

## Ankh-Morpork: The City as Protagonist

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**Abstract:** In science fiction and fantasy, sometimes the city (whether it is real or imaginary) plays the leading role, for example New York in *Winter's Tale* by Mark Helprin, or London in *Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman. Often, as in the case of Newford in several novels and short stories by Charles de Lint, a made-up city with its fictional topography and maps corresponds to and accentuates the social relations as well as the emotions embedded in the narration; the geography can indeed be emotional as it was so aptly put by Sir Terry Pratchett when he appointed Rincewind (one of his regularly popping-up characters) “Egregious Professor of Cruel and Unusual Geography of Unseen University” (among other jobs). Sir Terry also dreamt up a very significant city called Ankh-Morpork in his Discworld series (which might have been based on Budapest) which offers a perfect topic for discussion. Ankh-Morpork, which was a simple although very funny parody of a typical city in fantasy fiction at the beginning, gradually becomes a setting for emancipation, liberation and disenfranchisement from various bonds, and provides ample examples of references to British and internationalised culture. The city itself does not play a leading role in any of the novels, but when the whole series is taken into consideration, its significance is immediately apparent, the whole series forms a sort of *bildungsroman* which describes the maturation process of Ankh-Morpork. The whole sensational landscape created for our amusement as well as intellectual and moral benefit could be accurately mapped in terms of literary-cum-urban-studies, geopoetics, focusing on several aspects of social criticism.

**Keywords:** fantasy, series, parody, humour, *bildungsroman*, metafiction, emancipation

**Resumo:** No âmbito da ficção científica e da fantasia, a cidade (seja ela real ou ficcionada) desempenha, por vezes, o papel primordial, como Nova Iorque em *Winter's Tale* de Mark Helprin, ou Londres em *Neverwhere* de Neil Gaiman. Recorrentemente, como no caso de Newford em vários romances e contos de

Charles de Lint, uma cidade forjada com a sua topografia e mapas fictícios corresponde e acentua não só as relações sociais, mas também as emoções contidas na narração; a geografia pode, de igual modo, ser emocional, tal como enfatizou Terry Pratchett quando nomeou Rincewind (uma das suas personagens usuais), “Egrégio Professor da Cruel e Invulgar Geografia da Universidade Invisível” (entre outros trabalhos). Terry Pratchett projetou, ainda, uma cidade bastante significativa à qual chamou Ankn-Morpork, na série Discworld (que, eventualmente, poderia ter sido baseada na cidade de Budapeste), que se oferece como um tópico profícuo para a discussão. Ankn-Morpork, que era um local simples embora mimetizasse uma paródia de uma cidade típica do domínio da fantasia, no início, transformou-se paulatinamente num ponto de emancipação, libertação e desmantelamento de alguns laços, e fornece exemplos amplos de referências à cultura britânica internacionalizada. A cidade, em si, não desempenha um papel principal em nenhum dos romances, não obstante, quando se considera a série na totalidade, o seu relevo torna-se, de imediato, evidente, dado que toda a produção constitui um tipo de *bildungsroman*, que descreve o processo de conceção de Ankh-Morpork. A paisagem sensacional criada para o entretenimento dos leitores assim como os benefícios intelectuais e morais poderiam ser mapeados, com precisão, através de termos dos estudos literários-urbanos e geopoéticos, dando enfoque a múltiplos aspetos da crítica social.

**Palavras-chave:** fantasia, séries, paródia, humor, *bildungsroman*, metaficção, emancipação

For there to be culture in a deep sense of the word, there has to be a consensus in the social group about what is essential. In every grounded and vivifying culture, you find a central focus. Everyone (no doubt with different levels of discourse) refers to it – the philosopher in his study, the peasant in his field. (White 1994)

So does the novelist in his books, particularly, if he is both inside and outside of the norm, as I hope this brief sketch focusing on a very narrow central topic will demonstrate. The Humanist writer whom I shall talk about in this paper, Terry Pratchett had a really comprehensive, quite profound knowledge of Western civilisation and culture, at least in certain aspects of it, and this knowledge, his grasp of essentials he used to parody, as White put it, “this object-ridden, activity-frantic consumer-culture,” at the same time presenting several role models, several ways to fulfill one’s potential. He created several worlds, described many landscapes which were always more than simple background. The land and its inhabitants have a very deep link in all his stories,

the relationship to the earth is fundamental (e.g. the Tiffany Aching series, *Wyrd Sisters*, *Carpe Jugulum* et cetera), therefore my chosen topic seems a fitting contribution to the volume devoted to geocriticism. “The Geopoetics of an author is to be understood as his territorial intelligence, poetic and imagining ability for producing and constructing a world, his characteristic determination and presentation of the relation Man – Earth.” (Italiano 2016: 4). Pratchett excelled in this, and perhaps the best example of his geopoetics is the city-state, Ankh-Morpork to be discussed here.

### ***The author: Terry Pratchett***

In the hands of a Terry Pratchett or a James Morrow, the fantastic is a glorious vehicle for satire on contemporary mores and institutions. (Attebery 2014: 4)

Terry Pratchett, that is Sir Terence David John Pratchett was born on 28 April 1948 in Beaconsfield and died on 12 March 2015 in Broad Chalke. He wrote more than 70 books, among them 41 Discworld novels. Several of these were adapted to the stage, radio, television or cinema (both animation and films); turned into comics, videogames, or board games; picture books, maps, guides, calendars and diaries were produced in collaboration with him. More than 85 million Pratchett books were sold in 37 languages; in the nineties he was the best selling British author, every hundredth novel sold in the UK were written by him<sup>1</sup>. His most famous creation, the Discworld induced a lot of spin-off material, gave rise to a small industry. Fans of his works have created online fora, several newsgroups and webpages exclusively dealing with the Pratchett oeuvre or a part of it, usually the Discworld (see <https://www.lspace.org/>). Tit for tat: even a parody of his comedies was published in 2015.

He started his career as a journalist and composed parodies of his beloved science fiction and fantasy only in his spare time. When these became successful enough, he turned professional (1987) and devoted his time to writing, producing two novels every year until 2004. Regardless of topic or genre, all his work display his humane and humanitarian views, including his sense of justice and fairness, his cunning and artful way of thinking, his tremendous language, communication and combinatorial skills, his

peculiar and playful way of spotting the absurd in human history and society and presenting it edifyingly as well as amusingly, captivating the readers, having them laughing aloud and making them involved; and all of these effortlessly, wittily, inspiringly. Pratchett invented ‘narrative causality’ which he employs and alters unexpectedly, until his illness, the plot in his works generally had three unpredictable twists.

In a nutshell, it means stories have a shape. It’s very easy to follow that shape and very hard to escape from it. Let me put it at its crudest; if the youngest son of the king goes on a quest in which his two eldest brothers have failed, you know for a certainty he’s going to succeed. Narrative causality dictates that he will. And when he meets an old woman in the woods, whom his brothers failed to assist, and shares his lunch with her, she’s going to give him something, say something or be something which materially assists his quest. That’s built into the story structure of the Western world.

Narrative causality is a sense how plots, sub-plots and bits of story tend to follow a shape similar to thousands of others that have gone before (Nicholls 343-344)

Notwithstanding his acuity of mind and writing, he received only a few honours in his life: was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1998, won the British Science Fiction Award for *Pyramids* in 1989 and the annual Carnegie Medal in 2001, was knighted for services to literature (2009 New Year Honours), got the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement in 2010, the 13th Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction in 2013 (for *Snuff*, his 50th book) and the Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America posthumously, in 2016.

Academia has mainly ignored his works (apart from theses, from BA to PhD, a biography<sup>2</sup>, and a few scholarly works, only two of them focusing on literature<sup>3</sup>), perhaps because of his popularity (idolisation of the masses is still suspect), perhaps due to the doubly peripheral status of his chosen aspect and mode (Frye 1957): it is still frowned upon, still not *comme il faut* to take humour seriously, let alone fantasy. *Terry Pratchett's Narrative Worlds: From Giant Turtles to Small Gods* by Marion Rana discussing Pratchett life and literary world will be published in December this year.

In 2007 Pratchett was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease. From that moment on, he began a public awareness campaign to call attention – and donations – to

this terrible 'embuggerance' as he named his illness. He himself donated more than one million USD to Alzheimer research. In 2013 Pratchett was named the Humanist of the Year for his awareness campaign to raise funds for Alzheimer research and fighting for the right to die, for being the presenter in an award-winning BBC documentary about assisted death and saying, "it should be possible for someone stricken with a serious and ultimately fatal illness to choose to die peacefully with medical help, rather than suffer." As an expression of esteem and admiration, 17 writers wrote about memory *In Memory: A Tribute to Sir Terry Pratchett* in 2015.

An asteroid is christened 127005 Pratchett as one of his hobbies was star-gazing. Another was supporting the orangutans. The author had a relationship with the Orangutan Foundation for years, he became a trustee of the charity in 1994 whilst filming *Terry Pratchett's Jungle Quest*. He also worked with the charity whilst filming *Terry Pratchett Facing Extinction*. A biennial award was also named after him, the Terry Pratchett First Novel Award for the best unpublished science fiction novel in the Commonwealth of Nations. On 8th April 2014, the first International Sir Terry Pratchett Day was celebrated at the London Book Fair. When he died, graffiti tributes popped up at several places in the United Kingdom (most notably in Shoreditch Street in London), some of them took three months to complete.

The BBC produced and broadcast a dramatised documentary about his life entitled *Back in Black* on 11 February 2017. Salisbury Museum presents a major exhibition entitled *Terry Pratchett: His World* about the life of the author, humanist and activist from 16 September 2017 to 13 January 2018.

No writer in my lifetime has given me as much pleasure and happiness. He could do knockabout for schoolboys (and girls) but he was also subtle and wise and very funny in the adult world. I loved him because almost all the characters he didn't like slowly grew more real, more interesting, more complicated perhaps to his own surprise. (Byatt 2015: s.p.)

Obeying Terry Pratchett's last wish, all his unfinished novels, that is, the hard disks storing them, were destroyed using a steamroller on 30th August 2017 ensuring that after the last one he approved no more Discworld novels would ever be published again.

Pratchett wrote in *Going Postal* that “[a] man’s not dead while his name’s still spoken” (Pratchett 2004: 79) in connection with a code called GNU commemorating a deceased character, so after his death a similar GNU code was designed by Reddit as a way to add Pratchett to the HTML code of websites, and developers soon posted ways of adding the code to different servers, apps, proxies, and even to mail servers and blogging sites. So now #GNUTerryPratchett will run through the internet forever...

### ***The series: Discworld***

For, as the world tumbles lazily, it is revealed as the Discworld - flat, circular, and carried through space on the back of four elephants who stand on the back of Great A'tuin, the only turtle ever to feature on the Hertzprung-Russell Diagram, a turtle ten thousand miles long, dusted with the frost of dead comets, meteor-pocked, albedo-eyed. No-one knows the reason for all this, but it is probably quantum. Much that is weird could happen on a world on the back of a turtle like that. (P: 7<sup>4</sup>)

The Discworld series started in 1983 with *The Colour of Magic*, a pure parody, and ended in 2015 with the posthumous *The Shepherd's Crown*, the closing volume of a juvenile coming-of-age sub-series, and consists of 41 books and a few short stories. Additional information can be gained from maps, tourist guides, an atlas, a cookbook, an 'almanak', *Mrs Bradshaw's Handbook* (on travels by train), *The Art of Discworld*, *The Folklore of Discworld*, two illustrated children's books, *The Unseen University Cut-out Book*, four volumes of popular science, the themed Discworld diaries (1998-2003, 2007-2008, 2015), and the companions (nine so far, the most recent is up to 2011, including *Snuff*). Ankh-Morpork has both a map (1993, the very first one) and a tourist guide (2012) which clearly shows its significance, just like the themes of the diaries, all of them are in connection with the city, seven out of the ten give an account of Morporkian institutions or groups.

Pratchett's capacity to come up with unimaginably funny things has made his Discworld novels bestsellers. A planet with its genesis in an amalgam of Earthly creation myths, Discworld is a flat plane supported by four elephants standing on the back of a great turtle called A'Tuin, floating in the far regions of space.

It is populated by a pantheon of wacky characters. They include Granny Weatherwax, a knowing old bag of a witch; Carrot, a six-foot-tall dwarf, and Death, who once worked as a cook in a fast food joint. Visiting tourist Twoflower acts as a kind of Everyman figure, the reader's representative in this madhouse. They engage in all he exploits familiar to readers of fantasy, but on the Discworld everything is played strictly for laughs. (Nicholls 1993: 341)

The Disc, a secondary world<sup>5</sup> is based on a mytheme, a world turtle which occurs in several mythologies and folk tales, and, as usual, Pratchett has combined several myths: his fantasy setting also includes world elephants, and a Flat Earth called the Disc whose centre has an enormous mountain, The Hub also known as Cori Celesti, where the overmany gods and goddesses<sup>6</sup> dwell and which is the pivot of the Disc's magical field. Pratchett describes magic as an elemental force, like gravity, similar to background radiation: always there, only its amount differs. Magic warps reality (there is even a Law of Conservation of Reality) which allows the existence of the Discworld and provides the author with a locale where anything may happen and usually does. Belief creates gods/goddesses and endow them with supernatural powers: in *Going Postal* the protagonist publicly – and deceitfully – attributes finding a lot of money to Anoaia, the Goddess of Things That Get Stuck in Drawers, till then a very minor deity indeed, thus renders her capable of real miraculous intervention later on thanks to the great amount of belief and prayers the goddess receives from people who would also like to have a godsend.

The adventuresome and variegated narratives combine all sorts of humour and are interleaved with lots of information which requires encyclopaedic learning and well-informedness to appreciate them to the full, but of course they are enjoyable at several levels, it depends on the reader's preliminary knowledge, cultural background and abstraction skills how much they can perceive.

At the beginning these novels were linked to one another just loosely. If one reads them in their published order, not according to the six distinct, thematically separate sub-series (Rincewind, Death, City Watch, witches, industrial revolution, ancient civilisations), the process how the original light-hearted caricatures (e.g., Conan the Barbarian by Robert E. Howard or Cthulhu by H. P. Lovecraft), parodies (e.g., that of *Macbeth* or the *Arabian Nights*), pastiches have gradually developed into a staunch and

persevering communication of a profound, considered and consistent world view through delightful stories full of linguistic feats and logical somersaults which swerve from the expected patterns unpredictably (at least until the Alzheimer) can be traced easily. Even at a first glance, it is apparent how the initially pure entertainment and slyness have become, due to Pratchett's implacable sense of justice, a lashing out, chastisement against any oppression and stupidity. This attitude manifests best in the demonstrative chapters of the popular science books (*The Science of Discworld 1-4*), and the transformation of the city-state, Ankh-Morpork.

Unlike most fantasy fiction, the Discworld novels repudiate destiny (even in the form of narrative causality, see later) and advocate free will: the last scion of the Ankh-Morpork royal family who was raised by dwarves therefore considers himself a dwarf despite his height, refuses the throne and chooses to be a policeman (*Guards! Guards!*), the lost heir of a kingdom refuses the throne and chooses to be an actor (*Wyrd Sisters*); Cinderella decides not to marry the prince (*Witches Abroad*); the war between two nations suddenly metamorphoses into a friendly football match (*Jingo*) which, although certainly a battle, is not the usual outcome of armed conflicts (this motif is further developed in *Unseen Academicals*).

The novels always use patterns from well-known myths, tales, quotes from or allusions to literary or other art works (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Rubaiyat*, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *The Son of Lassie* etc.), scientific facts (from Brownian motion to quantum mechanics) and obscure titbits<sup>7</sup> of mostly Anglo-Saxon cultures, all of these with quirky twists: for instance, in *Maskerade*, the Discworld version of *The Phantom of the Opera*, at the end the leading part is given to a beautiful and slim girl who cannot sing well instead of the fat one with an astonishing voice, a surprising, but much more realistic happy ending than the one a well-read audience would hope for. Pratchett often hints at an idea or person, mentions something in passing, and develops it (the concept or the character etc.) later on (e.g., the name of a village which occurs in the third volume, *Equal Rites*, gets explained in the 25th, *Carpe Jugulum*).

All in all, the series holds up a mirror to various aspects of human civilisation, shows a distorted yet truthful image of our reality in each volume, and these images

combined together produce very severe social criticism from a humanistic standpoint, (partly) hidden behind the jokes and captivating narratives.

### ***The city: Ankh-Morpork***

The stars below are campfires, out in the desert, and the lights of remote villages high in the forested mountains. Towns are smeared nebulae, cities are vast constellations; the great sprawling city of Ankh-Morpork, for example, glows like a couple of colliding galaxies. (P: 8)

Ankh-Morpork, also referred to as the “Big Wahoonie,” is the biggest city of the Discworld, located where the Sto Plains meet the Circle Sea, bisected by the River Ankh, the hilly side belongs to the aristocracy and the well-to-do, the flat side to the poor and the working classes and the villains who mostly inhabit the slum called The Shades. It is built on black loam, but mostly on previous versions of itself, buried by sediment after the frequent floods, so by now there is a whole network of abandoned streets and canals below the city proper and certain areas of the city lie lower than the river bed. This city-state is arguably based on real-life Tallin, Prague and Budapest, with features borrowed from renaissance Florence, 18th century London, 19th century Seattle, contemporary New York, and Rome of any period, and, uniquely among the fictional cities, has been twinned with Wincanton, UK (since 2002). Its population is approximately one million, multi-cultural and multi-species, including fictive ones like dwarves, trolls, zombies, vampires, and werewolves, continuously increasing. The introduction of each new species permits a funny, but thought-provoking examination of real-world problems. “There's a saying that all roads lead to Ankh-Morpork. And it's wrong. All roads lead away from Ankh-Morpork, but sometimes people just walk along them the wrong way.” (MP: 13)

When Ankh-Morpork appears for the first time in COM, it is depicted as a city of greedy felons, where the criminals have guilds, no law enforcement exist, and half of the city is destroyed by flames thanks to the introduction of fire insurance. This moral atmosphere is mirrored in later volumes by the polluted environment: the air is putrid,

the water so befouled it is almost solid and one can walk on it, the Ankh is “the only river in the world on which you could draw a chalk outline” (MAA: 130).<sup>8</sup>

Both of these motifs recur in the first novels, usually in contrast with other, less contaminated places.

He found that he had this sudden desperate longing for the fuming, smoky streets of Ankh-Morpork, which was always at its best in the spring, when the gummy sheen on the turbid waters of the Ankh River had a special iridescence and the eaves were full of birdsong, or at least birds coughing rhythmically. (TLF: 68)

Teppic sighed. He was attached to rivers, which he felt were designed to have water lilies on top and crocodiles underneath, and the Ankh always depressed him because if you put a water lily in it, it would dissolve. It drained the huge silty plains all the way to the Ramtop mountains, and by the time it had passed through Ankh-Morpork, pop. one million, it could only be called a liquid because it moved faster than the land around it; actually being sick in it would probably make it, on average, marginally cleaner. (P: 66)

Later on, the portrayal of the city is enriched as each book reveals more and more about its history, layout, customs, everyday life and the like, and the small fragments together gradually form a very different picture. The often mentioned famous Morporkian enterprising spirit, which mainly focused on inventing methods to rob the unsuspecting and unprotected in the beginning, contrives new crafts, devices and methods leading to an industrial revolution, for instance, in *Moving Pictures* the alchemists discover how to produce silent movies (a form of gold, of course), or in *Soul Music* an accidentally broken harp is mended in the Street of Cunning Artificers: “I mean, I know you said there wasn’t anyone left in Llamados that could repair it. But this is Ankh-Morpork. **We can fix nearly everything.**” (SM: 325, emphasis mine)

The economy of the city-state is run by almost 300 guilds, all professions have their own: the accountants and usurers; the (cunning) artificers; the assassins; the beggars; the fools; the merchants and traders; the musicians; the seamstresses (a euphemism for ladies of negotiable affection); the teachers; the thieves, cutpurses and allied trades; the victims etc. Even the dogs have their guild and allegedly the rats, too.

The guilds handle their own apprentice training and education, advise the ruler in public affairs, and try to grab as much power as possible.

### ***The Patrician and the Guilds***

It was a funny thing, but everyone seemed to want to live under the despotic rule of the tyrannical Lord Vetinari. They poured into the city whose streets were apparently paved with gold. (MM: 96)

Ankh-Morpork had monarchy, oligarchy and anarchy in the past, the current political system is despotism, described in the fourth book, *Mort* as “Currently a highly specialised democracy lead by a Patrician, a.k.a One Man, One Vote: Lord Vetinari is the Man, he has the Vote.”

Lord Vetinari, called the Patrician, an enlightened tyrant rules the city juggling the various pressure groups and interests for the public good. His character might be developed from the Medicis. However, the Patrician of the first volume, and Lord Vetinari of the later ones cannot be the same person as their descriptions and behaviour differ significantly, in *The Colour of Magic*, the ruler is obese, while Vetinari who appears first in *Mort*, is bony, the former uses open threats of torture and execution while Vetinari is feared because of his devious mind, sarcastic remarks and “raising his eyebrows in no uncertain manner” (*Jingo*). The only common feature is an extensive spy network both of them employ. Thus, one may hypothesise that the noticeable changes in Ankh-Morpork from aversive to highly attractive, as demonstrated by the quotations below, may be attributed to the different government.

Ankh-Morpork!

Pearl of cities!

This is not a completely accurate description, of course – it was not round and shiny – but even its worst enemies would agree that **if you had to liken Ankh-Morpork to anything, then it might as well be a piece of rubbish covered with the diseased secretions of a dying mollusc.** (TLF: 173, my emphasis)

Ankh-Morpork's enviable system of licensed criminals owes much to the current Patrician, Lord Vetinari. He reasoned that the only way to police a city of a million inhabitants was to recognise the various gangs and robber guilds, give them professional status, invite the leaders to large dinners, allow an acceptable level of street crime and then make the guild leaders responsible for enforcing it, on pain of being stripped of their new civic honours along with large areas of their skins. It worked. Criminals, it turned out, made a very good police force; unauthorised robbers soon found, for example, that instead of a night in the cells they could now expect an eternity at the bottom of the river.

However, there was the problem of apportioning the crime statistics, and so there arose a complex system of annual budgeting, chits and allowances to see that a) the members could make a reasonable living and b) no citizen was robbed or assaulted more than an agreed number of times. Many foresighted citizens in fact arranged to get an acceptable minimum of theft, assault, etc, over at the beginning of the financial year, often in the privacy and comfort of their own homes, and thus be able to walk the streets quite safely for the rest of the year. It all ticked over extremely peacefully and efficiently, demonstrating once again that compared to the Patrician of Ankh, Machiavelli could not have run a wheel stall. (WS: 171)

The complex system of criminal Guilds had not actually made Ankh-Morpork a safer place, it just rationalised its dangers and put them on a regular and reliable footing. The major Guilds policed the city with more thoroughness and certainly more success than the old Watch had ever managed, and it was true that any freelance and unlicensed thief caught by the Thieves' Guild would soon find himself remanded in custody by social inquiry reports plus having his knees nailed together. (P: 64)

Since this despotism has to carefully balance among the various pressure groups and Guilds, the diverse species and neighbouring states as well as numerous religions, to say nothing of the wizards, witches and other magic practitioners; the power relations in Ankh-Morpork fluctuate, sometimes rather bizarrely, and several attempts were made to restore the monarchy or to divest the Patrician of his office (GG, MAA, FoC, J). However, the city prospers under his rule and, as an acknowledgement of the Patrician's role in this affluence, the Assassin's Guild refuses any commission on his life.

### ***Captain Vimes and the Watch***

The city wasa, wasa, wasa wosname. Thing. Woman. Thass what it was. Woman. Roaring, ancient, centuries old. Strung you along, let you fall in thingy, love, with her, then kicked you inna, inna,

thingy. Thingy, in your mouth. Tongue. Tonsils. Teeth. That's what it, she, did. She wasa . . . thing, you know, lady dog. Puppy. Hen. Bitch. And then you hated her and, and just when you thought you'd got her, it, out of your, your, whatever, then she opened her great booming rotten heart to you, caught you off bal, bal, bal, thing. Ance. Yeah. Thassit. Never knew where where you stood. Lay. Only thing you were sure of, you couldn't let her go. Because, because she was yours, all you had, even in her gutters . . . (GG: 7-8)

Parallel to the political progress, the lawlessness of the city, so apparent in the first few volumes, gradually disappears as Captain Vimes of the Night Watch, a good-for-nothing drunk transforms into a responsible law enforcement officer concerned with peace-keeping. He even arrests Prince Cadram, the ruler of a neighbouring state, and, despite being called Vetinari's terrier, the Patrician himself (J) since "No person is above the law" (Vetinari in GG).

This change may also be attributed to 'a different government:' as the transformation begins when the already mentioned last royal scion joins the Watch and adheres to every word of the law setting an example and reminds Vimes of his own keen and naive younger self. Combined with a firedrake's destruction, Vetinari's above-mentioned words and a good woman's love, it is enough to start the alteration which will culminate in climbing the social ladder (Commander of the Watch, knighthood, the Duke of Ankh and ambassador on several temporary missions in foreign countries), marrying the most eligible aristocratic spinster and finally having some private life, plus establishing a real police force. The captain's character gains depth in each volume, for instance, *Night Watch* which magically takes him into his own past, accounts for his peculiar relationship with the Patrician.

### ***Unseen University***

The magical realm follows the same course from chaos into order. The Unseen University, whose campus used to be centre of Ankh-Morpork, features from the very first novel as the Disc's premier college of magic, where academic competition is dead serious:

Far below, in the Great Hall, the eight most powerful wizards on the Discworld gathered at the angles of a ceremonial octogram. Actually they probably weren't the most powerful, if the truth were known, but they certainly had great powers of survival which, in the highly competitive world of magic, was pretty much the same thing. Behind every wizard of the eighth rank were half a dozen seventh rank wizards trying to bump him off, and senior wizards had to develop an inquiring attitude to, for example, scorpions in their bed. An ancient proverb summed it up: when a wizard is tired of looking for broken glass in his dinner, it ran, he is tired of life. (TLF: 23)

Wizardly rivalry climaxes in *Sourcery* with open magical warfare and wholesale full-on destruction, leaving a strong desire for stability and orderliness in its aftermath which manifests in electing a new Archchancellor who, in the same way the Patrician re-shapes power relations and Vimes re-forms police forces, re-organises the institution, restrains the wizards, and makes the University an important civil counterweight. Just like the policemen trained by Vimes are sought after in other cities, the faculty members of UU are coaxed to take up an academic position at other colleges of magic, and when they do, they also spread the Morporkian attitude. The travesty of higher education, including teaching (considered something to be avoided at all costs, lectures take place in a non-existent lecture room), students ('What sort of people would we be if we didn't go into the Library?' 'Students'), research, academic and monograph titles (Chair of Indefinite Studies, Lecturer in Creative Uncertainty, Senior Wrangler, Synonyms for the Word "Plimsoll", Some Observations on the Art of Invisibility etc.) is present whenever the Unseen University plays a part, and satirical asides materialise in particular of those who would maintain the *status quo* regardless; however, the advancement towards a more modern cognizance cannot be gainsaid.

### ***The meeting point, the melting pot***

He'll be in Ankh-Morpork. Mark my words. Everyone ends up there. We'll start with Ankh-Morpork. You don't have to search for people when destiny is involved, you just wait for them in Ankh-Morpork. (WS: 157)

Step by step, book by book Ankh-Morpork becomes a determinant in all events on the Disc, particularly in economics, technology, ideology and politics (inventing newspapers,

post, steam engines, clacks [telegraph], movies, football etc.) and sets an example to other countries how to be modern, politically correct (see vitally challenged for dead) and inventive. The forwardness of the city is frowned upon by certain people, social classes, countries and even gods, but any individual or even species discriminated against gravitates toward Ankh-Morpork hoping to find a place for themselves. Since so many deemed unfit, unworthy or just plain unusual move to the city, it becomes a real melting pot like the United States in the 19th and 20th century, with lots of resources other places lack and a huge potential for ingenuity ensuring rapid economic, technological, hence social progress.

'And what does this all mean to us?' 'Probably more refugees, sir.'

'Ye gods, we've got no more room! Why do they keep coming here?'

'In search of a better life, sir, I think.'

'A *better* life?' said Vimes. '*Here?*'

'I think things are worse where they come from, sir,' said Carrot.

'What kind of refugees are we talking about here?'

'Mostly human, sir.'

'Do you mean that most of them will be human, or that each individual will be mostly human?' said Vimes. After a while in Ankh-Morpork, you learned how to phrase that kind of question.

'Er, apart from humans the only species I've heard of there in any numbers are the kvetch, sir. They live in the deep woods and are covered in hair.'

'Really? Well, we'll probably find out more about them when we're asked to employ one in the Watch,' said Vimes sourly. (NW: 26)

After a while Ankh-Morpork even affects the incomers' place of origin, ultimately the whole world and civilisation. For instance, becoming the most populous dwarf dwelling-place besides their homeland, Uberwald, 50,000 Morporkian dwarves happen to be a decisive factor during the election of the king of all dwarves. Of course, the Morporkian dwarves vote for the progressive candidate, who in turn supports the vampires who pledge total abstinence from drinking blood of sentient species and the Morporkians in eliminating the werewolves' old and bloody oppression, that is, the Enlightenment of Uberwald originate in the laissez-faire and recipient attitude of Ankh-Morpork demonstrated by the previously mentioned key figures and institutions and a few others.

## **Conclusions**

Against the dark screen of night, Vimes had a vision of Ankh-Morpork. It wasn't a city, it was a process, a weight on the world that distorted the land for hundreds of miles around. People who'd never see it in their whole life nevertheless spent their life working for it. Thousands and thousands of green acres were part of it, forests were part of it. It drew in and consumed . . .

. . . and gave back the dung from its pens and the soot from its chimneys, and steel, and saucepans, and all the tools by which its food was made. And also clothes, and fashions and ideas and interesting vices, songs and knowledge and something which, if looked at in the right light, was called civilization. That's what civilization meant. It meant the city. (NW: 299)

The city is originally a parody of fantasy cities, its prominence gradually increases until it becomes a place of freedom and innovation. Paradoxically, the apparent autocracy respects not only the law, but human/nonhuman and civil rights as well, since all Discworld creatures aspire to gain those, they are drawn to Ankh-Morpork. It means that traditional enmities (e.g. troll versus dwarf) also move to the city, but coexisting changes these relationships, first the misfits of each species join the Night Watch where they learn to work together, then camaraderie, collegueship proves stronger than other ties species or social class may establish. Ankh-Morpork thus ends up as an epitome of civilisation.

Reading the Discworld novels changes our perception of “life, the universe and everything” through questioning a number of stereotypes and truths we have learnt during our socialisation. Meanwhile Ankh-Morpork “turns worthless gold into... everything” (MM: 109).

Ankh-Morpork occurs in all 41 Discworld novels (and other related stories), which might be a world record. This provides an opportunity to display several aspects of city life from different angles using relatively few protagonists with lots of supernumeraries and minor actors while altering the role of the city little by little: from a mere setting it metamorphoses into first a mainstay, later if we take the whole series into consideration, the real protagonist. As far as I know this is a unique occurrence in (fantasy) literature.

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## Appendix A.

### *The National Anthem of Ankh-Morpork*

The lyrics of the anthem are as follows:

When dragons belch and hippos flee  
My thoughts, Ankh-Morpork, are of thee  
Let others boast of martial dash  
For we have boldly fought with cash  
We own all your helmets, we own all your shoes  
We own all your generals - touch us and you'll lose.

Morporkia! Morporkia!  
Morporkia owns the day!  
We can rule you wholesale  
Touch us and you'll pay.

We bankrupt all invaders, we sell them souvenirs  
We ner ner ner ner ner, hner ner hner by the ears  
Er hner we ner ner ner ner ner  
Ner ner her ner ner ner hner the ner  
Er ner ner hner ner, nher hner ner ner (etc.)  
Ner hner ner, your gleaming swords  
We mortgaged to the hilt

Morporkia! Morporkia!  
Hner ner ner ner ner ner  
We can rule you wholesale  
Credit where it's due.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> “A second bookseller reports a similar finding: that 10 per cent of all fiction sold is fantasy, and that 10 per cent of all fantasy sold is by Terry Pratchett” (Edwards 1994: 202).

<sup>2</sup> Cabell, Craig (2012), *Terry Pratchett – The Spirit of Fantasy*, London, John Blake Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> Rzyman, Aleksander (2017), *The Intertextuality of Terry Pratchett’s Discworld as a Major Challenge for the Translator*, U.K., Cambridge Scholar Publishing; Held, J., / South, J. (eds.) (2014), *Philosophy and Terry Pratchett*, U.K., Palgrave MacMillan; Butler, Andrew M. / Edward, James / Mendlesohn, Farah (eds) (2000) *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, s.l., The Science Fiction Foundation; Alton, Anne Hiebert, Spruiell, William C. (eds.) (2014), *Discworld and the Disciplines: Critical approaches to the Terry Pratchett works*, Jefferson, McFarland and Company.

<sup>4</sup> See abbreviations of book titles in works cited.

<sup>5</sup> Tolkien’s term in his essay “On Fairy-Stories” (1947) for a particular kind of otherworld, which is not bound to mundane reality, impossible according to common sense and self-coherent. The concept is summed up by John Clute in “Tolkien”, Clute, John / Grant, John (1999), *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, London, Orbit Books, Hachette Book Group, 951.

<sup>6</sup> “There are 3,000 known major gods on the Disc, and more are discovered by research theologians every week.” (Briggs 2003: 71)

<sup>7</sup> Whose source is often one of Ebenezer Cobham Brewer’s works, see Project Gutenberg: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/authors/search/?query=Brewer,+Ebenezer+Cobham>.

<sup>8</sup> Since the name means life, and water is supposed to be the source of life, lots of environmentally conscious jokes pop up about the cleanliness of its water. And not only that of the Ankh, see the Fountain of Youth in *Eric*.