before, perhaps it is not… not yet the time.” (*Monstrous Regiment*, 447) For

some it is a force of habit, as Major Clogston says she would hardly be able to put on a dress anymore[3].

The important part of the victory, however, is that there is now the opportunity to enlist as women – the older officers' decision to remain in disguise is ultimately their choice, although it may be motivated by the still remaining patriarchy. Because at the end of the book, women are enlisting openly as women, and Major Clogston discloses her gender without being prompted by situational necessity or being outed, as is the case of the rest of the High Command, the struggle that Polly and her regiment endure during the trial, which is the culmination of their experience in disguise, can be seen as successful in changing the imbalance between the treatment of men and women for the better.

One other instance of crossdressing is Corporal Nobbs dressing as a woman while on an undercover mission in Klatch. The disguise is not a voluntary one, but stems from necessity, as there is no other disguise available. Nobbs is at first very unhappy about these circumstances, feeling that his masculinity is challenged, but as the story progresses, he finds the disguise more useful than that of Sergeant Colon or Lord Vetinari, as he is the only one who obtains a crucial piece of information because he is able to listen to the women speak freely. Even though the disguise is often used for comedic effect, in the end, Corporal Nobbs is shown to have a deeper respect for women (even though this is also framed in a rather comedic way). It is basically a reversal of the crossdressing in *Monstrous Regiment*, as here a man is shown the female experience and as a result learns to be more respectful. This instance, however, is used much more like a gag, even with some takes on many feminist slogans, but ultimately the importance of balance between the male and the female side (in Nobbs case even in his own personality) is clearly shown.

[3] The topic of dresses is addressed in the text a few times, as the dresses are shown to be much less practical, especially for soldier's purposes, than trousers, and therefore the opportunity to not wear them is welcome by many of the women in the novel.

4.2. Witches and mages

The contrast between witches and mages, i.e. the male and female magic, is at the centre of the third *Discworld* novel, *Equal Rites*. In it, a wizard's staff is passed on to a new-born baby, who, however, turns out to be a girl. The problem of women not being taken seriously, which is the underlying message under the topic of magic, is apparent at the very moment this mistake happens, as it could have been avoided, if the two men involved in the situation – the child's father and the wizard – had listened to the witch acting as a midwife. They, however, dismiss her in a rather condescending way: "She's a witch, sir, don't mind her.[4]"

The girl, Esk, is taken as an apprentice by the witch, but it becomes apparent she needs to be taught wizard magic, as it is different from that of the witches. The difference itself hints at the tendency of men to assume command, as wizard magic is controlling and does not care for many consequences of its usage, while the witch magic is mostly about knowledge others do not possess, and ways to avoid using too much magic. Alice Nuttall also notes that while wizards use magic for any goals they may wish, witches mostly do "other things [which] in large part involve emotional labour, which is closely linked to the domestic, and stereotypically seen as the province of women.[5]" Wizards, on the other hand, occupy academic positions, and are gatekeeping them from women as evidenced when Esk attempts to enter the University.

Esk is told that to enter the Unseen University to begin her study as a wizard is impossible, as women cannot be wizards. This has no other reason than tradition and is made to look ridiculous when being said in the face of a literal female wizard. Esk's magic

[4] Terry Pratchett, *Equal Rites* (London: Transworld Publishers, 1987) 17. All subsequent quotations from this book are from this edition and will be indicated in parentheses in the text by title and page
[5] Alice Nuttall, "Be a Witch, Be a Woman: Gendered Characterisation of Terry Pratchett's Witches", *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: From Giant Turtles to Small Gods,* ed. Marion Rana (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) 24.

fails her in a crucial moment when she was supposed to prove herself, though, and she is indeed not accepted to the University, even worse, she is laughed at and handled in a condescending way: "Someone even gave me a sweet!" (*Equal Rites*, 194) This situation once more stems from men ignoring the witch, as Granny Weatherwax, the witch taking care of Esk, had written several letters to the Archchancellor of the University, but he has simply thrown them away as ridiculous.

Towards the end of the book, Granny confronts the Archchancellor, but at first he does not want to listen and even attacks her for being in a place forbidden to women. Granny, however, proves more than a village wise woman, as she parries every attack of Archchancellor Cutangle not with an attack, but with a carefully thought-through counterspell (e.g. Cutangle's eagle is countered by Granny's tufted hat). After this show of strength, Cutangle finally listens to Granny and treats her with respect, even challenging and eventually dismissing the sexist University rules and offering her a position. Nuttall says of Granny: "Granny Weatherwax subverts patriarchal thinking by valuing domesticity and rural society over wealth, status and recognition, and pointing out that 'women's work' (and witches' work) is as valuable as any other.[6]" In the end, Granny proves the worth of female magic to the head of a male institution and acquires recognition for it.

This ending shows a promise of reconciling the male and female magic, which goes along with Esk's story, as she saves the day by combining aspects of wizardry and witchcraft, the ultimate weapon being the ability to use powerful magic while choosing not to do so. Even though later books show that this victory was also only temporary, as the division between mages and witches stays, the book itself ends on a hopeful note with

[6] Alice Nuttall, "Be a Witch, Be a Woman: Gendered Characterisation of Terry Pratchett's Witches", *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: From Giant Turtles to Small Gods,* ed. Marion Rana (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) 27.

Esk and the wizard Simon joining forces to create a new kind of magic that combines the male and female aspects to great results.

On this subversion of the trope of the old wise wizard and the cunning but ultimately less powerful witch which Craig Cabell calls "genre-breaking"[7] in relation to traditional fantasy) Pratchett not only shows that women are equally strong, or sometimes even stronger than men, but argues that the true goal is not a reversal of the powers and the dominance of women over men, but a balance between the two. The wizard magic is not shown as inferior to witchcraft, nor does it triumph over it, and it is only when those two come together in mutual respect that the threat can be stopped.

The book also contains one instance of what is colloquially referred to as "mansplaining", where a man explains to a woman something she already knows and is usually more knowledgeable about than the man explaining. This happens when Granny Borrows the mind of an owl and goes to speak to the spirit of the wizard who gave Esk his staff, which is currently inhabiting an apple tree. When she says women cannot be wizards as much as men cannot be, the tree launches into a several-minutes-long lecture on what witchcraft really is. Granny listens in "impatient annoyance" (*Equal Rites*, 49) as the tree goes through what he thinks witchcraft entails, and presents it as objective facts to a witch, who "told herself that she was well aware of what being a witch was all about". (*Equal Rites*, 49) Pratchett here illustrates the phenomenon of men disregarding women's experience and expertise only because they are women, and the condescension with which many women are treated every day. Pratchett visibly sides with Granny, who also later

[7] Craig Cabell, *Terry Pratchett: The Spirit of Fantasy* (London: John Blake Publishing, 2012) 51.

evolves into one of the major characters, one that "sits at the centre of the [*Witches*] sequence[8]" and on whom centres "the issue of identity and the battle to author the self.[9]"

[8] Karen Sayer, "The Witches", *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, ed. Andrew M. Butler, Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Baltimore: Old Earth Books, 2004) 137.
[9] Karen Sayer, "The Witches", *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, ed. Andrew M. Butler, Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Baltimore: Old Earth Books, 2004) 137

5. Conclusion

In many of his *Discworld* books, Pratchett utilises the genre of fantasy to talk about real world issues, to point out some of their possible causes, and to suggest ways of lessening those issues. Those possible ways are always on a personal level, as they are intended to reach the individual reader, and emphasise the importance of thinking for oneself. In the case of racism and sexism, Pratchett points out the role tradition plays in forming those prejudices, and calls for independent thinking and, in cases of people brought up with such traditions, re-evaluating certain viewpoints instead of uncritically shielding themselves with such dubious traditions. In the case of religion, furthermore, Pratchett does not dismiss religion as a whole, but emphasises the need for one's own thinking, criticism towards enforced rules of institutionalised faith, and personal responsibility in place of blind faith.

On the issue of racism, Pratchett positions himself against any form of such prejudice, giving his protagonists either inclusive views, or space to educate themselves and change the views that were, even subconsciously, racist. This option to re-evaluate is an important part, because Pratchett does not suggest everyone needs to be inclusive from the beginning, but rather that it is important to work towards more inclusion constantly, even when one thinks they are already at their best – like Sam Vimes, who finds out that he still subconsciously holds some racist views, but works on changing them. The villains of the novels, on the other hands, are those stuck in the racist mindsets, not willing to change, and in most cases even working to perpetuate racism, mostly to their own advantage as a means to acquiring power.

With religion, Pratchett recognises its importance in everyday life of many people, but maintains that ultimately it is people who are responsible for their lives, that too much blind faith is harmful, and that people should be kind for kindness' sake, and not for the

sake of getting a better afterlife for themselves. Brutha is kind because that is who he is, as he says to Death at the end of the novel, he makes most of his important decision out of the sense of righteousness, not because his god tells him to – he even disobeys a direct order from Om because he deems it immoral – yet he remains a devout follower, in which Pratchett shows the way faith can help one better themselves. Vorbis, on the other hand, follows the rules of Omnianism to the letter, yet he only acts in ways that are sure to accelerate his rise to power.

Especially in his later books, namely *Monstrous Regiment* and the *Tiffany Aching* sequence, Pratchett takes a decidedly feministic stance, pointing out the unfairness and condescension with which many women are treated daily, at the same time emphasising the capabilities of women. The women in the books struggle to prove themselves as strong as, or even stronger than, men, thus highlighting the injustice set up by a predominantly patriarchal society, where simply being female can be a great disadvantage. While neither *Monstrous Regiment* nor *Equal Rites* have a villain per se, there are characters who are portrayed as despicable or immoral that behave in clearly sexist ways, as is the case of Corporal Strappi or Prince Heinrich. Those are contrasted with the protagonists, women who have to fight hard to prove they are as good as men, or in many aspects better (Polly is a better soldier than Lieutenant Blouse, Granny would eventually best Cutangle in their duel). Pratchett emphasises the need to move forward from patriarchal traditions for the sake of a better, more tolerant and balanced future.

The genre of humoristic fantasy allows Pratchett to create settings perfectly fit for pointing out the exact problematics, and to joke at the expense of what he sees as unjust. The ever-present humour only underlines passages where Pratchett suddenly takes on a more serious tone, giving even more weight to the arguments presented.

Overall, Pratchett suggests that the first step to resolving some of the social issues is people thinking for themselves, not letting tradition or religion dictate their worldviews in situation where a simple change to a more flexible, understanding point of view is the starting point for a change in society. As even the protagonists, or the characters who are eventually on their side, show signs of prejudice, but work towards more open-mindedness, the possibility of change is emphasised. The most negative traits present in the novels discussed are rigorous adhesion to outdated traditions, the use of tradition or religion for manipulation and instilling hate, and stupidity and inability to learn. With bestselling books reaching a wide international audience, Pratchett aims to raise awareness of those causes of the issues, and to influence his readers towards thinking about these issues and the ways they personally can help to lessen or eliminate them. As Farah Mendlesohn notes, "[t]he crucial issue is *choice* and thus the role of the individual.[1]"

[1] Farah Mendlesohn, "Faith and Ethics", *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, ed. Andrew M. Butler, Edward James, Farah Mendlesohn (Baltimore: Old Earth Books, 2004) 239.

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