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Distorted Mirrors & Fantastical Reflections
Encounters with the Other in Terry Pratchett's Discworld

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Abstract

Throughout our lives, we encounter people that are different or other, and people have demonised and distrusted those others. The fear of the other is mirrored in the stories we tell. Fantasy worlds allow the author to create a world separated from the real one, where we can meet new conceptions of the other. This thesis examines which others we encounter within the Watch sequence, part of the Discworld series by Terry Pratchett, answering the research question: *What Others do we encounter in the Discworld series, and how does Terry Pratchett use humour and fantasy to interrogate our conceptions of the Other*. The theoretical part will first discuss who the other is, and how she has been theorised, then define Fantasy as a genre, and explore why it is suitable for examining social questions. The theoretical part ends with an exploration of humour, including the types of humour used within the Discworld series. This thesis then analyses three different types of others that are encountered on the Discworld: the Racial Other, the Nonhuman Other, and the Dehumanised Other. An analysis of these Others shows that The Watch sequence offers a funny, heartfelt plea to accept those who might be different, marginalised, or actively maligned.

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Introduction

“No one ever thinks of themselves as one of Them. We’re always one of Us. It’s

Them that do the bad things” (Pratchett *DW21* 127)

Throughout our lives, we will encounter people different from us, who challenge our ideas about the world and perhaps even what it means to be human. People have always distrusted and demonised those ‘Others’. The fear of the Other and otherness is mirrored in the stories we tell. It is present in the image of the wild savage, but also in the guise of creatures, monsters and demons. Genre fiction creates encounters with the Other. In Fantasy, Science Fiction and Horror, we meet those who are othered, even if they remind us of our own failings or fears. In *Skin Shows* (1995) Judith Halberstam has shown that fiction can echo real life concerns and give life to desire and fear, often in monstrous shapes. “Gothic monsters are defined both as other than the imagined community and as the being that cannot be imagined as the community” (15). Thus, literature is a perfect place to encounter the Other and to consider the reflections of these Others upon our own world.

Otherness is an increasingly relevant topic, and one not only found in fiction. The effects of globalisation confront us with otherness every single day (Palumbo 3). Literature can provide a space to encounter the Other, and teach us how to deal with otherness in real life. Stories have always been a form of social construction, and allow even disparate people to form a community (McGillis 218). Roderick McGillis suggests that stories present us with a different world, and can bring us face to face with the Other (216). Though it is impossible to see the world through another’s eyes, literature can help us encounter the thoughts and feelings of an Other (Sencindiver 1). Through reading, we can experience the lives of Others in a vibrant way or look at the world from a different perspective. It can even enhance our feeling of empathy for those who are Other (Palumbo 2). Literature can even, as Gideon Haberkorn suggests, provide a context through which

the reader can test, explore and revise the mental patterns they use to interpret the world (“Seriously Relevant” 150).

Fantasy worlds allow the author to create world separate from the real one, following different rules. In these imagined places, the Other can take all kinds of shapes, enlarging what might otherwise remain hidden. This thesis will examine how the Other and Otherness are encountered in Terry Pratchett’s Discworld series, answering the research question: *What Others do we encounter in the Discworld series, and how does Terry Pratchett use humour and fantasy to interrogate our conceptions of the Other?*

Terry Pratchett was one of Britain’s bestselling novelists. He sold more than 80 million books¹ and has been translated into 37 languages. He won many literary awards, was knighted for his services to literature (Rana “Shedding the Light” 2), and holds the dubious honour of being the most shoplifted author in Britain (Britton 1). His works are accessible to readers of all backgrounds², and he takes the effort to ensure that his works are inclusive (Rana “Shedding the Light” 4). Although Pratchett has written many other works, he is most famous for the *Discworld* series. Beginning with *The Colour of Magic (DWI)* in 1983³, the series consists of 41 novels and several companion books. All stories take place on the Discworld, a flat Disc carried through space on the backs of four elephants, who in turn stand on the back of Great A’tuin, the world turtle. The series started as a parody of High Fantasy, but turned over the years into an increasingly sophisticated way of giving social and political commentary (Rana “Shedding the Light” 2). Although filled with parodic and intertextual elements, all books can be read separately, but reading all the books provides the reader with a richer understanding, and allows them to understand the allusions, clues and references to earlier works (Schulz 230).

¹ Give or take a few million

² Though they might be slightly easier to understand if the reader is familiar with the conventions of British culture and British humour

³ Though it can be argued that *Strata* (1981), which also features a flat world, is a prologue or prequel to the series

Pratchett's sense of humour is one of the unique qualities of his work (Cheetham 76), as is its accessible, imaginative, but also deep and insightful nature. Pratchett is an intensely humane writer. Marion Rana states he “condemns all forms of racist, moral, class or religious bigotry” (Shedding the Light” 6), and his works, which are often satiric in nature, show the social and psychological processes through which these issues arise (6). Pratchett’s novels explore how our thinking and behaviour is shaped, and how it is influenced by stories (Luthi 137). Pratchett deals specifically with themes of racism and exclusion, and handles these issues carefully, creating complex narratives that stay away from stereotypes (Gibson 62). This makes it especially interesting to read the series through the lens of the Other and Otherness.

This thesis will focus mainly on the Watch sequence, a series within the larger Discworld series, which consists of eight books; *Guards! Guards!* (DW8 1989), *Men at Arms* (DW15 1993), *Feet of Clay* (DW19 1996), *Jingo* (DW21 1997), *The Last Elephant* (DW24 1999), *Night Watch* (DW29 2002), *Thud!* (DW34 2005), and *Snuff* (DW39 2011). The sequence deals with the changing fortunes of the City Watch, the police force of the city of Ankh-Morpork. Mel Gibson states that “the City Watch functions as a case study, showing the challenges and potential of multi-ethnic communities” (68). Placed in the multi-species city, the books deal heavily with the complications of a diverse and changing society. Stable point throughout is Sam Vimes, who as captain and later Commander of the Watch is the main protagonist of the series. The Watch deals daily with situations in which they are faced with Others, though every novel takes a slightly different approach. However, before we move towards a closer analysis of the sequence, it is necessary to understand who the Other is, how we should understand the term Fantasy, and where humour enters the mix.

Humouring the Fantastical Other

Part 1

An Encounter with the Other

“The universe becomes two halves, and you live in the half between the eyes”

(Pratchett *DW26* 146)

Beyond the edge of our own knowledge, we encounter the Other. Making a distinction between the Self and the Other is fundamental to consciousness, and an integral part of the human experience. But who, or what, is the Other?

She⁴ appears in many guises, can take many shapes, and has been approached and theorised in different ways. The first to introduce the Other was Simone de Beauvoir, who posited her as a construction opposed to the self, while simultaneously constructing the self (Brons 68). Do we see the Other as a construction to oppose the self, a separate individual, or as a thing rather than a person? (Brons 74). In her simplest form, the Other asks us what it means that difference exists in the world, but how we react to this difference depends on how we view otherness itself (Traenor 2-3).

Western thought has been intent on understanding and thus conquering the Other (Levinas 345; Irvine 12; Traenor 3). This position assumes that the Other should be understood, and through understanding becomes less Other. Emmanuel Levinas breaks with this tradition. He posits that the Other is impossible to understand. She is a manifestation of absolute difference, incomprehensible (Irvine 10; Todd 69; Peperzak 21). An encounter with the Other invades the ego's world, and calls into question that the ego can construct the world out of itself, through its own reasoning and

⁴ Since the Other is not gendered and the pronoun ‘it’ would cause confusion, I have chosen to use she and her when referring to the Other, especially because the feminine is often considered to be essentially Other.

consciousness (315). The existence of the Other reveals that the ego is not alone in the world, and that he has a responsibility toward the Other. This, Levinas calls the ethical dimension (350; Todd 67; Handelman 72; Peperzak 21). Levinas seeks not to eliminate Otherness, but respects the difference that separates the Other from the self (Traenor 209). Though Levinas suggests what to do when to encounter the Other, he also posits that the Other can never be understood. If she is understood, she is no longer Other. It exercises power over her, and reduces her to our own understanding (Todd 73). Thus, the Other compels us to let go of the preconceived notions concerning her (69). Instead of interpreting, exposure to the Other compels the ego to listen, attend, and be surprised; to learn from an Other who is “absolutely different from myself” (83).

Not everyone is open to understanding the Other. Though Levinas’s Other is neither socially constructed nor dependent on discursive power (Todd 69), othering is also a process of attributing everything that is deemed undesirable or deviant to people that have characteristics or cultural expressions other than your own (Evans 151). Through the process of othering, an Other is created rather than encountered. Othering attaches moral value to difference: What is Other is inferior. This can result in discrimination, exclusion of marginalised groups, and racism (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi 300).

Lajos Brons suggests that there are two different types of Othering: crude- and sophisticated othering. Crude othering attributes (un)desirable characteristic upon specific groups, and is built on the hidden assumption that the in-group is superior, while the out-group is inferior or radically alien (80). Sophisticated othering states that while we will encounter others, this difference is neutral (71), and suggests that instead of forcing the other to conform to our interpretation, we should acknowledge the Other. Though whether it is possible to let go of our own interpretation and truly see the Other, can be debated (84).

The division Brons creates hints at the tension between constructed otherness and the existence of otherness in the world. Through othering, it is possible to create cultural distance and

alienation from the Other (Rana, *Creating Magical Worlds*, 15). Othering constructs a division between two groups: The in-group and the out-group. This construction acts as a justification for exclusion, racism, or oppression (Brons 72). This is framed as a natural hierarchy, not a motivated construction (75). Otherness is relative and mutable. Different cultures construct different others. The process of othering often says more about the group creating the Other, than the Others themselves⁵. In this way, the Other is used to define who we are, understanding ourselves in relation to what we are not (Brons 76).

Narratives of othering have consequences for how we see the world. Positioning racial or marginalised groups as the Other can lead to oppression and exclusion (Todd 68). Ziauddin Sardar argues that the West has created a devilish image of the Other, which needs to be stopped by any means possible. The demonisation of the Other justifies the atrocities necessary to stop her, insuring a victory for the 'good' and the 'just' (45). Narratives of otherness that posit the Other as inferior, savage, or evil, uphold old power structures and divide the world into two sides, Us versus the Others.

Although processes of othering often go hand in hand with discourses of superiority, this does not have to be the case. If the Other is accepted instead of despised, we open ourselves to new experiences. In sophisticated othering and Levinas's conception of the Other, difference is framed as neutral or positive instead of negative. However, these Others are unknowable, making it impossible to understand them. Brian Traenor proposes a model of relative otherness. He suggests that the Other should be viewed through an interplay of alterity and similitude. Similitude —what is familiar and understandable— allows for common ground, while alterity —what is alien and obscure— can reveal something new. The interplay between these two powers requires us to constantly adjust and reevaluate our mind (229), and reconstruct our conceptions of ourselves and the Other. Traenor's concept of relative otherness allows us to take a middle position. The Other is

⁵ The construct, after all, does not have to be based on truth, and in most cases is not

neither unknowable, nor familiar. Relative otherness encourages dialogue: we can hope to understand the Other, without conquering her.

Every time we open a book we encounter the Other, and in turn literature can influence how we see the Other. It can copy discourses of othering, cement the notion of the Other as deviant and scary. Or, it can allow the reader to see and feel the Other's perspective, understand that many Others are also complex selves (Scencindiver 15). The Others we encounter in literature are always constructed. By examining them, it becomes easier to see the processes of othering.

Othering is not always negative, though it often becomes so in a social context. Within literature, and especially Fantasy, there is also an interplay between alterity and similitude, the familiar and the fantastical. Within the Discworld, we will encounter many Others, but first it is important to understand how Fantasy and Humour interact with the proces of othering.

Part 2

Escaping into Fantasy

“Humans need fantasy to be human” (Pratchett *DW20* 222)

The Fantasy genre has a complicated heritage. The one thing most researchers agree on, is that it has not gotten the critical attention it deserved, and is much maligned in the critical sphere. The genre was considered “lesser” (Kjellberg 2) or “inferior” (Rana, *Creating Magical Worlds* 4). With the exception of Tolkien⁶, critics don’t see Fantasy writers as literary authors, and many writers avoid the label (Rumsby 1). Fantasy texts were seen as simple and unprogressive, a guilty pleasure at best (Scholz 227). They are unrelated to the real world, and only lead to daydreaming or escapism (Petzold 19; Britton 1). This suggests that we can learn nothing of value about ourselves or our world through Fantasy. That is, of course, untrue. Though Fantasy novels indeed take place in a world unlike our own, their contents can tell us much about the world we live in⁷.

Part of the genre’s reputation is due to its relative youth, and the past few decades have improved Fantasy’s standing in the academic world. The genre surfaced in the middle of the 20th century (Scholz 227), but it can be argued that the roots of the genre are older and deeper⁸. Though many books have fantastical elements, not all are Fantasy. The debate on how the genre should be defined has raged since its conception (Luthi 126). This process is made harder by the numerous subgenres within the genre, and the close connections to other genres, such as Science Fiction.

Although almost everyone connects Fantasy to wizards, dragons and magic, they are not the core of the genre. Brian Laetz and Joshua Johnston define Fantasy as “fictional action stories with

⁶ And even this took several decades (Pratchett *Slip of Keyboard* 124)

⁷ This is not to say that all Fantasy is good, or insightful. There are many derivative novels on the market. However, this is true for every genre, and should not stop the reader or critic from exploring the rich, imaginative worlds that Fantasy can offer (Rumsby 3)

⁸ It is possible to argue that all literature is Fantasy, in a way, and that Fantasy has existed as long as the human imagination. However this thesis will stick to a definition of the genre that emerged in the 20th century

prominent supernatural content that is inspired by myth, legend, or folklore” (167). Though this basic definition holds true for most works of Fantasy, it ignores the most important element: the secondary world.

Fantasy is centred around worldbuilding: It takes place in a universe where the rules of our own need not apply, though this world needs to be internally consistent and follow its own rules (Rumsby 10). The secondary world is first described by J.R.R. Tolkien, the father of modern Fantasy, in his essay “On Fairy Stories” (6), and can be defined as “an autonomous world or venue which is not bound to mundane reality ... which is impossible according to common sense and which is self-coherent” (Clute & Grant “Secondary world”). According to Dieter Petzold, the world needs to be significantly different from our own, while Gideon Haberkorn describes it simply as “different from the one inhabited by its readers” (“Seriously Relevant” 137). This difference is essential, as it allows the work to enter the realm of Fantasy. The secondary world is an essential element of the genre, which ensures that the world the reader enters follows different rules than the ‘real’ world. Because the secondary world is different from our own⁹, it can be used to reflect on or critique the world we live in.

The creation of a secondary world demands imagination¹⁰. Though often seen as trivial or a way to escape serious engagement with reality (Haberkorn “Seriously Relevant” 138), many fantasy works are highly inventive in the ways in which they deal with the struggle of good versus evil that is central to many Fantasies. This often centres around struggles of justice, power, or tension between different groups, and is not as far removed from the real world as many people like to believe. According to John Henry Rumsby, Fantasies act as contemporary mythologies. They can offer a mirror to society, and can help us understand ourselves and the world around us by creating an alternative society where ideas can be explored (1). Brian McFadden argues that the genre

⁹ Though it can, of course, incorporate familiar elements

¹⁰ Though, as soon as a secondary world is created, it is possible create other worlds derived from it. This is common within the genre, and it can be questioned how much imagination is still present within such derivative works

presents scenarios that “allow people to confront difficult ideas about selfhood and otherness” (156). This suggests that the assumption that the genre does not address difficult social issues, such as racism or oppression, is a misconception. As Helen Young mentions, many fantasy narratives are built upon encounters between different cultures, while fantasy worlds are populated by all manner of species (“Diversity and Difference” 351). Therefore, this thesis argues that especially fantastical setting can provide a space for the author to play and experiment with otherness.

Fantasy’s futuristic sibling, Science Fiction, often addresses complex social issues¹¹. Janelle Marie Evans even argues that the genre is an ideal medium for addressing social injustice, because it can move beyond the binary division in the real world, and create new worlds where these rules simply don’t exist (145). However, while the genre has shown it can address these issues, it is still bound to specific conventions. The reader has to believe that our current world can change into the world described. Fantasy worlds are free from this convention, and provide an equally interesting or even better space to examine these issues. Unrestrained by reality, Fantasy texts can exaggerate, reverse or even invert natural laws (Rayment 12) or social conventions. Fantasy texts can offer alternative worlds that critique narratives of othering in our own world, and offer imaginative solutions to issues of otherness.

Despite its potential, the genre has a long way to go. Though everything imaginable is possible, many texts remain conservative. They re-create rather than re-imagine popular conceptions of the Other. Villains or monstrous species are coded with characteristics of marginalised people, as a quick shorthand towards worldbuilding. Many popular Fantasy narratives are inspired by Western history and colonialism, where non-white ethnicities are treated as subhuman (Rumsby 2). Rumsby argues that the roots of this problem lie in early Fantasy’s connections to Colonialism, and the derivative nature of many works of Fantasy. Works basing

¹¹ Again, this is not true for all works of Science Fiction. There are derivative works within this genre as well

themselves on texts from the 18th and 19th century, with their savage depictions of foreign cultures, simple binary oppositions, and superior portrayal of the Western world, cannot help but copy ideas and themes from these texts, even if they do so subconsciously (14). Their secondary worlds mirror the structures of exclusionary discourse (16). Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay agrees that colonialism influenced representation in Fantasy by erasing difference or recreating the colonial Other (224). He adds that most of the books are written by Western writers, often men, creating an Anglocentrist canon (214). This means that for Fantasy to be read as a critical genre, critics and readers need to be aware of the implications of what they are reading. The excuse ‘but it is just Fantasy’ is not sufficient.

Another problem within Fantasy narratives is the conflation of ‘race’ and ‘species’. Race is used to describe human civilisations, ethnicities, or cultures as well as non-human species (16). According to Melissa Monson, ‘race’ is used interchangeable with species, but the use of the word reinforces the idea of a race-based society. It creates a world that is focused on difference, and often a reality where physiological elements predict behaviour (53). The term suggests that ‘race’ denotes real, biological differences, and that there is a biological validation for racial hierarchies (16). It is clear, after all, that the scary, ugly races that seem to inhabit so many Fantasy worlds cannot be anything other than inherently evil.

Many Fantasy species are formulaic stereotypes, whose character depends on their nature. Inherently problematic as this is, it becomes more so if many species are based on existing stereotypes of ethnic, religious, or cultural groups (Rumsby 22). Monson adds that while many Fantasy species¹² are unique in their appearance, their cultures are lifted right from earth, and these narratives uphold the existing racial hegemony (54). That this effect is often unconscious, can be seen even in the works of Tolkien. Though he ‘abhorred racism’, Middle Earth is based on a binary opposition that conflates dark and black with evil (McFadden 164). Additionally, Tolkien’s letters

¹² Monson mentions Wookies, Ewoks, Vulcans, Klingons, Stygians, Calormenes, Orcs, and Hobbits (54)

describe the irredeemably evil Orcs as “degraded and repulsive versions of the (to Europeans) least lovely Mongol-types” (Tolkien qtd McFadden 164) and specifically link non-Western racial characteristics and otherness to evil¹³. Helen Young argues Orcs and their literary descendants are invariably racially coded. These conceptions were inspired by the literary model of the heathen Saracens, as well as 19th and 20th century racial stereotypes. With their dark skin tones, muscled bodies, and dreadlocks¹⁴, the Orcs embody racial otherness (108). This negative depiction of otherness is extremely prevalent in Fantasy, though it is not inherent in the genre. Fantasy has the potential to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Other and Otherness, but in order to do so, it needs to engage more critically with its own conventions.

Terry Pratchett is aware of the pitfalls of the Fantasy genre. The Discworld started as a loving parody of the genre, because “there was an awful lot of bad fantasy around” (*Slip of the Keyboard*, 59). Though it started as a bit of fun, the series has grown into an increasingly sophisticated way of giving social and political commentary (Rana “Shedding the Light” 2). A keen observer of humanity, Pratchett seems to be able to pinpoint exactly what is problematic. The Discworld series can be classified as Comic Fantasy, as sub-genre that —if possible— has even less prestige than Fantasy. The sub-genre is seen as a light form of Fantasy, which subverts and deflates the high ambitions and epic nature of High Fantasy (Duvezin-Caubet 2). In the hands of Pratchett, it can be used to create books that are rich and detailed, critical of the world between its pages as well as our own. According to Pratchett, Fantasy should “present the familiar in a new light” (*Slip of the Keyboard* 107). It should show us the familiar in a new direction, and make us look at our own world with new eyes (90). Pratchett has created a world that is both imaginative and critical, a world that reflects on our own. Something he would not have been able to do without humour.

¹³ The academic debate on whether Tolkien’s work is racist is still ongoing, and there are strong arguments for both sides. What seems clear is that Tolkien most likely didn’t intent for his work to be, but that it is possible to read it in this manner.

¹⁴ As the Orcs are depicted in the LOTR films.

Part 3

All Joking Aside

“Make them laugh, and they’re not afraid” (Pratchett, *DW34* 16)

Everyone likes to laugh, but not everyone laughs at the same things. Humour allows us to perceive something as funny, to make people laugh (Singh 65). Everyone has a sense of humour, though certain types of humour, such as satire, might appeal more to certain audiences (Singh 66; Zelizer 3). Humour has to occur within a context, and is viewed through a cultural lens. This explains why a joke that is hilarious to a Dutchman might be incomprehensible to an Australian (Zelizer 2).

Despite humour’s universality, it can be used to create division, laugh at marginalised groups, or ridicule those who are different. Ziauddin Sardar even suggests that irony, ridicule and cynicism can be used to disempower those who have different views, as their views are not taken seriously (175). However, humour is a double-edged sword: It can be used to demonise others, but also to bring people closer together (Zelizer 1). It can play a critical role in the development of positive relations between groups, and de-escalate conflicts. It can even help people cope with impact or trauma (Zelizer 1). Humour has a long history of resistance. Subversive humour, ridicule and mockery can be directed at those in power. Humour has the potential to shake reality, play with established stereotypes, turn order upside down, and resist the status quo. Jokes can be an ideal form of resistance, as they can fly under the radar. Their nebulous nature, ambiguous messages or ironic tone can hide controversial ideas in plain sight (Weaver 33).

When we laugh, it is important to consider who we are laughing at. Making jokes about minorities can cause actual harm. In the 1970s, British comedy became aware of the oppressive power of humour, and moved away from jokes focused on stereotypes and minority groups, focusing on those in power instead (Cheetham 67).

Literature is expected to do more than entertain. It is expected to lift our understanding, communicate universal truths, and change how we see the world and the people in it. Raj Kishor Singh argues that humour, as a tool, is a necessary element of fiction, and can help accomplish these goals. People assume writing about serious topics should be deep, dark, or heavy. Light humorous material is seen as nothing more than silly fun, and tackles only swallow topics (Cheetham 65). However, it makes sense to take a humorous approach to serious topics, because serious is not the opposite of funny (Pratchett, *Slip of the Keyboard* 136). By making people laugh, you can make them more amenable towards your point of view, and discuss topics that would not be broached otherwise. As Pratchett himself stated: “Laughter can get through the keyhole while seriousness is still hammering on the door. New ideas can ride on the back of a joke, old ideas can be given an added edge” (136).

Despite being one of the most common forms of humour, written humour has been less studied than jokes and spoken humour. However, existing models of humour are difficult to apply to written humour, and humour in literature thus asks for a new approach (Cheetham 79). Gideon Haberkorn describes humour as “a playful process of noting that there is more than one way of looking at something, and then resolving the opposition” (“Debugging the Mind” 422). This new understanding creates humour. Haberkorn then suggest that a rhetorics of humour deals with the ways in which this shift can be created (422). This shift in view is similar to the ways in which Fantasy allows the reader to see his own world differently, and suggests that humour can be used in a similar way.

Pratchett is well known for his wordplay, and this is one way in which the familiar can suddenly shift. Throughout Pratchett’s work, there are many examples of understatements, footnotes¹⁵ and similes (Haberkorn “Debugging the Mind” 438), which liven up the text and can

¹⁵ Terry Pratchett might be the first to have turned the humble footnote into a humorous technique

make the smallest detail shine. However, though Pratchett's texts are funny, they are not just meant to make you laugh, they are also meant to make you think.

The Discworld novels started off as a parody, which creates humour through reworking, transforming, and deliberately changing its source material. It doesn't use derisive exaggeration, which would make it a pastiche (Haberkorn "Seriously Relevant" 138). Taken one step further, the text becomes a satire, which creates "laughter with a purpose" (146).

Satire attempts to point out what is wrong with the world. It is a form of comedic criticism (Singh 70). The target of a satire is not fictional. The text shows where people fall short, or points out incongruities in the world. Using shame or ridicule, satire unmasks those who misrepresent the world or themselves (Haberkorn "Seriously Relevant" 146). The satirist's goal is to improve the world, to correct the flaws in humanity or society (Kjellberg 4). Though often funny, its true purpose is to draw attention to issues in society by giving social criticism (Singh 68).

Though Pratchett's work is often described as satire (Duvezin-Coubet 18; Kjellberg 3), he does not fit the standard description of a satirist. Though his work is critical, his critique is usually neither harsh nor heavy handed (Britton 4). Traditionally, there are two basic ways in which a satirist looks at people: Either people are good, but foolish and misguided, or people are evil and despicable (Haberkorn "Seriously Relevant" 146). Pratchett is able to maintain a balance between the two. While pointing out the ridiculous and dark sides within his characters, he also manages to show the good in them. Andrew Rayment even suggests that Pratchett's work goes beyond satire. He is more radical, playful and dismissive of what is assumed normal or natural, and goes beyond satirical critique (16).

There are satiric elements in Pratchett's work, and he uses several satiric techniques, of which irony is the most important. Irony is a rhetorical device. It is an "incongruity between what is being said and what is understood, or what is expected and actually occurs" (Singh 67). It can be used to emphasise ideas, or make the audience think about what has been said (67). It is a complex

tool, and if the audience fails to understand the irony, the meaning intended by the author can be lost (Kjellberg 7). This makes the role of the audience quite important: Irony is only successful if the audience realises its intended meaning (Singh 67). Singh argues that irony is an effective way to approach difficult topics without becoming pretentious or didactic. It allows the audience to see the discrepancies in their own society (68).

Haberkorn posits that our brains seek patterns to make meaning of the world. Fantasy can show us the tools we use to create this meaning, while humour points out when we construe meaning where there is none. Between humour and fantasy is an interplay of meaning, which allows the readers to test their own ideas, and develop new ones (“Debugging the Mind” 415). Within the Discworld books, Pratchett uses this interplay to create a space for the reader to test their own ideas. The humorous tone of the Discworld creates a safe space to do so, while Pratchett’s use of satire and irony gently nudge the reader to examine their own assumptions. As such, the Discworld is the perfect arena to encounter the Other, and interrogate our own conceptions of her.

Chapter 2

The Racial Other

“Guilty of repeatedly being Klatchian” (Pratchett *DW21* 107)

“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” (Pratchett *DW12* 110). This quote suggests that racism is not a problem on the Discworld, but this is not true. Even in a world that is populated by trolls and goblins, humans can still find a reason to look down on others for the colour of their skin. Racism is a form of othering, it creates in-groups and out-groups based on race. Racism is usually understood as “prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism against someone from a different race, based on the belief that one’s own race is superior” (“racism”). However, as Melissa Monson points out, race is not real in a biological sense, but racism enacts a self-fulfilling prophecy. If people believe that a natural order of racial relations exists, they will ensure that this order is created and remains in place (50).

Here, the Other is someone who looks or acts differently from you. The Racial Other is constructed based on racial characteristics, which are seen as negative by the ‘superior’ culture. These negative connotations lead to discrimination and exclusion. Racism is most directly addressed in *Jingo* (*DW21* 1997), which deals with a war between two nations: Ankh-Morpork and Klatch. The Watch, tasked to “keep the peace” (34), is put right in the middle of this conflict.

The novel starts with a chance meeting of two fishermen, one from each nation. It becomes clear that there is little love lost between the two. “I know that is you, you thieving foreign bastard” is the first greeting, while in the other boat we hear, “—See, my son, how the underhanded fish thief —“ (Pratchett *DW21* 7). The men are so busy shouting at each other, they don’t realise they are mirroring each other’s insults, or how much they have in common. Pratchett intentionally mirrors the dialogue, which is both humorous and hints at themes in the rest of the novel.

This initial exchange illustrates the existing tensions between Ankh-Morpork and Klatch.

When a strategically placed island emerges from the depths of the sea¹⁶, this tension turns into the threat of war. Both nations¹⁷ exacerbate their differences and create an us-versus-them narrative, based on racist discourse. The Klatchians are portrayed as a bunch of opportunist and thieves, unlike the good people of Ankh-Morpork, who have ““enough of these swaggering brigands! They steal our fish, they steal our trade, and now they’re stealing our land!” (Pratchett *DW2I* 10). The civic leaders paint the Klatchians as “a bunch of thieves with towels on their heads” (17), and they are described in the streets as “towelhead[s]” (49), “greasy” (12,23,167), “cowards” (27), and “Johnny Klatchian” (18). Though these insults and racist stereotypes become more pronounced, Pratchett makes it clear that they did not suddenly appear. These remarks show that the Klatchians were already considered Other, now it is simply easier to say so. Commander Vimes realises that all those “jokes about funny food and foreigners” were not actually funny, and what he himself dismissed as harmless was simply a fuse waiting to be lit (19).

Another example of the us-versus-them mode of thinking can be seen when the patrician is asked why Ankh-Morpork has laid claim to the island. “Because they are showing a brisk pioneering spirit and seeking wealth and... additional wealth in a new land,” and when asked about the Klatchians, describes “a bunch of unprincipled opportunists always ready to grab something for nothing” (*DW2I* 17). When the city council loudly agrees, the patrician dryly remarks “Oh, I do beg your pardon ... I seem to have read those last two sentences in the wrong order” (17). Here, Pratchett shows how a narrative of othering works. For exactly the same action, one’s own nation is portrayed in the best light, while the other is denounced. The irony of the final statement undermines this narrative. The hypocrisy of the two statements becomes apparent, and shows both statements in a new light.

¹⁶ The island, Leshp, consist of pumice stone. If enough gas builds up, it rises to the surface

¹⁷ The reader follows along with the Ankh-Morpork perspective

Jingo also shows the uglier effects of othering. Though Ankh-Morpork is populated by all manner of races and species, and many Klatchians have lived there for years, they are affected by this narrative of othering. What begins with anti-Klatchian feeling and insults in the street ends with violence. Sam Vimes witnesses the aftermath of a firebomb attack on a Klatchian home. “Dimly, his mind assembled the clues; the man’s beard, the woman’s jewellery ... the two other people were a boy, almost as tall as his father and a small girl trying to hide behind her mother. Vimes felt his stomach turn to lead” (Pratchett *DW21* 40). Here, the violence othering narratives can lead to is counteracted by the humanity of the victims: these aren’t Klatchian savages, but people.

The scene also confronts Vimes with his own prejudices. Despite being a regular visitor in the family’s restaurant, he only “vaguely recognised the face ... they were ... faces. They were usually at the other end of some arms holding a portion of curry or kebab,” (Pratchett *DW21* 42). He then asks one of the other Watchmen to translate, though the family have lived in the city for ten years, and speaks and understands Morporkian perfectly (42). Despite’s Vimes tolerant and anti-war attitude, he still has prejudices and needs to reevaluate his own views.

When the city declares martial law, the first command given to the Watch is to “take the Klatchians resident in the city into custody” (Pratchett *DW21* 106). In other words, to arrest every Klatchian in the city for being Klatchian¹⁸. Here, individuals are no longer seen as people, they are only seen as part of a group, and a group that is inferior and potentially dangerous at that.

The Discworld mirrors our own world in certain aspects, and *Jingo* is heavily influenced by narratives of othering from our world. At first glance, Klatch, an empire consisting of desert-dwelling tribes, who wear turbans, wave scimitars, and ride camels, seems a textbook example of Orientalism. Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said, is the Western tradition¹⁹ of creating the Orient through Western experience. This tradition consists of several interdependent processes,

¹⁸ The Watch refuses to do so: The Klatchians have committed no crime (*DW16* 106)

¹⁹ Though especially the French and British, who had colonies in the Middle East

containing everything that is written, researched and communicated about the Orient. This imagined Orient does not truly exist, but is created through Western discourses; through Orientalism, the West has created an imaginary Orient that is its absolute Other. This relationship is one of power and domination, the West seeking to control and form the East (2-5).

Klatch is a construction built of Oriental stereotypes; the aforementioned Arab, but also Indian stereotypes. The Klatchians are known for eating curry and have a bunch of odd gods (Pratchett *DW21* 18,29,120). At least, this is Klatch seen through an Morporkian lens. Morporkian discourse considers Klatch inferior and backwards, like West considers the Orient inferior. The power relations between the two are similar. Once, the Morporkian empire colonised most of Klatch²⁰ (255), and Morporkian is considered a lingua franca in the same way English is in our world (186). If this was the only perspective of Klatch Pratchett offered, he would simply be copying Orientalist narratives. However, once the characters enter Klatch, it becomes clear that Ankh-Morpork's construction is just as much of a Fata Morgana as the Western construction of the Orient. Though Pratchett uses orientalist imagery, the novel reads as a critique rather than an endorsement of this approach towards other nations. Additionally, Mel Gibson argues that Pratchett uses the amalgamation of otherness to poke fun at those who put every Other in the same category (60). Arabs and Indians might both be Others²¹, but that doesn't make them the same, or even similar. Throughout the novel, Pratchett subverts the Orientalist stereotypes espoused by certain characters, and problematises the practice of judging people on external characteristics.

A master of judging people based on how they look, is Fred Colon, one of the original members of the Watch. Fred is the man on the street, a man who "[had] been to the School of My Dad Always Said, the College of It Stands to Reason, and was now a postgraduate student at the University of What Some Bloke in the Pub Told Me" (Pratchett *DW21* 27), and is often narrow

²⁰ And quite a bit of the rest of the Discworld

²¹ At least to the West

minded or bigoted. Though Pratchett never condemns Colon—who is foolish but not malicious—he also never lets his views go unanswered. Colon is often accompanied by Nobby Nobbs, another watchman. Though neither educated nor smart, Nobby has a knack for pointing out the flaws in Colon’s arguments. When both discuss the war, Colon remarks “Won’t last long. Lot of cowards, the Klatchians, ... The moment they taste a bit of cold steel they’re legging it away over the sand” (27), only to follow it up with “they’re all mad for fighting ... vicious buggers with all those curvy swords of theirs” (29). To which Nobby replies: “You mean, like... they viciously attack you while cowardly running away after tasting cold steel?” (29). Though Colon fails to see the incongruity, the reader cannot fail to do so. This style of dialogue returns often: Characters state something with perfect certainty, only to be contradicted by other characters, the narrator, or events. This gentle mocking is a form of socratic dialogue. The reader is invited to examine the ideas proposed, and see where they don’t add up. Because Pratchett doesn’t outright condemn Colon’s ideas, he creates—through humour—a space for the reader to do so.

A similar situation unfolds in *Klatch*, where Colon is assigned to find the whereabouts of the Klatchian army. He finds himself alone in a caravanserai:

Now then, how did you... ah, right... *anyone* knew how Klatchians talked...

‘Greetings, fellow brothers of the dessert,’ he said. ‘I don’t know about you, but I could just do with a piece of sheep’s eyeballs, eh? I bet you boys can’t wait to be back on your camels, I know I can’t. I spit upon the defiling dogs of Ankh-Morpork, Anyone had any baksheesh lately? You can call me Al (Pratchett *DW21* 200)

This little speech is met with amazed silence, and the conclusion that Colon is “several trees short of an oasis” (202). Instead of camel-riding devils, the Klatchians turn out to be just people²². Colon

²² One of the men talking to Colon is a plumber. Hardly a romantic orientalist profession. Besides, the camel would get stuck (*DW21* 202)

is completely blind to what's going on. Since he is convinced he knows what Klatchians are, he interacts with stereotypes rather than people. The reader, who knows what the Klatchians are saying, has a better understanding of the situation, and sees how his stereotypes conflict with the reality. The reader is not invited to laugh at weird foreigners, but rather at Colon's shortsightedness. Though there are characters that make racist jokes or comments, Gibson suggests that Pratchett undermines the idea that jokes about ethnicity are funny, or should be made (63). Indeed, Pratchett might make fun of the absurdities of the world, but he finds humour in deconstructing the stereotype, not in the stereotype itself.

If the unthinking, explicit racism of Fred Colon was the only observable form of racism, *Jingo* would fall in the same trap as many other depictions of racism. Though overt racism exists, and still needs to be called out, it ignores more systematic forms of racism, prejudice and othering that everyone is susceptible too. Like all Watch novels, *Jingo* is a detective. The crime at the heart of the book is the attempted assassination of Prince Kufurah, who comes to Ankh-Morpork to discuss peace. The prince is shot, by a Morporkian shooter. All the evidence points in the direction of Klatch: the shooter was paid in Klatchian money (Pratchett *DW21* 72) and there is still sand on the floor of his apartment (73). These clues are so obvious that Vimes suspects a set-up: "The only thing they haven't found are the bunch of dates and the camel hidden under the pillow..." (74). Here, Pratchett shows how othering works within our minds. The denouement of the plot hinges on prejudice, stereotypes, and false expectations.

This begins when Vimes meets 71-hour Ahmed, who:

under his black headdress, had the most crowded face Vimes had ever seen. A network of scars surrounded a nose like an eagle's beak. There was a sort of beard and moustache, but the scars had affected the hair growth so much that they stuck out in strange bunches and at odd angles ... All in all, the man had a face that any policeman would arrest on sight (Pratchett *DW21* 50).

Ahmed chews cloves, has golden teeth, carries an enormous curved sword (51), and the first word out of his mouth is “Offendi” (50). He even offers —in a thick Arabian accent— to buy Vimes’s wife for twenty-five camels (52). The man walks, talks and acts like the stereotypical untrustworthy Klatchian.

Can the reader blame Vimes for his immediate suspicion? A suspicion confirmed when a chewed clove is found at the crime scene. Vimes never phrases what he suspects Ahmed of, not even to himself. But his suspicions are strong enough to follow the man across the sea to Klatch²³. Once the Watch arrives, several things become clear. Klatch is not a united front. Just like Ankh-Morpork, it is inhabited by different people, who have their own opinions. Many people don’t even want to fight in the war, they were simply “dragooned into the army” and “don’t even know why they are fighting” (Pratchett *DW21* 192). Most of the tribes are in fact fighting the Caliph (175). To the Caliph, Ankh-Morpork is simply a convenient enemy, an Other that can unite the land he has been pacifying²⁴ for years (226).

In the desert, Vimes realises that he got it all wrong, and this is where things become interesting. The Klatchians are very aware of the Ankh-Morporkian stereotypes and subvert and actively use them. Morporkians’ belief that Klatchians eat sheep’s eyeballs? The Klatchians offer this delicacy to Morporkians on at least three separate occasions²⁵ (Pratchett *DW21* 18,120,173,226), in a game called “Let’s see what offendi will swallow” (173). It shows again how stereotypes and othering warp the world, and how those who adhere to them are easy to fool.

When Vimes finally catches up with Ahmed, his voice “lacked that hint of camel spit and gravel that it had possessed in Ankh-Morpork. Now, it was the drawl of a gentleman” (Pratchett *DW21* 210). It is telling that the character who is introduced as the most “Other” is in fact both

²³ At that point, Ahmed has dognapped Sergeant Angua, which might count as a mitigating circumstance (*DW21* 137)

²⁴ With sharps swords and just a smidge of violence

²⁵ It would be rude to refuse...

educated in Ankh-Morpork and a policeman. In many aspects, he is a distorted mirror image of Sam Vimes. It is equally telling that it takes Vimes²⁶ most of the book to figure this out. Vimes himself admits that he was fooled. ““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’” (211). Vimes is still influenced by the idea of the Other as inferior. It leads him to dismiss and underestimate Ahmed. Aware of these prejudices, Ahmed actively uses this: “Always be a little foreign wherever you are, because everyone knows that foreigners are a little bit stupid” (213). He is not the only Klatchian manipulating Vimes. The obvious framing of Klatch turns out to be Klatch framing Ankh-Morpork (213), an option the usually suspicious Vimes hadn’t even considered, still underestimating the Klatchians. In Ahmed’s words “Be generous, Sir Samuel. *Truly* treat all men equally. Allow Klatchians the right to be scheming bastards, hmm?” (215). Since the narrative follows Vimes’s perspective, the reader tends to go along with his way of thinking, including his blindspots. When Vimes questions himself, the reader is faced with their own blindspot, and their own possible prejudice.

Pratchett subverts the ‘orientalist’ discourse of Ankh-Morpork by systematically showing how mistaken it is. That the Klatchians will run at the taste of cold steel seems ludicrous when facing an army that is better armed, better provisioned, better practised and much larger than the Morporkian army. Morporkian superiority consists of nothing but hot air. Again, Pratchett shows what happens if you base your view of the world on stereotypes based on a constructed Other. Though there are differences between Ankh-Morpork and Klatch, in geography, culture, and social structure, Pratchett seems to suggest that none of these differences are essential. Both Ankh-Morpork and Klatch are run by people, and both are complex nations facing complex issues. To simplify the world into a battle of us-versus-them can only harm both sides.

²⁶ And the reader

Once Vimes accepts Ahmed as an equal, it becomes clear how similar both men are. That doesn't mean they are the same. Brian Traenor suggests that otherness is an interplay between difference and similarity (229), and this is what we see between Vimes and Ahmed. They have points of recognition: both are commander of police in their respective countries, both "thought the same way" and suspected their own people of the assassination attempt (213), but they are also different. Vimes prefers to arrest people, Ahmed's justice is of a more permanent sort. Neither way is inherently superior, because both are shaped by need and circumstance. Ahmed "must inspire dread and strike the first blow, because [he] will not have a chance to strike the second one" (216), while Vimes is backed by the power of the city and civilisation. Once you let go of stereotype and prejudice, you can truly encounter the Other: Not everyone in the Discworld nor in our world is exactly the same. By dismissing what is Other, we fail to see the complexities in the real world, and miss the opportunity to learn about the otherness present in the world.

Jingo is set up in a manner that suggest turning the world into little, easy to understand bits means you are missing part of the story. The Watch only makes headway once they accept those who are othered as equal, and both Vimes and the reader need to be able to view both sides of the coin before understanding the situation. Pratchett enhances this by showing how similar Ankh-Morpork and Klatch are, despite their own insistence they are Other. This is hinted at in the fishermen, but clearer worked out in Vimes and Ahmed. Every time a character attempts to divide the world in two, characters, the narrator, or events contract them. Prachtett constantly pokes fun at and subverts these narratives. *Jingo* shows how easy it is to other an entire nation of people. By turning the Klatchians into the inferior, racial Other, the Morporkians become blind to reality as it is, and fail to see the complex humans hiding behind the turban.

The Other we encounter in *Jingo* is a construction. Though there are differences between Klatchians and Morporkians, theses differences are not as unsurmountable as their discourse seems to suggest. The racial other is a familiar construction in our world, and it is no accident that

Pratchett uses orientalist imagery. *Jingo* makes us think about these constructions in our own world, and their validity. Pratchett shows how this Other can be constructed, interweaves into an us-versus-them narrative, and is often politically motivated. The fantasy setting, like, but unlike our world, allows the reader a certain distance, through which the flaws in the narrative become more apparent. Pratchett uses humour to point this out, to make the reader see their world in a different light, and examine the ideas presented on the page. However, racism is not Ankh-Morpork's biggest problem. How could it be, in a city that is populated by dwarfs, trolls, and vampires?

Chapter 3

The Non-Human Other

“You can’t trust people of their type” (Pratchett *DW15* 134)

While we come across the Racial Other almost every day, in real life or the media, we encounter the Non-Human Other only in fiction²⁷. Fantasy worlds are inhabited with all manner of sapient species. Often, these are divided into ‘good’ and ‘bad’. The good species being noble and just, while the bad are inherently evil and often monstrous. Often, they considered as different races, rather than species. The terms are seen as interchangeable. The resulting worlds are often built upon a system of essentialist racism (Monson 53).

While these species look radically different from humans, they are often coded to resemble specific human communities. They are given the cultural characteristics of groups in the real world. The Dwarves from Middle Earth are coded Jewish²⁸, the Haradrim²⁹ are Middle-Eastern caricatures, as are the Narnian Calormenes (Monson 54), while the evil Orcs are coded as racial monsters (Young, “Orcs and Otherness” 89). Non-Human Others mirror our fears, and enlarge what scares us in the Other³⁰. Instead of questioning why these Others are so often coded like marginalised groups, Fantasy texts have a tendency to endorse them, creating a world where one’s species determines one’s character (Monson 55).

Unlike many Fantasy writers, Pratchett divides race and species. Humans are simply one of the species of the disc, albeit one that comes in a variety of colours. Pratchett does show the parallels between speciesism and racism. If a character is racist, it is likely that he is also suspicious

²⁷ Unless animals can be counted as others, institutions count as Others, or intelligent life is discovered on distant planets

²⁸ Though they are coded Scottish in the movies

²⁹ They also appear in LOTR

³⁰ Though this too, might be a reflection of what scares us within our selves

of other species, and vice versa. Sometimes, they try to justify their prejudice by stating their acceptance for another group: ““I’ve got nothing against *dwarfs*, mind you, ... I mean, dwarfs is practically people, in my book. Just shorter humans, almost. But trolls... weeeelll... they’re not the same as us, right?” (Pratchett *DW15* 121)³¹. This shows that narratives of discrimination and otherness have hierarchies. Certain species are ‘better’ than others. The less human and more ‘Other’ someone appears, the more likely she is to be othered.

Monstrosity has been tied to racial and ethnic identity, and monstrous races often embody the fear of foreign otherness (Stypczynski 58). Certain aspects are exaggerated, making the monsters fearful and scary. They embody the fear of racial difference and the fear of the unknown (Young “Orcs and Otherness” 88). Pratchett subverts this idea of monsters. Someone becomes a monster based on how they act, not what they look like. He shows that what is often considered evil by nature, does not need to be, letting even werewolves, trolls, and zombies arise to heroic status (Rayment 17).

Populating the world with species based on racial stereotypes is not the only way Fantasy can interact with Non-Human otherness. It might be interesting to explore how these species can help us encounter otherness, without coding it as bad. There have always been fantastical species on the side of good, that remained Other than the often human protagonist. The Discworld shows a narrative in which such Others are slowly accepted into the city. This progression is present throughout the entire series, but can be seen most strongly within the Watch sequence, starting within the Watch itself.

³¹ This seems to be the Discworld equivalent of ‘I’m not racist, some of my best friends are black’

Part 1

Dwarfs and Trolls

“But as the dwarfs say, where there is trouble you will always find a troll” (Pratchett *DW34* 13)

Trolls and Dwarfs are the most numerous non-human inhabitants of Ankh-Morpork. They have their own cultures, communities and customs, but routinely interact with each other, humans, and the other species making the city their home. Their integration into a city that is predominantly human at the beginning of the sequence is no easy feat, and shows how people deal with those they consider Other. In *Men at Arms* (Pratchett *DW15* 1993), the Watch starts a policy of minority representation. The original members of the Watch all have to overcome their own prejudices, and initially, their new members have trouble fitting in. The same is true in the wider city. Many humans see the presence of dwarfs and trolls as an “ethnic problem” (72). The discourse surrounding trolls and dwarfs is similar to the discourse surrounding Klatchians in *Jingo*. If you are different, you are Other. Dwarfs and trolls are seen as inferior to humans, perhaps even as encroaching on human territory. ““And everywhere you look it’s uppity dwarfs and trolls and rude people ... there’s more dwarfs in Ankh-Morpork now than in any of their own cities, or whatever they call their holes”” (72).

Humans don’t make an effort to understand their new neighbours, and immediately jump to conclusions. Since trolls are seen as “barely more than animals” (Pratchett *DW15* 73), and they are “fighting [in Quarry Lane] every night” (72), it is easy to conclude that trolls are violent and stupid. The dwarfs face similar prejudice. They are accused of eating dogs, and it is highly suspicious you never see their women around, because “You know what they say about dwarfs³²” (73). Non of this is based on truth, but simply on conjecture. Within their minds, these people have created an image of trolls and dwarfs which fits their own ideas. Trollish is body language, which puts the fighting in

³² No one actually seems to say out loud what everyone knows about dwarfs, and the dwarfs themselves have no clue

a different light (72). Similarly, Dwarfs don't eat dog, and Dwarf women are often seen around the city. They simply look just like the males, and only reveal their gender in intimate situations (73).

Pratchett again uses humour to show how ridiculous this line of argument is. Instead of questioning his conversation partners, Sam Vimes mimics their way of thinking, exaggerating their arguments until they become ridiculous. The conversation begins with trolls; “‘have you noticed how massive their heads are? ... that’s really just rock. Very small brains’” (Pratchett DW15 73). He follows this, when the conversation moves towards dwarfs with “‘have you noticed how small their heads are? ... very limited cranial capacity, surely. Fact of measurement’” (73). Through Vimes, Pratchett shows that this sort of reasoning leads itself to support for every bigoted argument. Vimes’s audience fails to notice, and he finishes off with “‘you know, that’s what’s so damn annoying, isn’t it? The way they can be so incapable of any rational thought and so bloody shrewd at the same time’” (73). In this dialogue, Pratchett points out the hypocrisy used to belittle and dismiss others. The reader, once again, can come to their own conclusions.

Though Vimes defends trolls and dwarfs, he also struggles with his own prejudices. At the start of *Men at Arms*, Vimes isn't happy about the new recruits. “It wasn't as if he was speciesist, he told himself, but the Watch was a job for men” (Pratchett DW15 16). He can't keep dwarfs apart, because “they all look alike to him” (64) and initially calls them “little buggers” (35). He is equally negative about other non-human species. As the sequence progresses, Vimes gets to know and work with members of different species and learns to appreciate their talents. Though he still refers to dwarfs as “you people” in *Feet of Clay*, he speaks passible dwarfish and is able to distinguish between the different dwarf clans. By *Thud!* he is firmly on the side of the people, “all the people” including dwarfs, trolls, and every other species in Ankh-Morpork³³. Vimes's progress helps familiarise the reader with both species. The gradual progress allows the reader to understand dwarfs and trolls, learn more about them with every book, and accept them.

³³ With the possible exception of Vampires, as will be discussed later in this chapter

Though both trolls and dwarfs are considered Others by humans, they are most important in their relation to each other. The two are complete opposites. For dwarfs, trolls are the ultimate Other, and vice versa. Though enhanced by legend (Pratchett *DW35* 6), this conflict seems embedded in their very nature: trolls are “rocks with valuable minerals in them” and dwarfs “make a living smashing up rocks with valuable minerals” (*DW15* 29). Since trolls look like rocks when asleep, and often sleep during the day, dwarfs occasionally mistake them for rocks, to which the trolls react violently. The resulting centuries of war, especially the famous clash at Koom Valley³⁴, have resulted in a deep hatred between the species.

In the city, both are forced to interact, though they occasionally come to blows. Tensions run highest in *Thud!* when the anniversary of Koom Valley is near. When a dwarf is murdered, the dwarfs are quick to point fingers: “behind every crime you will find the troll” (Pratchett *DW34* 15). A group of fundamentalist dwarfs, all deepdowners, see trolls as less than nothing. They are the ultimate Other, not even alive, only a “pale, jealous echo of living” (28). To these dwarfs, trolls are even less than objects, living miserable lives without love or purpose. “To kill the troll is no murder. At its very worst it is an act of charity” (28). The dwarfs no longer see the trolls for what they are, they only see the monster they themselves created.

It is not only in the mind of dwarfs that this narrative has taken root, it influences humans too. “You don’t know the history chant,” Diamond³⁵ King of Trolls tells Vimes. “or the long dance, or the stone music. You see the hunched troll dragging his club. That’s what the dwarfs did for us, long ago. They turned us, in your minds, into sad, brainless monsters” (Pratchett *DW34* 160). To humans, trolls are Other too, and the image constructed by the dwarfs is easier to accept, than taking the effort to understand the troll. Thus, the troll becomes a caricatural Other, a mindless monster

³⁴ The battle of Koom Valley, where the dwarfs betrayed the trolls or the trolls betrayed the dwarfs, is the only one known in history where both sides ambushed each other (*DW15* 29)

³⁵ Trolls are made from metaphorical rock

and violent man-eater. In their hatred, the dwarfs have created an Other that is irredeemable, and whatever the trolls once were, or have the potential to be, is forgotten.

This might have worked in the mountains, where both species can avoid each other, but the city forces them together. Within the microcosm of the Watch, dwarfs and trolls seem to be getting along. In *Men at Arms* dwarf Cuddy and troll Detritus learn to respect and like each other while on beat together, and the Watch itself adheres to a strict policy of equal treatment (*DW19* 16). Within the city, there is even an underground society where trolls and dwarfs come together to play games³⁶. Dwarfs and trolls might believe that it is in their nature to hate each other, Pratchett shows that it is possible to transcend this nature, or even that what both believe to be natural, might not be.

To be a dwarf means to act like a dwarf³⁷, and many city dwarfs feel they are betraying their dwarfhood by living in the city, instead of underground. This is why they listen to the deep downers, who have a very firm opinion on what a dwarf ought to be, and they preach you cannot be a dwarf if you don't hate trolls (Pratchett *DW34* 57). This narrative of othering is so strong, that the deepdowners are willing to go to any length to preserve it.

The dwarf murdered at the beginning of the novel was not murdered by a troll, but by other dwarfs, in order to destroy the truth. Koom Valley was not the site of the first battle, but the site of a peace treaty (Pratchett *DW34* 256). A misunderstanding leads to fighting, before a storm washes both armies away. Dwarfs and trolls die united in the caves under the valley, but leave a testament of peace that shows it is possible for both species to get along. The deepdowners reject this information; it is less appealing than their own conception of the world, in which there is no place for trolls. Fortunately, their view is not shared by all dwarfs. To be a dwarf does not mean hating trolls, a truth that many have discovered for themselves within the city, but which is cemented with

³⁶ They play Thud, which is a game of strategy. Game pieces consist of dwarfs and trolls and a complete game consists of two battles: one where you play the troll side, and one where you play the dwarf side (Pratchett *DW34* 161)

³⁷ This means that you don't necessarily have to be born like a dwarf to become one, though it's a good start. There are at least two humans who were adopted into dwarfhood, of whom Captain Carrot is one

the discovery at Koom Valley. The first seeds for a tentative peace have been planted. *Thud!* shows how dangerous basing your identity in opposition of a construction of the Other can be.

Encounters with the Other don't always have to be negative. The Discworld dwarfs are not a copy of an existing culture, and can't be encountered anywhere outside the pages of a book. As an Imagined Other, they are created through Pratchett and the reader. The dwarfs look at the world differently. They have their own unique culture, which is carefully built up over the course of the books. Dwarfs are not enlightened, like humans, they become endarkened (*DW34* 6). Dwarf culture is formed by living in the dark, and dwarfs have multiple words to describe darkness. To them, darkness is associated with positivity, not with fear. By imagining what it would be like to grow up as a dwarf, the reader encounters the Other, a non-human, fantastical Other, that all the same can show us a new way of looking at the world.

Part 2:

The Undead³⁸

“Undead yes—unperson, no!” (Pratchett *DW11* 77)

The undead are usually portrayed as monsters. With an almost human appearance, they are familiar, yet Other. They can be a reminder of the more bestial aspects of human nature, the dark side of our psyche, or the great unknown beyond death. The undead who, beside Fantasy, are best known for appearing in Horror, embody the fears that society holds. Fears around gender, sexuality, politics, or class transgressions are explored by placing them upon the undead (Young “Orcs and Otherness” 89). They are frightening and deadly, able to rip out throats or suck blood³⁹.

The undead community in Ankh-Morpork consists of werewolves, vampires, zombies, bogeymen and similar ‘monsters’. Members of these communities face fear and outright hostility. At the start of *Men at Arms* Vimes actively hates the undead, a prejudice that weakens throughout the sequence, though he always stays suspicious of “bloody vampires” (Pratchett *DW34* 19). Even Carrot, usually one of the most moral and tolerant Watchmen is initially hesitant: “But... undead... I just wish that they’d go back to where they came from, that’s all” (*DW15* 64).

The first member of the undead who joins the Watch is Angua, a female werewolf hired because of the minority representation policy. In the popular consciousness the werewolf is usually a monster, and he is always male. Werewolves are often portrayed as cannibalistic beasts (Lidman 391) and connected to our hidden savagery and propensity for violence (396; Lawrence 119).

When the savagery of the wolf is combined with the intelligence of the human, the result is a ravenous monster that will devour everyone in its path. Pratchett’s approach is slightly different. If you combine a wolf with a human, the result is a dog. This doglike nature of werewolves is very

³⁸ *differently alive

³⁹ Though current YA fantasies seem to take a different approach, turning the former monster into a brooding bad boy or misunderstood outcast

apparent. They don't like shower and baths (Pratchett *DW24* 140; *DW34* 177) and wince at the mention of "vet" (*DW24* 140). When Angua is chasing a smell, she practically barks, and she even has the occasional tendency to wag her tail (*DW34* 106-7). While this subverts the monster-like portrayals of werewolves, it also shows the liminal position of werewolves. They are neither human, nor wolf, but perpetually stuck between the two.

Angua is the first Other who is also one of the main characters, which means that the reader occasionally sees the world through her eyes, and knows her thoughts⁴⁰. Angua is aware of her position as an Other. She keeps her status as a werewolf hidden, and keeps her distance from men: Few men would be happy in a relationship with a werewolf (Pratchett *DW15* 164). She constantly expects having to leave, because she is too different. "Werewolves have to hang around other werewolves, they're the only ones that understand" (183). Her liminal position makes Angua more aware of her position: She can see how different she is, and is afraid that she will be shunned by both humans and wolves (*DW24* 100).

Angua struggles with this otherness within herself. She has to control the urges of the wolf. Though she can rip out a man's jugular in an instant, she chooses not to do so. She controls her impulses and chooses "the vegetarian option" (Prachtett *DW15* 172). Some will always see her as a monster, simply because of what she is, but Angua works at fitting in. She tames the Other within herself. Instead of her werewolf nature making her inherently evil, she herself gets to choose who she wants to be. Throughout the sequence, Angua grows more at ease with herself, and is able to accept that her otherness is also a part of her, and even learn to use it to her advantage.

Because of her liminal position, placed in a position similar but other to humanity, she can translate her experience of being a wolf, providing a view of the world through the eyes of an Other. As a werewolf, Angua can 'see' smell, and as a human, she can put that experience into words.

⁴⁰ Though Vimes is the main protagonist, Pratchett's narrator is third person omniscient, and the reader occasionally follows other people and other perspectives

Angua could see several hours of Elm Street in one go. The mugger's fear was a pale green cloud, with an edge that suggested he was slightly worried; there were additional tones of old leather and armour polish. Other trails, faint or powerful, criss-crossed the street (Pratchett *DW15* 67).

The reader will never be able to experience what it is like to see the world as a wolf or dog would see it, but can imagine what it would be like. The world through Angua's eyes is a colourful place, and through it she can reveal what would otherwise remain hidden. The reader can only wonder how she would see our world.

Vampires are some of the most popular monsters in popculture. Like werewolves, they stand for those sides of our psyche that we would rather ignore, our abnormal cravings, though vampires are connected to sex and desire rather than violence (Koç & Demir 425). On the Discworld, Pratchett plays with what we know in our world about vampires, as most of what is believed in our world seems to be true in the Discworld, resulting in somewhat contradicting stories. Most of the vampires in the city belong to the "League of Temperance" and have sworn not to take a drop of human blood (Pratchett *DW34* 18). Here, Pratchett makes it obvious that vampirism is a kind of addiction. Vampires who swear off blood go "cold bat," though animal blood replaces the human variety like "lemonade replaces whiskey" (*DW24* 175).

In the first few Discworld books, most of the vampires are not especially sympathetic, ranging from the bloodthirsty (*DW23*) to the power-hungry (*DW19*). It is not until the introduction of the Black Ribboners and the Temperance league that a few truly sympathetic vampires appear⁴¹. The league shows that vampires are not evil by nature, and are able to make the choice to abstain from blood, not giving in to their own cravings. Those that become Black Ribboners often try to

⁴¹ Arthur and Doreen Winkles might be an exception, but Arthur only became a vampire late in life, and still acts mostly human (Pratchett *DW11*)

negate their otherness, and act as human as possible, and stay as far removed from the stereotypical vampire shtick as possible.

No flowing cloaks, no sucking and definitely no ripping the underwired nightdresses of young ladies! Everyone knows that John Not-A-Vampire-At-All Smith used to be Count Vargo St. Gruet fon Vilimus! But now he smokes a pipe and wears those horrible woollen sweaters and he collects bananas and makes models of human organs out of matchsticks, because he thinks that hobbies make you more human! (Pratchett *DW34* 20)

Their attempts to make themselves more human might not be entirely successful, but it does succeed in making them less threatening, and vampires become a normal part of city life.

Vampires are a difficult point for Vimes. Throughout the books, he becomes more and more tolerant of other species, but never vampires. When he is forced to hire one in *Thud!* his prejudice is compared to reality. Though aware of his prejudice, he finds it difficult to see the vampire as a person, instead of a vampire. This leads the reader to question their own prejudice. The vampire seems to fit in perfectly well, and behaves just like any other character. Why would vampires be any different from werewolves, trolls, or other species? To exclude anyone based on what species they belong to, denies them their individuality.

Humour too is a useful tool for the undead. It can make the monstrous less threatening. Vampire Otto Chriek is widely liked within the city, because he makes people laugh (Pratchett *DW34* 16). Otto, in his black opera cloak, lined with pockets for his gear, ridiculous accent and widow's peak, is not threatening in the least. "He looked funny, a joke, a musichall vampire. It had never occurred to Vimes that maybe, the joke was on other people" (17). Instead of acting human and playing down his otherness, Otto enhances and accentuates it, and it becomes non-threatening. Humour is used to negate the Otherness.

The other undead are also put in a humorous context. Angua jokes about her own status as a werewolf, and the troubles it brings, like “the constant nagging feeling you should be wearing three bra’s at once” (Pratchett *DW19* 39). She can even jokingly call herself a pet, because “it’s only bad taste if someone else says it. *I’m* allowed” (*DW21* 87). Humour is a way for Angua to cope with her otherness, but it also lets the reader see her as a person, instead of a monster. The same is seen in the treatment of Reg Shoe, a zombie. Bits fall off him all the time, but what could be horrific, becomes funny. Especially since Reg never seems to understand why people mind that his arms drop off occasionally. He is amazed that when someone cuts off his arm, and he picks it up to hit people, his opponents run off screaming (*DW21* 184). The humour here is not used to counter arguments, but to change how we see werewolves, vampires, and zombies. If even monsters can be funny, and act like people, the reader might well wonder whether they are really so frightening after all.

One of the risks in creating Fantasy species is that they can become deterministic. An entire culture is defined by a few characteristics, group members are indistinguishable from each other, and all members share the same immutable qualities. To know how one dwarf acts, is to know how all dwarfs act (Monson 54). Pratchett breaks this mould. Though his species share certain characteristics, they are always exceptions to the rule. Angua is not a typical werewolf, and during the course of the Watch sequence the reader meets a whole host of dwarfs and trolls, most of whom are individuals. Though this is true for most species on the Disc, it can be best illustrated with the dwarfs. Throughout the series we meet Hwell, a playwright (*DW6*), Casanunda, the worlds greatest lover (*DW12*), Madame Sharn, a fashion designer (*DW37*), and many more. The most noteworthy of these is Cheery Littlebottom, who enters the Watch in *Feet of Clay* and is the city’s first openly female dwarf (*DW19* 59). Cheery admitting that she is female⁴² and changing her appearance accordingly, illustrates a point that holds true for all species on the Disc: the species you are born as

⁴²Cheery’s decision interacts with debates about intersectionality, gender, gender roles and perhaps even trans-narratives. However, to explore this dimension in detail would ask for a separate paper.

does not have to determine how you choose to act. This counters essentialist racist narratives, which claim that your race—or species—determines what you can do.

Both vampires and werewolves are able to tame their wilder natures, to rise above the monsters they are considered to be. Pratchett shows that you can overcome what you are, or others believe you to be. Neither werewolves nor vampires, dwarves nor trolls are bound by their nature, and none of them are inherently good or inherently evil. Though the non-human inhabitants of Ankh-Morpork initially face prejudice and mistrust, throughout the sequence a multi-species and multi-vital society becomes the new normal. The city makes it possible to live together, despite their differences.

When we encounter the Non-Human other, we encounter something that doesn't exist, a construct. Is it really possible for a human author to describe what the world is like for a creature that is not human? Perhaps not, but Fantasy at least provides the opportunity to try, to wonder what the world would look like through another's eyes. When we meet the Non-Human Other, we tend to focus on what is familiar. Like the inhabitants of the Discworld, we are more likely to sympathise with Non-Humans if they have characteristics close to human. This makes it easier to relate to dwarfs, than to trolls. Pratchett shows that every Non-Human species is worthy of consideration, and that all act like people. Although the Non-Human Other can show us a different way to approach the world, and teach us to see the world in a new light, the more monstrous Others seem to need to give up some part of themselves in order to be accepted. They lose some of their otherness.

Because Pratchett's Non-Human species aren't direct translations from cultures in our world, the way they are treated can be applied to multiple situations. We might not encounter literal trolls, zombies, or vampires, but there are groups or individuals who are being treated in similar ways. Additionally, Pratchett seems to question why we are afraid of the Other, what in them scares us. Answering this question might not tell us more about the Other, but it will tell us more about

ourselves. The Non-Human other can show us different perspectives on the world, and though it is unlikely we will meet a troll or dwarf on a stroll, fantasy can imagine these perspectives for us. Fantasy trains the mind to see the world in different ways, and to imagine one that is better.

Chapter 3

The Dehumanised Other

“Oh, the strange and secret people, last and worst, born of rubbish” (Pratchett *DW39* 307)

Dehumanisation is an extreme form of othering and excludes certain groups from the category of human. It means that certain people are seen as less than human (Vaes et al 64). Those who are not considered human are lacking those qualities that make us human, and therefore don't need to be treated the same as 'real' human beings. They can be tortured, enslaved or exterminated, and treated in ways we would never treat those we consider human (Livingstone Smith 8). Jeroen Vaes et al describe two main ways of dehumanisation. Mechanistic dehumanisation describes others as machines, without human emotion, while Animalistic dehumanisation sees others as savage and animalistic, without human reason (69).

Dehumanisation is difficult to discuss within Fantasy. Many of the species present in the genre are not human, despite being influenced by human cultures. Therefore, when discussing dehumanisation in Fantasy, the focus lies not specifically on the treatment of humans, but on the treatments of sentient beings. The term 'people' can then be used to denote those species who have a level of intelligence, culture and language that is similar to that of humans. The treatment of sapient species in a Fantasy world can show how the process of dehumanisation works, and why it might be convenient to consider certain groups as less than human.

Part 1

Golems

“Golems do all the really mucky jobs” (Pratchett DW19 171)

When golems are introduced in the first scene of *Feet of Clay*, they are objects, machines. They are bought and sold, and used to complete all manner of tasks. Golems are modelled after humans, and look like moving statues. They are made of clay and have red, glowing eyes (Pratchett DW19 71). Golems originated in Jewish Folklore, where they are brought to life when a priest inserts magical words into their mouth. They obey their master without question (Clute & Crant “Golem”). The Discworld golems work in the same way, though their words are inserted inside their heads, which tell them what to do, and what their purpose is. Though golems are treated as machines, they are autonomous and can complete any task they are asked to do. Golems have no tongue, and cannot speak, but communicate by writing on slates (73).

There are hundreds of golems working in Ankh-Morpork, but people tend to overlook them. “Golems are just *there*, sir, no one notices golems” (Pratchett DW19 171). They do the jobs that no one wants to do, work that is repetitive, heavy, or disgusting. They also work with poisonous and dangerous substances. They do “all the really mucky jobs” (171). Golems don’t sleep. They work constantly, day and night, without pay, and have to obey any order: ““a weaver over Nap Way had ordered his golem to smash himself with a hammer—and it had” (76).

If golems were objects, none of this would matter. There is nothing wrong with using objects, that is their purpose. There are, however, hints throughout *Feet of Clay* that suggest that golems are more than objects. They can communicate through writing, are capable of making decisions and taking actions. They even have arguments amongst each other (Pratchett DW19 93). None of the inhabitants of the city question this, though the golems do seem to make them uneasy. The people living in Ankh-Morpork have an innate fear of golems, though they are tolerated and

used by the citizens. Even those who employ golems see them as “stupid things” (DW19 75) and believe “you can’t trust golems” (159). If they are employed, people often don’t keep them for long⁴³ (76). It is rumoured that golems are killers (89), though golems are unable to kill, and have not committed any kind of crime⁴⁴ (89).

Golems are undeniably Other. They are not born, but made. Their clay faces are expressionless and they work in silence without complaint. “*“That’s why we all hate ‘em. ... Those expressionless eyes watch us, those big faces turn to follow us, and doesn’t it just look as if they’re making notes and taking names? ... Given how we use them, maybe we’re scared because we know we deserve it”*⁴⁵” (DW19 90), muses Vimes. Despite being treated as objects, being *made* into objects, golems force humans to face the Other. As Vimes suggests, deep down people are aware that their treatment of golems is not right. The suggestion they might be sentient is frightening, and when it can no longer be denied they can think and act, Vimes’s first reaction is ““We ought to destroy the lot of them ... You like the idea of them having *secrets*? I mean, good grief, ... They’re just objects that do work. It’s like having a bunch of shovels meeting for a chat!”” (93).

Golems were made by humans and they seem imprisoned by their own nature. Even they believe their purpose is to obey orders and work. “GOLEM MUST HAVE A MASTER” (Pratchett DW19 143) is their credo, followed by “TO WORK IS TO LIVE” (144). No one wants golems to think. It is easier, more convenient if they are objects. Because they are treated as such, they themselves do not realise they are alive. Their dehumanisation is not just external, it is also internal. The words in their heads need to be changed before they can conceptualise themselves as sentient beings, that is how deep their enslavement goes (161). Even so, golems still find ways to resist. Events in *Feet of Clay* hinge on the golems’s attempts to express themselves, to create—within the

⁴³ Or keep them where they can’t be seen

⁴⁴ Until events of *Feet of Clay*, that is, where a newly made golem is driven mad (DW19)

⁴⁵ Emphasis Pratchett’s

boundaries constricting them—a little bit of freedom. Despite being othered and objectified, the golems still strive and fight, even if their most common act of resistance consists of “dumbly obeying orders” (76). Pratchett seems to suggest that no matter how you are made, you can rise above the circumstances of your ‘clay’.

Language is used to dehumanise the golems—if they are discussed as objects, they become objects. The golems themselves have no voice and cannot express themselves. The words in their heads determine what they think: Change the words and you change their thoughts. If golems become people, the words used to discuss them need to be changed first. If a golem destroys itself, is that destruction of property, or suicide? (117). The answer determines whether a golem is a person or a thing. The same language shows how hypocritical the attitude of the citizens truly is. Captain Carrot points out that “‘If a golem is a *thing* than in can’t commit murder, ... If a golem can commit murder, then you are *people* and what is being done to you is terrible and must be stopped” (144). Golems cannot be both murderers and objects, but for them to become people, the language discussing them needs to change, starting with the words in their own head.

Carrot solves this problem by giving the golem Dorfl to himself, by placing the receipt used to buy him within Dorfl’s head. Through this symbolic action, Dorfl himself becomes responsible for who, or what, he is, no longer those who own him and the enormous responsibility that brings. “You couldn’t say, ‘I had orders.’ You couldn’t say, ‘It’s not fair.’ No one was listening. There were no words. You *owned* yourself” (Pratchett DW19 174). Those who are Other, need to be given a voice to defend themselves, and to be able to influence how they are talked about. Though golems were always sentient, they need to be able to express this before they will be considered people. Pratchett understands the importance of language and speech in this process, and the first thing the golems are given when they become free, is a tongue (204), so they can speak for themselves.

That golems ascend into peoplehood does not mean that they become more ‘human’. They always were sentient, now this is simply acknowledged and they are treated as such. Throughout the

novel, characters mention that golems think differently from humans. Golems don't have to eat, drink, or sleep, and have different priorities. Their otherness does not disappear, as to force them into something they are not would only be another form of slavery. However, as long as they themselves believe they are alive, they should be treated as such.

Mel Gibson suggests that Pratchett links golems to economic migrants (66). There are indeed similarities. Like golems, migrants are often invisible and working under atrocious conditions, while people blame them for taking the jobs they are offered, and accuse them of all manner of crimes without evidence. This link is explicitly made when the Watch bursts into the Discworld equivalent of a sweatshop. The proprietor employs both golems and the poor, and seems to consider neither people (DW19 189-90). However, we need to be careful with making too direct a connection. Golems are an exaggeration of how people are treated when they are treated as machines or objects. Humans cannot work without sleep or food, and they are not truly other. However, like golems, humans are shaped by the words that describe them. *Feet of Clay* shows what happens when we treat humans like things, and the evil it brings.

Part 2

Goblins

“Vermin ... an entire race reduced to vermin!” (Pratchett *DW39* 5)

Where golems are an example of mechanical dehumanisation, the treatment of goblins illustrates another way in which sentient beings can be dehumanised. They are turned into savage, animalistic monsters. Goblins first entered folklore as mischievous spirits, but are now often portrayed as irredeemably evil, following Tolkien’s example⁴⁶ (Clute & Grant “goblin”). At the beginning of *Snuff*, the Discworld golems are considered the lowest of the low.

The City Watch appeared to contain at least one member of every known bipedal sapient species ... It had become a tradition: If you could make it as a copper, then you could make it as a species. But nobody had ever once suggested that Vimes should employ a goblin, the simple reason being that they were universally known to be stinking, cannibalistic, vicious, untrustworthy bastards (Pratchett *DW39* 74)

The “stinking goblins” (94) are “officially vermin” (94); worthless and thieves to boot (94). Even within the Discworld they are a scary tale to tell children (117). It cannot be denied that they look like monsters. A goblin is “a creature that looked like a cross between a wolf and an ape ... they looked like the bad guys” (125). They live on the edges of society, because they have been driven there (5). However, as is usual on the Disc, appearances do not determine what a creature is. Despite how they are described by the characters, Pratchett does not describe the goblins as monsters. There are hints at lives lived in secret. They have beautiful but strange names, such as “The Pleasant Contrast of the Orange and Yellow Petals in the Flower of the Gorse” (119); “Tears

⁴⁶ Tolkien doesn’t always distinguish between the orcs and goblins, making it unclear whether orcs and goblins are two separate races or separate names for the same creatures. Both are evil corruptions of the nobler races of Middle Earth

off the Mushroom” (128); and “Regret of the Falling Leaf” (183) and show no sign of aggression. Instead they cower, scared and defeated.

It is easy to dehumanise the goblins. They are Other in almost every respect. They look like monsters, with their long claws and sharp teeth, live in holes and darkness, eat everything, and collect their own snot⁴⁷. Their language is impossible to understand for outsiders, and sounds unpleasant (Pratchett *DW39* 125). Because they are vermin, any action against them is justified. To kill a goblin is not murder (231), nor is it a crime to take them from their homes and force them into slavery (130). As with the golems, there are hints that the goblins are sentient. At the very least, it is obvious they feel pain. To the villagers, it is easier to ignore these signals, and think of them as vermin.

Pushed to the edges of society, the goblins are forced to do anything to survive. If they steal, they steal because they are starving. The most harrowing example of the hardships they are forced into, is the ‘*soul of tears*’ which is “the most beautiful of all pots, carved with little flowers and washed with tears” (Pratchett *DW39* 5). When a mother and newborn child are starving, goblins are faced with the “dreadful algebra of necessity” (5): Both will die, unless the mother eats the child. Without context, this sounds like a horrible act of cannibalism. Within context, it is the only solution: The mother might survive, and live to bear another child. She cries while she carves a pot to hold the soul of her child, hoping it might be reborn to her when times are better (185). The world may have decided that goblins are worthless, but this forces them into a life of suffering, death, and heartbreak.

Like the golems, goblins do not fight their status. They have accepted the fact they are worthless. They are so used to “undeserved and casual death” (Pratchett *DW39* 128) that they are neither angry nor grief-stricken when one of their own is killed. “There was just a sense of sorrow

⁴⁷ The goblins follow the tradition of Unggue, which means they need to collect everything expelled from their bodies, so it can be buried with them. In practice, most goblins observe the Unggue Had, which includes earwax, nail clippings, and snot (*DW39* 4)

and hopeless resignation at the fact that the world was as it was, and always would be and there was nothing to be done” (119). The goblins agree with the rest of the world: they believe they deserve their position. “[T]hey think that they’re rubbish! They think they did something very bad, a long time ago, and because of it, they think they’ve lived like they do” (152). Even the goblins taken into slavery do not fight back, but stolidly accept their fate. This shows how easy it is to rationalise being treated a certain way, and why it might be hard to fight their position.

By contrasting how characters talk about the goblins, with descriptions of the situation in the golem cave, Pratchett shows that what ‘everyone knows’ isn’t always true, and definitely not always right. Everyone that meets the goblins and sees how they live is surprised (Pratchett *DW39* 182). They are not vermin: they grieve and laugh, pick flowers, make beautiful things, and can make music, and this is what saves them. It takes one performance in the Ankh-Morkpork opera to show that goblins are people, that they can make art (274). Though the goblins use music rather than words, this mirrors the important role art and literature can play in social issues. Art might accomplish what arguments cannot.

Accepting the goblins does not mean turning them into copies of human beings. To do so would enslave their mind in the same way their bodies were enslaved. Miss Beedle, who teaches the goblins, teaches them to be “clever goblins”, so they can speak to those who would otherwise refuse to listen (Pratchett *DW39* 129). Goblins have a unique, subtle culture, that is only hinted at throughout the book. Pratchett shows a culture different than any encountered on the Disc before, and, if the beautiful things they create, their unique names, and ethereal music are any indication, it is a culture worth preserving⁴⁸ (288). In order to truly accept the goblin, the reader needs to accept their otherness. It is not up to the person standing face to face with the Other to judge her, it is their responsibility to listen.

⁴⁸ Though perhaps this is true of every culture, and should goblins be protected even if they made horrible things.

Even Fred Colon, one of the most speciesist members of the Watch, can be changed through an encounter with the Other. When he comes into possession of a “soul of tears” pot, he is forced to experience what the goblins at the plantation experience, and “having to rethink his worldview has shaken him a little” (Pratchett *DW39* 295). If even the most bigoted member of the Watch can be redeemed, once he has seen through the eyes of the Other, perhaps everyone can.

Snuff is one of the last Discworld books and very different in tone than previous volumes. So much so that fans doubted whether it had been written by Pratchett, and others suggested the lapse might be due to Pratchett’s illness⁴⁹ (r/discworld). Critical reception was still positive (Byatt). Though the message is similar to earlier books —there is no excuse for treating sentient beings as anything less than people— Pratchett seems more overt, losing some subtlety and humour along the way. The reader can never laugh at the foolishness of those in power, because their actions cause real palpable harm. The difference in tone is perhaps best illustrated in one of Vimes’s speeches.

And it appears, Mr. Stoner, that officially, in this parish, goblins are vermin. Rats are vermin, so are mice, and I believe that pigeons and crows may be also. But they don’t play the harp, Mr Stoner, they don’t make exquisitely configured pots, and, Mr Stoner, they do not beg for mercy, ... Goblins may be wretched, unhygienic and badly fed, and in that they are pretty much like the commonality of most of mankind. Where will your magistrates put the ruler, Mr Stoner? Then again, we don’t use a ruler in Ankh-Morpork, because once goblins are vermin, then the poor are vermin, and the trolls are vermin. She wasn’t vermin and she pleaded not to die (*DW39* 193)

⁴⁹ Pratchett was diagnosed with a rare form of early on-set alzheimer in December 2007, but continued to write until his death in 2015

An encounter with the Dehumanised Other shows us how simple it is to ignore the needs of living, breathing beings, because it is more convenient, or fits our worldview. In both *Feet of Clay* and *Snuff* there are hints that what is being done is wrong, but it takes an outsider to see how truly dreadful the situation is. This shows how difficult it is to see the world any other way. It is easier to see the Other as Other, than to question our own mind. What is often considered neutral — language, or law influences how those who deviate from the status quo are treated. Even if neither goblins nor golems exist on earth, the process of dehumanisation is all too real, and can turn entire groups of people in less than nothing.

Conclusion

Though we encounter many Others within the Watch sequence, the methods through which they are othered are depressingly familiar. Racism, speciesism, and dehumanisation all consider the other as inferior, and often not even worthy of consideration. This despite the fact that these Others often have much to offer, and at the very least offer an opportunity to question whether the world truly needs to be the way it is.

If we read the Watch sequence through the lens of otherness, it becomes clear that there is a progression within the novels. Beginning with *Men at Arms*, every subsequent novel deals with some form of othering, and throughout the series more and more species become accepted into the Watch, and subsequently into the city. The Fantasy setting allows Pratchett to experiment with different Others, without directly referencing existing cultures on Earth. *Jingo* comes closest to this, but plays with an idea of the Racial Other, rather than portraying a specific race, though the text employs orientalist imagery. The struggle of dwarfs, trolls, and undead to be accepted, mirrors the struggle of minority groups, while the struggle of golems and goblins examines those who have been dehumanised. However, the novels also offer hope: if species as different as dwarfs, trolls, the undead, golems, goblins, and humans, can live together in relative harmony, might not something similar be possible in our world?

The long period over which the books have been written, has allowed the characters to grow. Throughout the book, Sam Vimes has learned to accept those who are other, and to learn to see past their face into the part that really matters. While other species enter the Watch, and Vimes has to learn to see them as people, the reader learns right along with him. No single character within the Discworld is without fault, and acceptance of difference is a lesson some have to learn again and again, which shows how deeply ingrained the distrust of Others and otherness can be. The reader is invited to identify with the characters, and examine their own ideas.

Fantasy allows the writer to create a different world, and thus show our own world in a new light. Pratchett combines this with humour, to point out the flaws within our thinking, and to show the aspects of our world that don't make sense. When characters say things that are racist, speciesist, or intolerant, they are contradicted by other characters, events, or the narrator. These incongruities make us laugh, but they also make us think. Within these sequence, Pratchett makes us think about why we treat people a certain way, and what arguments we use to justify our worldview, but consistently shows that the Other is simply another person who wants to live their life.

Pratchett shows us that Otherness does not have to be negative, and that it is possible to be different and still live together. In fact, within the Watch itself, these differences are essential: Without werewolves, dwarfs, trolls and vampires many crimes would remain unsolved, the city a more dangerous place. Fantasy allows the author to come up with new ways of seeing the world, and Pratchett hints at what the world would look like if we could look through the eyes of dwarfs, werewolves, or even goblins. Though we can question whether it is possible to truly see the world through another's eyes, the exercise stretches the imagination and makes it more likely for us to be open to the perspectives of others. The books remind us as well that we are always looking outwards: We ourselves are separate from the world, and might be an Other in the eyes of many.

Pratchett is not a typical Fantasy writer. Though this is not true for all Fantasy, there is fantasy which is derivative, and which remains shackled to an essentialist worldview, where the humans are good, and the monsters bad. Pratchett shows that highly imaginative Fantasy can show us worlds that are either free of our systems of oppression, or question them, and help the reader free their own mind towards the possible. The Watch sequence offers a funny, heartfelt plea to accept those who might be different, marginalised, or actively maligned. If Fantasy teaches you that monsters can be beaten, Pratchett shows you that monsters can be befriended —and once you have — they might turn out not so monstrous after all.

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