Comedy Gold

How Humour is Used as Social Criticism in Terry Pratchett’s Making Money

Komik Värd Sin Vikt i Guld
Hur Humor Används Som Samhällskritik i Terry Pratchetts Making Money

Robin Kjellberg

Institutionen för Språk, Litteratur och Interkultur
Engelska/Litteraturvetenskap
15hp
Johan Wijkmark
Åke Bergvall
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Abstract

Pratchett’s absence from being mentioned in the same breath as great satirists such as Swift, Chaucer or Dryden to mention a few, could be because Pratchett’s choice of genre is fantasy which is, by many, considered a ‘lesser’ genre. One can wonder though in what ways the imagined nations and peoples of the Discworld series differ from some of the encounters made by Gulliver in Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels. This could indicate that the genre is not necessarily the reason why Pratchett’s work is not considered classic satire, but rather the fact that he is still too contemporary.

My intention with this essay is to argue that Pratchett is a satirist, particularly in the way he uses a select few kinds of satire to craft social commentary that is relevant to not only the worlds he creates, but ours as well. However, it is also my view that Pratchett’s one major downfall is that the humor he uses to make social commentary can also be so heavy-handed that the reader, at times, misses the point entirely as well as the fact that his writing is clearly coloured by an agenda that makes him rather biased. While most of Pratchett’s satire is easy to understand at first glance for most readers, some of it is not and requires that the reader share some of the same political and social views as the author.

Keywords: Satire, Pratchett, Making Money, Social Criticism

Sammanfattning

Pratchetts frånvaro i uppräkningar av stora satirister som t.ex. Swift, Chaucer eller Dryden för att näma ett fåtal kan bero på Pratchetts val av fantasy som sin litterära uttrycksform vilket av många anses vara en 'lägre' form av litteratur. Det är dock möjligt att ställa frågan hur de påhittade nationerna och invånarna i Discworld-serien skiljer sig markant från några utav de möten som görs av Gulliver i Swifts Gulliver’s Travels. Detta kan ses att vara en indikation på att det kanske inte är genren som är Pratchetts problem utan att han ses att vara för samtida för att uppskattas för sina observationer i vissa kretsar.

Målet med denna uppsats är att argumentera för att Pratchett är en satiriker, speciellt i sitt sätt att använda ett par valda satiriska grepp för att skapa sociala budskap om inte bara kan appliceras på de världar han skapar utan även på vår egen. Dock så är det också min åsikt att Pratchetts stora problem är att den humor som används för att skapa dessa budskap ibland kan vara så överdrivet för läsaren att de stundtals kan missas och istället tolkas för ren komedi. Till detta tillkommer att han skriver sina texter färgad av en agenda som gör honom partisk i vissa frågor. Medens majoriteten av Pratchetts satir är lätt att ta till sig för de flesta läsare så är den ibland konstruerad att läsaren måste dela samma politiska och sociologiska åsikter för att förstå meningen.

Nyckelord: Satir, Pratchett, Making Money, Samhällskritik
Terry Pratchett’s *Making Money* was first published in 2007 and well received by critics. *The Times* declared it to be “As bright and shiny as a newly minted coin; clever, engaging and laugh-out-loud funny”; *Sunday Times* stated that the novel “Offers more comic inventiveness and originality than most other novels of the year, and more fun” while *Daily Express* commented by saying “Terry Pratchett is a comic genius”. With his *Discworld* series Pratchett has amassed a great deal of renown and fame; as he states it himself, “I am an author. I am, by the crude yardstick of sales, an immensely successful one” (“Imaginary Worlds, Real Stories” 159). Even though he is read and loved by many people all over the world, in his own HarperCollins biography, Pratchett is described as an author of comic fantasy and little else.

The reasons for such a widely accepted author to not have garnered academic standing are varied. In “Gender Bending: The Satire of Terry Pratchett”, Hillary Henson compares the work of Chaucer, Jonathan Swift and Charles Dickens against modern-day satirists like Stephen Colbert and Garry Trudeau. Henson then states that Terry Pratchett “swims alongside them… [but] is somehow left out.” It is Henson’s assertion that the reason for Pratchett’s absence is in part that he is contemporary and as such too recent to be branded classic. Henson also believes that he is too British to be widely accepted by American consumers, who dictate together with the American academic institutions what should and should not be considered for academic pondering (Henson).

Pratchett’s absence from being mentioned in the same breath as great satirists such as Swift, Chaucer or Dryden to mention a few, could be because Pratchett’s choice of genre is fantasy which is, by many, considered a ‘lesser’ genre. One can wonder though in what ways the imagined nations and peoples of the *Discworld* series differ from some of the encounters made by Gulliver in Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. This could indicate that the genre is not necessarily the reason why Pratchett’s work is not considered classic satire, but rather the fact that he is, as stated earlier, still too contemporary. Pratchett has over the years as a genre author always carried with him a satirist’s way of looking at and portraying the people and phenomena in his created universe. Although he admits that his stories are all played out in a universe which appears to be far removed from our own, all his characters act and interact in a way that, as he states, “Can be, I hope, curiously familiar to the reader” (Pratchett 160). In much the same way as Swift’s work appealed to people in his time, so does Pratchett’s. Unfortunately, it is Pratchett’s genre of choice of fantasy that prevents him from reaching any real level of academic recognition; he is viewed primarily as a fantasy author rather than a satirist as well. Throughout his work as an author of fantasy, Pratchett has taken on a wide
range of subjects and situations all based in the world that he has created. More specifically, Pratchett’s *Discworld* series tackles contemporary issues such as the pros and cons of democracy, the futility of war, women’s suffrage, cultural clashes and how technology can be equal parts a blessing and a curse. While he has presented all of these modern problems to a world inhabited by dragons, trolls and dwarves, these issues have all found their own parts in it, accompanied by a level of humour and wit that has become one of the Pratchett’s trademarks.

My intention with this essay is to argue that Pratchett is a satirist, particularly in the way he uses a select few kinds of satire to craft social commentary that is relevant to not only the worlds he creates, but ours as well. However, it is also my view that Pratchett’s one major downfall is that the humor he uses to make social commentary can also be so heavy-handed that the reader, at times, misses the point entirely as well as the fact that his writing is clearly coloured by an agenda that makes him rather biased. While most of Pratchett’s satire is easy to understand at first glance for most readers, some of it is not and requires that the reader share some of the same political and social views as the author.

In order to make the material more manageable, I’ve chosen to work with one representative text, *Making Money* (2007), which is the 36th instalment in the *Discworld* series. The novel is set in the rapidly growing city of Ankh-Morpork, which is on the verge of changing monetary system from that of the gold standard to that of a radical new one using paper bills. In charge of this grand shift of paradigm is the resourceful conman Moist Von Lipwig, who has in previous novels transformed from a convict with a death sentence to the Postmaster General of the Ankh-Morpork postal service. Lipwig is a character that craves excitement, which is stated as one of the reasons he started out as a conman in the first place. His goal was not necessarily to attain riches but rather fight off the mundane routine of ordinary life (which makes him do such things as break in to his own office after hours simply for the thrill of it). This gives the character a very interesting dynamic in that his moral compass for the most part is highly functional, but it takes a convenient leave of absence when faced with moral choices that put that compass into conflict. After once again finding himself summoned to the chambers of the somewhat benign tyrant Lord Vetinari, he is asked to turn the city’s crumbling bank system into an institution to serve the constantly evolving need of the city and its inhabitants. This novel ponders many of our modern-day economic and social problems: corrupt bankers, the often overly complicated law systems that everyone has to abide by though not necessarily understand and what servants of the people are actually serving the people and who among them are out to prey on the weak. To guide the reader
through the plot readers see the world through von Lipwig, a conman with a clear moral compass, alongside a narrator who points out what we usually might see but not reflect upon.

Pratchett uses satire quite often to illustrate observations about the many different themes he tackles in his work. However, in order to better understand Pratchett’s work, a cursory introduction to satire is needed. There are a great many ways to define and categorize satire, but for the purposes of my arguments I shall keep to the ones that specifically apply to the novel at hand. Satire, and specifically irony, is called one of “the basic rhetorical structures by which we make sense of experience” (Culler 72). By this Culler means that thanks to the humour inherently found in either mode of writing we can more easily relate to the world around us, while giving us means to express ourselves regarding the situation in which we may find ourselves. Satire and irony are elsewhere defined as “standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured” (Colleta 5).

One of the most famous definitions of satire would be that of Jonathan Swift’s. Swift asserts that satire “is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own” (qtd. in Cuddon 827). J.A. Cuddon calls the satirist a “kind of self-appointed guardian of standards, ideals and truth; of moral as well as aesthetic values” (827). The satirist according to Cuddon always has the moral high-ground but does not necessarily write to just condemn but rather to improve on what they perceive as a flaw of society or humanity, making them the de-facto guardians of previously mentioned standards, ideals and truth. Satire is a concept that is currently very popular not only in literature but also in other sources of media such as TV-shows like Family Guy, American Dad and The Simpsons. These television shows satirise suburban life and other parts of western society (Dentith 161). They are all highly successful shows, most likely in part for the reason that “satire should do well in unsettled times” (Briggs 25), unsettled times in which many are displeased with how things are in large parts of society. Those who ridicule those parts of society give people a chance to laugh (sometimes bitterly) about things that seem beyond our control or sphere of influence. In his Discworld series, and particularly in Making Money, Pratchett uses several kinds of satire to underscore the issues that plague the current banking industry and distribution of wealth. Pratchett’s use of wit as a tool and his ability to utilize different kinds of satire to make his point, successfully create social commentary in a fantasy world where there would otherwise be none.

Pratchett only uses a select few kinds of satire in his work, Arthur Pollard describes seven distinct versions of literary satire, or tones as he chooses to call them: “wit, ridicule, irony, sarcasm, cynicism, the sardonic and invective” (66). All of these different modes
should be considered weapons in a satirist’s arsenal with which to “inflict anguish upon the corrupt and to expose hypocrisy” (Pollard 3), two of the main objectives of the satirist. And just like weapons differ in their capacity and nature of damage so do the seven tones, wit being the elegant rapier, cutting neatly and with precision, while at the opposite end of the spectrum we find invective being the metaphorical bludgeon, discarding all forms of finesse for a heavy-handed blow. However, *Making Money* concerns itself almost exclusively with only four of these: wit, irony, sarcasm, and cynicism. Therefore only these four need to be more closely explained in relation to examples from the book.

Wit, or rather its effect, is defined by Pollard in the following way, “The reader is surprised, comically shocked, by the unexpected collocation of ideas; yet though unexpected, he recognizes in them a certain truth or at any rate sufficient truth for the wit to be acceptable” (Pollard 66). The primary function of wit then would be to take a familiar setting and introduce elements previously not considered in the context. This forces the reader to challenge their notions of a given topic by shocking them with humour rather than outrage.

In analyzing satire, definitions alone are not enough, however. Examples of satire, as in Pratchett’s *Making Money*, further illustrate the utility of satire as a literary device. Pratchett uses wit both in the narration and as a tool for a small part of his cast of characters. One that is usually favoured to convey razor-sharp witticism is the tyrant Lord Vetinari who is well known in all of Ankh-Morpork to have the ability to disable anyone with a very brief comment. After Lipwig endeavours to explain away a small incident that had taken place at the post office, where attempts to deal with vermin was handled by introducing a bigger sort of vermin, Vetinari replies, “As you indicate, this may well have been a case where chilly logic should have been replaced by the common sense of, perhaps, the average chicken” (Pratchett 23). Further on another incident is commented upon in where the League of Decency has complained about the sexual nature of a particular stamp, to which Vetinari in a level tone replies that “I understand that the offending affair can only be seen in any detail with quite a large magnifying glass, and so the offence, if such be, is largely self-inflicted” (Pratchett 23).

To further illustrate Pratchett’s use of wit there is an instance where Lipwig is looking up at the building that houses the Royal Mint and establishes that “It would be hard to imagine an uglier building that hadn’t won a major architectural award” (Pratchett 39). Lipwig’s commentary wittily suggests that the architectural worth of a building rarely has much to do with its aesthetic appeal but rather the artificial and contrived principle of taste which provides its merits as an object of admiration. When Vetinari and Lipwig enter the
bank they are eventually greeted by the chief cashier, Mr. Bent, of whom Vetinari said that he expected him to be “oiling his way across the floor within seconds of my entrance” (Pratchett 45). Pratchett has in this case named the chief cashier in a way to satirise bank clerks, bent being a British synonym for someone that is corrupt in the execution of his work, adding to this is the idea that the cashier is a slick character, possibly even evasive. This would appear to be a conscious play on words from Pratchett in order to satirise by the use of witty commentary the stereotype of crooked bankers and clerks within the banking industry that try to trick people out of their money.

A concept that ties in with this and that carries through the novel is the concept of the gold standard as a security for an economy. We first encounter it when Mr. Bent and Lipwig are properly introduced and Bent immediately berates Lipwig for creating an unsecure currency in the shape of the Post Office stamps. When reprimanded this way a bewildered Lipwig turns to Vetinari who explains that “Mr. Bent is one of those who believe in the pre-eminence of gold” and that he suspects that they will “get along exactly like a house on fire” (Pratchett 46-47). While this sets the basis for a central theme of the plot, the witty exchange here is nothing more than an amusing one. While this might not initially seem as an example of wit it becomes more apparent if we look to the stamps created by Lipwig as a means to send letters through his postal service. These stamps have in the city of Ankh-Morpork become an unofficial currency, one that has no financial securities other than the fact that they are printed by a governmental institution. This is something Mr. Bent takes issues with in that it has no security like say the Ankh-Morpork dollar that relies on the gold standard. This all leads to Lipwig having created a currency that is not only outside the influence of the banks but also widely used, and trusted by the common people of the city (Pratchett 47-48), a fact that earns the ire of the bankers represented by Mr. Bent and prompts the comparison by Vetinari as the two men getting along like a house on fire; that is to say, burning to the ground.

It carries on with Lipwig inquiring of Bent about the fundamental concept of the gold standard system that a dollar coin represents a promise made by the bank to, when asked, to exchange said coin for a dollar’s worth of gold, thus securing the coins worth as being one dollar. Bent replies that while it is technically true that “we will honour our promise to exchange it for a dollar’s worth of gold provided we are not, in point of fact, asked to” (Pratchett 50) and that it is a matter of trust, to which Lipwig replies, “You mean, trust us, we’ve got a big expensive building?” (Pratchett 51).
This exchange is related to the problem that eventually ended the use of the gold standard in modern times. But we now face the problem where we have more imagined money in the form of virtual currency than we have hard currency to back it up. Pratchett points to the fact that while the banks rely on us trusting them there are very few actual reasons for doing so other than their promise that our money is safe, something that proved to be disastrous with big banks collapsing in the U.S. around 2008. Lipwig drives the point home regarding the uselessness of gold when talking to the press and stating boldly that they have “a room full of useless metal in the vault” they have to get rid of, and that when all is said and done even potatoes are worth more than gold (Pratchett 133). The latter statement causes a reporter to cry out “surely not!” (Pratchett 133), an outcry which seems to mirror the public opinion that gold is a guarantee for value rather than actual foodstuff, which in the end is what the gold will be used for. Pratchett points to the fact that gold has no value beyond what we give it and he hammers the point home by ultimately having Lipwig reflecting over the fact that “Food gets you through times of no gold much better than gold gets you through times of no food” (Pratchett 145). As with most of Pratchett’s satire, these witty comments point to the fact that people are rather too willing to believe in someone else to handle their money without having any assurances of their secured value and that, ultimately, what value money has is what we give it.

Pratchett does not confine himself to just the one mode of satire but rather concerns himself with a range of them. One that has a fairly dominant role in the narrative is the mode of satire called Irony. Irony is defined in the following way by Pollard:

Irony uses distortion as its weapon, total distortion in the form of inversion. It is not simply inversion either. It includes in its effect implication, insinuation and omission. It requires a select and responsive audience to recognize its peculiar direction of meaning.

(Pollard 67)

Irony is one of the more complicated tones of satire due to the fact that it can easily be lost in the transition from the work to the reader, all depending on whether the recipients understand what is being satirised (Hutcheon 93). A good example of this is what initially happened to Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal*, which he wrote after returning to his native Ireland from his stay in England. The way Ireland was being governed so angered him that he wrote a text where he suggested that the Irish people should solve the issues of starvation by eating
the newly born, thus both feeding and reducing the population (Haynes 40). Public response
to the work was not what Swift had hoped though, with many of the readers believing that
the distortion of values and morals belonged to a deeply disturbed lunatic rather than a
brilliant satirist (Pollard 67). This example highlights what Linda Hutcheon says in *Irony’s
Edge* about the fact that “Irony’s Edge cuts many ways” (176), in this case it cut the satirist
rather than the intended victim.

In *Making Money*, Lipwig notices his picture displayed in the newspaper of Ankh-
Morpork, and his inner monologue about it demonstrates Pratchett’s use of irony in his
writing. Since Lipwig has a serious aversion to having his likeness on display anywhere in
public, he comments on the event in a way that might seem odd but is very much in line with
how Lipwig’s morals and sense of sensibility operates:

> And they’d only used the picture on page one because someone had
decided that the main story, which was about another bank going
bust and a mob of angry customers trying to hang the manager in the
street did not merit illustration. Did the editor have the common
decency to print a picture of that and put a sparkle in everyone’s
day? Oh no, it had to be a picture of Moist von bloody Lipwig!
(Pratchett 19-20)

While this inner monologue of Liwpig’s portrays his thoughts regarding the editor and their
way or prioritising, the author uses the concept of common decency in an inverted form, the
implication being that the editor acted in line with common decency in his decision to not
display the hanging rather than the sort of common decency that Lipwig would have hoped
for. The risk of this is that the reader must understand the character Moist von Lipwig as a
conman with a highly personalised sense of morals and decency, in that he never wants
people to be harmed by what he does but he is rather keen on avoiding attention to whatever
extent possible, or else be lead to believe him to be a deeply disturbed individual that takes
delight in vivid scenes of violence. Deflection is one of the key traits of the character and as
long as he can fly under the radar, he sees most opportunities to stay out of the spotlight as a
valid option, as long as he himself does not have to harm anyone.

In a dialogue between Lipwig and Vetinari about what Lipwig’s life will be like
depending on whether or not he takes Vetinari up on his offer of a new position within the
government, Vetinari provides Lipwig with two choices. Vetinari specifies that if he stays on
as the man in charge of the Post Office then ahead of Lipwig is “a life of respectable quiet contentment, of civic dignity and, of course, in the fullness of time a pension” (Pratchett 35). This is another inversion of what would be considered normal by most as almost anyone would jump at the opportunity to have such working conditions, but if you know Lipwig’s character you would understand that this is a terrible fate that is to be avoided by all means necessary. After this, Lipwig quickly asks what will happen to him should he not take Vetinari up on his offer and the tyrant reacts with surprise and clarifies: “That is what will happen if you decline my offer. If you accept it, you will survive on your wits against powerful and dangerous enemies, with every day presenting fresh challenges. Someone might even try to kill you” (Pratchett 35).

An understanding of Lipwig as a character here is crucial for understanding why he would be in the least bit compelled by the option that would in a general sense be deemed unfavourable and outright dangerous. While the average person would most likely jump at the opportunity to live out their days in the way described, initially it is something that would utterly devastate Lipwig. As a character that craves attention, excitement and a break from routine, this sort of cosy and secure lifestyle would be agony for Lipwig, which is why we see him, as earlier mentioned, breaking into his own office at the onset of the story (doing so only to get a break from the mundane routine his life has fallen in to) and subsequently accepting the new position. Irony here and in other examples functions as an inversion of the expected. The goal seems to be to lead the reader down one road just to have it shift at the very breaking point from the expected to the unexpected, but which in the setting of the character makes the most sense.

Pratchett does not solely rely on the more subtle forms of satire. This is proven by the following section dedicated to what by some might be considered a cruder form: Sarcasm. Sarcasm is a form of satire that is as mentioned considered being the lowest standing variety by some, as can be seen in Pollard’s description:

Sarcasm is irony without the mystery and the refinement. It is essentially incidental and verbal. It is also cruder than irony, a much blunter instrument. It is lacking in generosity. It has been called, not without justice, the lowest form of wit. (68)

Pollard’s description of sarcasm might seem to be rather condemning but the idea of sarcasm as the crudest form of satire is an opinion that Pollard has developed fairly efficiently without
protest and while it might seem a bit one-dimensional it serves its purpose in this text as a definition for one of the modes of satire. Sarcasm is what you use when you do not have the time to be subtle and it is generally used as a sort of “heat-of-the-moment” mode of satire. As Pollard states; it is without thought and it is mostly conveyed in conversation as a reaction rather than a planned strategy, something that Pratchett’s characters at times utilize for a cheap laugh more than anything.

Sarcasm is notoriously treacherous when used in anything but spoken conversation and as such it can be hard to identify correctly because it is, as stated, a rather crude instrument. Even though it is not very refined Pratchett’s characters are known to use sarcasm to comment on events that they are participants of, generally you find it in the exchange between the ‘masses’ and whoever is the lead character in the novel. One such moment is when Mr. Bent exclaims that there cannot be a greater crime than the diluting of the gold of the one dollar coin. Lipwig quickly responds that “clearly murder is overrated?” to which Mr. Bent replies “Murder can only happen once” (Pratchett 50). This statement and retort can be considered irony in part, at least when you look at the stance and commentary that Mr Bent takes on the gravity of the crime, while Lipwig’s rhetorical question, lacking in subtlety, can be considered a sarcastic response to a ludicrous statement. The irony here is not from Mr. Bent but rather from the narration as a whole. The comment from Mr. Bent is sincere but the narration asks the reader to look at it again in relation to the grand scheme of things that the value of a human life trumps that of the gold standard.

Further comment on the relative nature of morals and standards can be seen during Lipwig’s initial meeting with his predecessor as chairperson, Mrs Lavish. The topic of her husband’s infidelity is brought up. This is something she quickly dismisses as of no importance, and she comments on this that she started out as a mistress herself. When Lipwig enquires further about the whole affair she has the following to say about it:

People understood more then. It was all quite acceptable. I used to take tea with his wife once a month to sort out his schedule, and she always said she was glad to have him out from under her feet. Of course, a mistress was expected to be a woman of some accomplishment in those days […] Now, of course, the ability to spin upside down around a pole seems to be sufficient. (Pratchett 67)
To this rather lengthy speech regarding something quite taboo, Lipwig responds sarcastically with “Standards are falling everywhere” (Pratchett 67).

A final example of sarcasm in the narrative can be seen in a statement pertaining to banks, bankers and their history when Lipwig first encounters what is called the hereditary foreman of the people working inside the mint.

The post of hereditary foreman had been created hundreds of years before, when the post of Master of the Mint was a sinecure handed to a drinking pal of the current king or patrician, who used it as a money box and did nothing more than turn up now and again with a big sack, a hangover and a meaningful look. The foremanship was instituted because it was dimly realized that someone ought to be in charge and, if possible, sober. (Pratchett 54)

This is another statement that points to the deeply held suspicions against banks by some people and the notion that bankers are a dishonest when dealing with their money. With a tone of sarcasm, Pratchett points to the idea that banks generally were and perhaps still are run by the influential and rich who work with a very different agenda from what they for the most part want people to believe.

The final mode of satire used by Pratchett, cynicism, is one he brings forth only on rare occasions. While the three previous tones all involve an element of sincere humour, the cynic has a different outlook on the world, or as Pollard puts it:

Cynicism and the sardonic are closely related. Both of them issue from a deep sense of disillusion, and the two often occur in close relationship […] The cynic’s criticism is made against the background of hollow laughter; the sardonic comment is too pessimistic to accept even hollow laughter. (Pollard 1970: 69)

Cynicism is as dark as the humour of Pratchett comes. He doesn’t venture into the territory of the sardonic even if the two are closely related, and he only uses cynicism on rare occasions to make a point. In the beginning of the book, as has been referred to earlier and that lends itself to an example of cynicism, we find Lipwig scaling the outside of the Central Post Office, realising something about how the society of the modern times works when experiencing a ruckus as he is climbing up a wall to break in to his own office: “These were
loud sounds which were therefore public sounds, which in turn meant that they were everyone’s problem and, therefore, not mine” (Pratchett 12). This would seem to reflect on most people’s reluctance to get involved in any problem or happening that they are not necessarily required to, portraying in a cynical way that people are rather egocentric at their core. Another such occasion occurs after Lipwig has read about a hanging taking place shortly, a hanging of a man guilty of forging stamps who Lipwig was forced to testify against as part of his ‘civic duty’. Lipwig wraps it up by saying, with bitterness, “But I never thought being an upstanding citizen was going to be this bad” (Pratchett 21). This is a rather cynical part for Lipwig feels wholeheartedly that the punishment does not fit the crime and he is embittered over the fact that he as an ‘upstanding citizen’ was forced to condemn, at least in part, a man to death for a crime that doesn’t deserve it. This is in line with a disillusioned and bitter view of a moral construct, such as the ‘upstanding citizen’ which is supposed to represent something noble and honourable. We are here made aware that doing the ‘right’ thing is not always the same as doing the decent or even nice thing.

Another example of a disillusioned observation made by Lipwig, in the form of an internal reflection, is the nature of banking architecture when he first sets eyes on the Royal Bank of Ankh-Morpork.

“Why temples? thought Moist as he gazed up at the façade of the Royal Bank of Ankh-Morpork. Why do they always build banks to look like temples, despite the fact that several major religions a) are canonically against what they do inside and b) bank there.” (Pratchett 38)

While the comment in itself is rather witty, it also points to a rather severe outlook in the narrative on the hypocrisy of the church when dealing with mundane economics. What can be read is that what the church dismisses with one hand it condones with the other leaving us with few options than to accompany the cynical observation with the hollow laughter it deserves. A final example of this would be when Vetinari and Lipwig enters the Royal Bank for the first time and Vetinari confides in Lipwig that he enjoys the smell of banks that consists of “A mix of polish and ink and wealth” (Pratchett 41). Lipwig is quick to add “ursery” to the list which Vetinari corrects to usury, commenting that the former would simply be cruelty to bears and dismisses the remark by saying “The churches don’t seem to be so much against it these days” (Pratchett 42). The mention of churches relates to the
description of the bank as a temple or place of worship but rather than gods of plenty and war
the citizens now worship gods of finance and statistics (Pratchett 40). This is also a blow at
the kind of church who once preached fervently that usury was a grave sin and should not be
allowed to take place but as things progressed and the church possessed more economic
liquidity it turned into another case of ‘do as we say not as we do’, again drawing a laughter
without mirth from the reader at the hypocrisy of reality.

Lipwig eventually gets ready to take over the running of the bank and in a conversation
with Mrs. Lavish regarding running of it Lipwig claims that “You take rich people’s money
and lend it to suitable people at interest, and give as little as possible of the interest back”
(Pratchett 69). When asked who exactly would be considered suitable people Lipwig replies
cynically “Someone that can prove they don’t need the money” (Pratchett 70). While he is
berated for his reply by Mrs. Lavish she also admits that it is, in general, true and that the
only way to make money out of poor people is by keeping them poor (Pratchett 70). This is
one of the instances of cynicism used by Pratchett in that he flatly states that banks only cater
to the rich in the interest of making them even richer while the poor are setting themselves up
for disaster by trusting them.

As can be seen from several of the examples discussed above, the use of satire as social
criticism in this particular novel is plentiful but it might be these examples of social criticism
that all fall in line with a rather determined agenda that seems to focus on discrediting
capitalism as an economical structure and religion as an institution that could be the reasons
why Pratchett is considered more of a comedy writer than a satirist. Rather than going for a
wide spread Pratchett seems to narrow himself down which leads to a distancing from large
parts of the readership in that a specific ideological standpoint might be required to find the
satirical element of his writing. This might be what leads to the thought of him as a comedy
writer rather than a satirist, a thought that does not take you very long looking at any blurb
from any given Pratchett book. It will in the vast majority of times involve the words funny,
comedy genius, amusing or any other word that implies humour. To give specific examples
from different books we have “One of the best and funniest English authors alive,” written by
the Independent. “This is another brilliant, bravura command performance of comic fantasy,”
written by the Daily Mail regarding the novel Snuff. And, finally, “Humour such as his is an
endangered species,” written by The Times. What can be deduced from this selection of
blurbs and many more like it is that Pratchett is first and foremost praised for his humour and
comedy, not his social criticism or satire. The reason for this, as you can see in the following
examples, is that while Pratchett’s commentary qualifies as satirical statements they are also
almost too funny to remain to the point, even though a point is certainly there. You can also trace hints of the author’s personal political views from some of his own postings on his Usenet group *alt.fan.pratchett*, where the quote “I must confess the activities of the UK governments for the past couple of years have been watched with frank admiration and amazement by Lord Vetinari. Outright theft as a policy had never occurred to him” would suggest a strong political opinion, which again would narrow down the scope of who can appreciate and feel in touch with the criticism to those of similar minds as the author.

Further example could be found in the exchange between Lipwig and Topsy Lavish where Topsy identifies Lipwig for who he really is, “a thief, a trickster, a Charlie artful and all-round bunco artist!” (Pratchett 64). Afterwards she goes on by asking him sincerely how it took him so long to find his way to the financial sector (Pratchett 65). This is a good example of satire in that it is part of what some ideologies might refer to as the common knowledge that bankers are simply crooks dressed nicely, an image established earlier by Pratchett himself but something that most people also firmly believe to be the cynical truth. What Pratchett does is to take this a step further in making the characters representing the banks almost caricatures of the established image, going so far as to turn Mr. Bent in to an actual clown (Pratchett 429). Another point for satire in *Making Money* is the concept of old money, families that are rich for reasons that according to Pratchett would not be considered all together fair play and Lipwig puts it rather nicely:

> They were indeed what were known as ‘old money’, which meant that it had been made so long ago that the black deeds which had originally filled the coffers were now historically irrelevant. Funny, that: a brigand for a father was something you kept quiet about, but a slave-taking pirate for a great-great-great-grandfather was something to boast of over port. Time turned the evil bastards into rogues, and rogue was a word with a twinkle in its eye and nothing to be ashamed of. (Pratchett 90)

This is a rather cynical and disillusioned view of things and while most likely not everybody knows that what is true about the Lavishes is also rumoured to be true about families such as the Rockefellers and the like Most people will know enough about the world and the rich to know that this sadly is truer than they might wish. Associated to the rich are also the lawyers and indeed the legal system itself, both being targets of Pratchett’s wit throughout the novel.
A good example of this is when Lipwig learns that the late Topsy Lavish has in her will left her dog, Mr Fusspot, 51 percent of the shares in the bank, making it the current chairman with Lipwig as its custodian. When Lipwig protests the fact that a dog can hold such a position, the lawyer, Mr. Slant, gleefully points out that there is a long list of previous such cases, with many different occupations and animals (Pratchett 108). Slant ends the argument with “The will, in short, is legal; it does not have to make sense” (Pratchett 109). This example borders on the absurd in its portrayal but in doing so puts it in the realm of what people might be willing to believe. The novel seems to imply that in a legal system where no one, unless you are an expert of law, knows exactly what the laws are, Pratchett would seem to point at the absurdity of a system where something could overrule common sense and logic as long as it was deemed legal by the right body of people.

Satire of lawyers is further elaborated on when the narrator lists some of the favourite activities of the Lavish family, which includes disinheriting and suing each other over the family fortunes and anything that involves moving money around (through legal means or otherwise). Each Lavish therefore has a cadre of lawyers with them for each family meeting to make sure no incidents occur. During one of these meetings, one of the Lavishes suggests poisoning the dog to reclaim control of the bank, which is immediately followed by a lawyer expressing that “My client wishes to make it clear that she is merely referring to the general availability of noxious substances in general and this is not intended to be and in no way should be taken as an espousal of an illegal course of action” (Pratchett 161-162). Finally the narrator goes on to name the major traits of a lawyer, embodied in Mr. Slant, as being “his encyclopaedic memory, his guile, his talent for corkscrew reasoning” (Pratchett 426). Lawyers are generally viewed with suspicion by anyone who isn’t frequently in need of one or indeed, is one himself and most would be wary trust what they say even if they are the modern world’s interpreters of law, turning the entire system into something at most times, rather untrustworthy.

A final point of satire in Making Money is the by Pratchett perceived gap between the world of finance and banking and that of the ‘real world.’ For instance, Lipwig establishes that a bankable idea is something that is impossible to test in a bank but instead requires a place where “people paid far more attention to money” (Pratchett 170). But while average people are more connected to the actual need for money, Lipwig realises that they still believe in things that are not strictly adhering to the concepts of common sense, such as gold being necessary because it keeps the banks honest (Pratchett 176). This though is a concept that is disproven frequently throughout the novel. As Lipwig points out, “There was no
power in the world that could keep a bank honest if it didn’t want to be” (Pratchett 176). The previously made statement epitomized in one of the final scenes when it has been discovered that all the gold in the vault of the Royal Bank was actually sold off years ago and one of the louder Lavishes in attendance in the courtroom, Pucci, exclaims annoyed that “We’ve got nothing to be ashamed of. It’s our gold, isn’t it?” (Pratchett 435). The previous statement leading to her standing up in court and ignoring the cadre of lawyers beckoning her to be quiet she proudly proclaims that:

We can’t steal what already belongs to us, can we? So what if Father put the wretched gold to better use? It was just sitting there! Honestly, why are you all so dense? Everybody does it. It’s not stealing (Pratchett 434)

This statement shows a great deal of mistrust towards the banking system from the side of the author, one that a lot of people might share.

While according to Hutcheon there does not exist “any necessary relationship between irony and radical politics” (10) much of it will reflect a social or political standpoint, and the left-wing liberal views of the author are not difficult to detect if you know what you are looking for. The satire used conveys an attitude which is something almost impossible to disassociate with this particular way of writing and that attitude is “an attitude of rejection or disapproval” (Hutcheon 37-38) which falls in line with the critical view of the banking system and of the bankers themselves offered up by the author in most of these examples.

What makes the otherwise rather critical tone fall a bit flat though is what Hutcheon further writes in that satire’s judgement is “seen as hostile or derogatory, if a judgement is playful it cannot be ironical” (38). This is what lies at the core in my opinion as to why Pratchett is considered a great writer of comedy rather than satire. His goal would seem to be in the main part to be funny with a message rather than the other way around, thus detracting a lot of the power from the critical statements he makes.

In conclusion, Pratchett uses select parts of the spectrum of satire to criticize many of the major aspects of society but there are problems. Even if most, if not all, of the satirical statements carry a meaning some of it can lose its value for the sake of telling a good joke and while some of what Pratchett satirizes about is easy to understand and as such appreciate some of it is not. Some of the comments and insights requires the reader to either know things that are not part of the common knowledge or belongs to a certain set of moral,
political or social beliefs, but it is hard to call satire truly objective. Pratchett tells us of things we already have some awareness of and for the most part consider ‘wrong’, such as how banks work to keep the rich in the same way while doing little for the common man, but he brings it to light in a way that makes us able to laugh at it. He comments on the modern society’s obsession with wealth rather than with life and he does this by letting the reader embody a man that stands outside of normal life and rather runs alongside it. Moist von Lipwig is a great agent for delivering the satire in that he can direct and lead the reader through the novel but rather than take sides, Lipwig can show the faults of not just a select group but the society as a whole, evenly spreading the blame of how things are to everyone rather than just a few individual. Pratchett manages to use his chosen modes of satire and make us laugh at it and while much of his satire serves no purpose as social commentary, the majority of it does and does so in a convincing way, and importantly in a way people understand as long as they are in line with a particular line of thinking that relates to the Author’s views on politics and ideologies. Whether this is Pratchett’s triumph or downfall can be argued but if you share at least some of his views, his comments on our society and its constructions are functional and just as important, they get us to laugh.
Works Cited


