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Dvergar and the Discworld Dwarfs

A study of the Norse background to the works of Terry Pratchett

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Abstract

Terry Pratchett interacted with a wide range of material, including world literature, mythology and history, to create his Discworld series. The Norse world was one such contributor and there are elements of the Discworld books that have discernible roots in medieval Icelandic literature. These features may be combined with multiple other influences or in some instances display a more direct connection. One prominent example is the dwarfs of Pratchett's Discworld, which appear in a number of novels and whose collective story is played out in the Ankh-Morpork thread of books.

This thesis will examine the extent to which Pratchett drew upon the *dvergar* of medieval Icelandic literature for his dwarfs. It is my intention to explore the varied cultural material that has been combined into this race of characters. This thesis therefore considers the Norse *dvergar* in detail, aiming towards an understanding of these beings in their original tradition and literature, unclouded by later influences. German folklore collected by the Brothers Grimm and the Middle-earth novels of J. R. R. Tolkien have become key influences upon dwarfs in the popular imagination and on Pratchett's Discworld in particular. The attributes and impact of dwarfs in these sources are also evaluated in this thesis.

A study of the Discworld dwarfs generates discussion on the ways that Pratchett engaged with pre-existing stereotypes and motifs in order to produce satirical commentary on contemporary issues (such as racial tensions and gender identity) as well as on the fantasy genre itself and the traditions it draws upon. The structure of this study follows a thematic approach as multiple *dvergr/Zwerg*/dwarf characteristics are discussed in an ordered format to enable a more productive comparison.

Ágrip

Terry Pratchett samtvinnaði ýmsa þræði, svo sem heimsbókmenntir, goðafræði og sögu, til að skapa raðir Discworlds bókanna. Hann var ljóslega hugfangin af hinum Norræna heimi og auðvelt er að sjá áhrif íslenskra fornbókmennta í skrifum hans. Áhrifanna gætir víða en oft eru þau sameinuð við hugmyndafræði annars staðar frá. Eitt helsta dæmið eru dvergarnir í skrifum Pratchetts.

Rannsóknin fjallar um hvernig Pratchett nýtti skrif um dverga í hinum íslensku fornbókmenntum í hugmyndasköpun þeirra persóna sem síðar komu fram í skrifum hans. Markmið ritgerðarinnar er að rannsaka hinn fjölpátta menningarmun sem þátt í sköpun persóna Pratchetts og þá sér í lagi Norræna dverga. Slíkt telst nauðsynlegt til að auka frekari skilning á ofangreindum þáttum í bókmenntum. Germanskrar þjóðsagnarhefðar gætir bæði í söguheimi Grímsbræðra og J. R. R. Tolkien og hafa þeirra skrif þjónað lykilhlutverki í vinsælli persónusköpun dverga, einkum hjá Pratchett, og skipa þar af leiðandi mikilvægan sess í ritgerðinni.

Við skoðun Discworld bókaðarinnar er unnt að sjá hvernig Pratchett nýtir bæði undirliggjandi staðalímyndir og grunnhugmyndir um dverga, ásamt fjöregu ímyndunarafli, til að kalla fram ákveðna háðsdeilu á málefni líðandi stundar, s.s. kynþáttarhatur og kyngervi. Rannsóknaraðferð ritgerðarinnar er ákveðin „þema-nálgun“ þar sem persónusköpun dverganna er rædd og gerður er ítarlegur samanburður milli þeirra.

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Table of Abbreviations

Terry Pratchett novels

<i>CM</i>	<i>The Colour of Magic</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>Equal Rites</i>
<i>GG</i>	<i>Guards! Guards!</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Men at Arms</i>
<i>IT</i>	<i>Interesting Times</i>
<i>FC</i>	<i>Feet of Clay</i>
<i>LC</i>	<i>The Last Continent</i>
<i>FE</i>	<i>The Fifth Elephant</i>
<i>TT</i>	<i>The Truth</i>
<i>LH</i>	<i>The Last Hero</i>
<i>RS</i>	<i>Raising Steam</i>

Other

<i>DS</i>	<i>Deutsche Sagen</i>
<i>KHM</i>	<i>Kinder- und Hausmärchen</i>
<i>GL</i>	<i>German Legends</i>
<i>FR</i>	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i>
<i>TTT</i>	<i>The Two Towers</i>
<i>RK</i>	<i>The Return of the King</i>
<i>FD</i>	<i>The Folklore of Discworld</i>

Introduction

Terry Pratchett created his Discworld as a fictional setting designed to parody the fantasy genre. In a speech entitled ‘Why Gandalf Never Married’ (1985), he described his first novel of the series, *The Colour of Magic* (1983), as ‘an attempt to do for the classical fantasy universe what *Blazing Saddles* did for Westerns’.¹ Pratchett claimed in this speech that a ‘consensus fantasy universe’ exists, which is a product of many formative sources including folklore, Victorian romantics, Walt Disney and influential modern authors.² This setting contains the staples of the fantasy genre, which most readers find to be immediately recognisable. It is the world of fantasy role-playing games such as *Dungeons & Dragons*, described by Pratchett as ‘mosaics of every fantasy story you’ve ever read’.³ In Pratchett’s novels, the pervasive stereotypes and motifs of the genre became vehicles for satirical commentary on a range of issues.

In this “consensus fantasy universe”, remnants of the mythical and legendary-heroic Norse-Icelandic literary corpus can be identified. Influences from the Old Norse *dvergar*, for example, may be discerned beneath the common fantasy race of dwarfs, which is greatly indebted to the works of J. R. R. Tolkien. The ideas that surrounded the fictional Norse race have, however, been greatly transformed as they passed through the centuries, receiving a cultural makeover from a combination of influences and alternate traditions.

In his Discworld novels, Pratchett asks many questions of the resulting fantasy clichés, interrogating his fictional world and our own society alike. Why do dwarfs avoid the sunlight? Must a dwarf *always* carry an axe?⁴ Do dwarfs really all identify with the external masculine gender? And what, in the end, makes a dwarf a dwarf? These are some of the questions that Pratchett poses, turning a questioning eye to his diverse range of source material.

Of all the fantasy races, Pratchett embellished the culture and traditions of his dwarfs most of all. This thesis will seek to demonstrate the extent to which the dwarfs in the Discworld series were influenced by the medieval Icelandic literary corpus and

¹ Pratchett, ‘Why Gandalf Never Married’, *A Slip of the Keyboard*, 85-92: 86.

² Pratchett, ‘Gandalf’, 86.

³ Pratchett, ‘Gandalf’, 87.

⁴ Pratchett, *FE*, 269-270.

what, if any, relation is born to the Old Norse mythological and legendary *dvergar*. It will therefore be necessary to consider, in some detail, other key influences that shaped Pratchett's race of dwarfs, in order to maintain a well-rounded view. The most important of these are the dwarfs (German: *Zwerge*) of the German folk- and fairy-tales collected by the Brothers Grimm in the nineteenth century, and the dwarves of J. R. R. Tolkien's twentieth-century fantasy world Middle-earth.⁵ The seemingly Norse elements in the Discworld must likewise be approached critically. Pratchett's source material was wide-ranging and some influence may have come indirectly, particularly through the works of Tolkien and Richard Wagner: Pratchett was a self-confessed Middle-earth enthusiast, who claimed *The Lord of the Rings* to have been his teenage entrance into an obsession with the fantasy genre that came to include the reading of Norse sagas.⁶

It will be important to consider the complexities of all sources. The Old Norse-Icelandic literary corpus, for example, does not represent a uniform body of concepts and beliefs. I shall be referencing works of poetry and prose whose origins and transcriptions span several centuries, as well as the strong possibility for some of an oral tradition that may date back far earlier. Their poets, authors, compilers, copyists and audiences can be expected to have possessed wide-ranging motives, tastes, beliefs and ideologies. The differing geographical origins and additional foreign influences (particularly on later, more courtly works) should also be born in mind. The folklore collected by the Brothers Grimm in the nineteenth century is similarly problematic, since ideas surrounding supernatural creatures will vary between localities. Approaching these short narratives as a consistent whole would mean misunderstanding the nature of such material.

Although the Discworld series is the work of a single author, it is not simple to analyse. There are forty-one Discworld novels, plus multiple tie-in works, and Pratchett

⁵ This study will use specific terminology to differentiate between the "dwarfs" of different traditions, in-keeping with the language of source texts and acknowledging that these terms signify beings that are not of one nature. "Dwarfs" in German texts will be referred to as *Zwerge* (singular: *Zwerg*), while the Old Norse term *dvergar* (singular: *dvergr*) will also be preserved for the race in the Norse-Icelandic corpus of literature. I will observe Tolkien's spelling of "dwarves" in the plural when referring to the race of his creation.

⁶ Pratchett, 'Gandalf', 86.

preferred to provide continually fresh perspectives rather than a fixed and uniform fantasy world. It will not be possible in this study to enumerate every dwarf character in these books. I will concentrate my analysis on the norms and trends within Pratchett's dwarfish culture, rather than the outlying figures.⁷ For this reason, my study will predominantly focus on certain books within the City Watch series thread: *Guards! Guards!* (1989), *Men at Arms* (1993), *Feet of Clay* (1996), *The Fifth Elephant* (1999), *Thud!* (2005). *The Truth* (2000) and *Raising Steam* (2013), which share the setting of Ankh-Morpork, will also be among my main Discworld texts.

An additional complication is that the concept of a dwarf is not at all straightforward. It is likely that each person, nowadays and in past centuries, will envision a "dwarf" differently depending on their culture, the sources they have been exposed to, and the material that has resonated most strongly with them. Ármann Jakobsson has previously set out that much of the problem when it comes to understanding medieval *dvergar* is 'knowing too much', and emphasised the importance of looking past preconceptions that have their basis in later influences and not the relevant source material.⁸

I will therefore not attempt to construct a unified image for beings this of type, or to synthesise any and all *dvergr*/*Zwerg*/dwarf attributes into one or two definitions. Instead, I will identify prominent (although not universal) characteristics and explore the web of influence and similarity. My discussion will focus on primary text analysis, drawing upon previous arguments from scholars where relevant.

⁷ Non-typical dwarf characters that appear in other works include Hwel the playwright (*Wyrd Sisters*), Glod Glodsson the musician (*Soul Music*), Mad the trader (*The Last Continent*) and Casanunda "the world's second greatest lover" (first appearance in *Witches Abroad*).

⁸ Ármann Jakobsson, 'The Hole', 53.

The Mythologies of the Discworld

World mythologies

The Discworld is substantially built out of references, which are wide-ranging, intermixed and irreverently employed. Pratchett admitted in a speech to the British Folklore Society (1999), ‘I think about folklore in the same way that a carpenter thinks about trees’.⁹ A self-confessed ‘parasitical writer’, he delved into world history, literature, geography, science, prominent figures, mythology, religion and folklore to create one fantasy world.¹⁰ It will not be possible to map out all of the allusions and parodies in the Discworld series. I shall, however, discuss some selected features in order to illustrate the eclectic and mixed nature of the cultural material that has shaped the Discworld. In doing so, I will make considerable use of Pratchett and Simpson’s companion book *The Folklore of Discworld*. As a collaborative work by the Discworld author and a folklore scholar, this is an extremely useful resource for understanding the background to the series. The work, however, is intended primarily for the interest and entertainment of a casual reader and does not exist externally to the Discworld series, meaning that the Discworld is compared to our own (real) “Roundworld” on equal terms. Furthermore, *The Folklore of Discworld* does not provide full references for its source material. For the particular role of Norse material in the Discworld series, which is of most importance to this study, I have preferred to cite medieval Icelandic sources. Many of these comparisons are also suggested within *The Folklore of Discworld*, and where this is the case I shall make note.

Many of the books describe the Discworld as disc-shaped and carried on the backs of four elephants that stand on a great turtle as it swims through the universe.¹¹ This cosmological image is a blend of several old beliefs in Hindu mythology, which are set out by Pratchett and Simpson in *The Folklore of Discworld*. One such belief is that the world rests on the back of an elephant that stands on the back of a tortoise. In another old myth, there are either four or eight elephants who guard the compass points

⁹ Pratchett, ‘Imaginary Worlds, Real Stories,’ 159.

¹⁰ Pratchett, ‘Gandalf’, 86.

¹¹ See, for example: Pratchett, *GG*, 343; *FE*, 1.

of the world, although these do not carry it.¹² A further ‘immense cosmic turtle’ exists in Chinese mythology, in which version the world is located inside, rather than on top of, the turtle.¹³ The essential cosmology of the Discworld is therefore heavily influenced by Asian sources.

The Discworld is populated by creatures that represent the myths and traditions of multiple cultures and historical periods. Banshees are adapted from Irish folklore, in which they are female creatures.¹⁴ Zombies exist in the traditional beliefs of Haiti.¹⁵ Golem legends, according to *The Folklore of Discworld*, appear in the Jewish traditions of Europe, originating in fifteenth-century Germany; the word “golem” is of Hebrew origin.¹⁶ In *Interesting Times*, however, this tradition is blended with Chinese history of the third century BCE when the protagonist encounters an army of terracotta golems in an emperor’s burial mound;¹⁷ this is an allusion to the Chinese Terracotta Army, discovered in the tomb of Emperor Qin Shi Huang in Xi’an, Shaanxi province.¹⁸ There are many other allusions to genuine world history; for instance, the recurring character Leonard of Quirm is an artist and inventor who paints the portrait ‘Mona Ogg’.¹⁹ The character is a parody of the Renaissance figure Leonardo da Vinci.²⁰

More recent cultural material lies behind Pratchett’s vampires. Pratchett and Simpson discuss in *The Folklore of Discworld* how vampires in the contemporary imagination have been majorly influenced by the film industry.²¹ In the earlier folklore of Europe, vampires were ‘undead revenants’ that did not necessarily suck blood.²² They are now more commonly envisioned along the lines of creations by nineteenth-

¹² Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 23.

¹³ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 24.

¹⁴ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 145.

¹⁵ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 160.

¹⁶ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 148.

¹⁷ Pratchett, *IT*, 310-311.

¹⁸ Roach, ‘Terra-Cotta Army Protects First Emperor’s Tomb’.

<<http://science.nationalgeographic.com/science/archaeology/emperor-qin/>>

¹⁹ Pratchett, *MA*, 147, 148.

²⁰ ‘Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)’, BBC: History.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/da_vinci_leonardo.shtml>

²¹ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 135.

²² Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 136.

century novelists and the cinema.²³ In *The Truth*, the vampire Otto discards ‘the traditional black evening dress preferred by his species’.²⁴ Vimes, in the novel *Thud!*, observes that the vampires who have forsworn drinking human blood have attempted to throw off this image.²⁵ Pratchett therefore uses his vampires to portray both this popular imagery and a reaction against such stereotypes.

The Discworld deity Hoki the Jokester is inspired by multiple cultures. Hoki is mentioned in the books *Equal Rites* and *The Last Continent*:

'Oh, he's a nature god,' [Granny Weatherwax] said. 'Sometimes he manifests himself as an oak tree, or half a man and half a goat, but mainly I see him in his aspect as a bloody nuisance. You only find him in the deep woods, of course. He plays the flute. Very badly, if you must know.'²⁶

Hoki's goat-legs and pipes are taken from the Ancient Greek nature-god Pan.²⁷ His oaken appearance is explained in *The Folklore of Discworld* as an influence of the Green Man, a nature god image with a face of leaves that was fashionable in twentieth-century Britain.²⁸ His name, however, and his “jokester” nature recalls the Norse god Loki, whose often antagonistic or semi-antagonistic exploits towards the gods are recalled in the Eddas. Hoki, according to both *Turtle Recall* and *The Folklore of Discworld*, was thrown out of Dunmanifestin (the home of the gods on the Discworld) for ‘playing “the old exploding mistletoe trick” on Blind Io’.²⁹ This is a humorous reference to the myth in chapter 49 of *Gylfaginning*, in which the blind god Høðr slays his brother Baldr with a mistletoe projectile due to Loki's treachery; Loki's subsequent punishment is the subject of *Gylfaginning* chapter 50.³⁰ The myth is also alluded to in *Völuspá*, although this version contains no mention of Loki or his culpability.³¹

²³ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 137.

²⁴ Pratchett, *TT*, 262.

²⁵ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 13.

²⁶ Pratchett, *ER*, 62 (quotation above); *LC*, 107 (‘by Hoki’).

²⁷ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 41.

²⁸ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 42.

²⁹ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 41-42 (quotation above); Pratchett and Briggs, *Turtle Recall*, 91 (‘pulling the old exploding mistletoe joke on Blind Io’).

³⁰ *Gylfaginning*, chaps. 49-50, pp. 45-49.

³¹ *Völuspá*, p. 299, ss. 31-32. All citations from Eddic poems taken from *Eddukvæði* (edited by Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason). All citations from *Völuspá* are from the Konungsbók manuscript version unless otherwise specified.

The reference to the mistletoe myth casts Blind Io of the Discworld pantheon in the role of the Norse god Høðr. Blind Io, however, does not resemble Høðr in other attributes. Despite his “blindness”, he is said to have full visual ability due to many detached eyeballs.³² These are pictured in illustrations of the character in the graphic novel *The Last Hero*, along with a blindfold, classical toga and hammers.³³ Like Hoki, Blind Io is formed from aspects of multiple world religions. One god upon which he is significantly based appears to be the Norse Óðinn. Although not blind, Óðinn does lack one eye.³⁴ Blind Io is also said to have once owned ravens that brought him information, which is an allusion to Óðinn’s pair Huginn and Muninn in Norse mythology.³⁵ The valkyries in the Discworld also connect Blind Io with Óðinn; they are said to carry dead warriors to Blind Io’s halls.³⁶ Blind Io, unlike Óðinn, is primarily a thunder god: he is said to have incorporated all the thunder gods of the world into one. He therefore displays attributes of Zeus, Jupiter, Perkun, Indra and Jehovah, as well as Þórr.³⁷ In *The Last Hero*, he is pictured with hammers on his belt (a reference to Þórr’s Mjöllnir).³⁸ One illustration parodies the fresco painting ‘The Creation of Adam’ by Michelangelo, with Blind Io in the position of the Christian god.³⁹ According to *The Folklore of Discworld*, his disembodied eyes are inspired by Ancient Egyptian religion.⁴⁰

Through these examples, I have sought to demonstrate the wide-ranging body of source material that has informed the construction of the Discworld novels. In addition

³² Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 31.

³³ Pratchett, *LH*, 82-3, 142, 154-155.

³⁴ *Gylfaginning* gives the story that the All-father (Alföðr) placed one eye into Mimir’s well in order to obtain wisdom (*Gylfaginning*, chap. 15, p. 17, ll. 15-28). Snorri cites stanza 28 of *Völuspá* in this chapter, which also refers to Óðinn’s sacrifice of his eye. In other places in the corpus, Óðinn appears enigmatically as a one-eyed figure, such as in *Völsunga saga* (chap. 3, p. 7; chap. 11, p. 26; chap. 42, p. 90).

³⁵ Pratchett, *Hogfather*, 100; *Gylfaginning*, chap. 38, p. 32, l. 32-39.

³⁶ The relationship between Blind Io and the valkyries is mentioned in Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 48.

An account of the Norse *valkyrjur* serving a similar purpose is given in *Gylfaginning*, in which they are said to wait on the inhabitants in Valhöll and to allot victory and death on the battlefield (*Gylfaginning*, chap. 36, p. 30, ll. 22-36).

³⁷ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 32.

³⁸ Pratchett, *The Last Hero*, 82-83, 142, 154-155. Illustrations by Paul Kidby.

³⁹ Pratchett, *The Last Hero*, 154-155. Illustration by Paul Kidby.

⁴⁰ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 32.

to the influences upon certain Discworld gods, there are many other elements in the series that derive from Norse literature and mythology.

Norse mythology

I will now examine the features of medieval Norse-Icelandic literature that may be discerned within Pratchett's Discworld.

The Discworld valkyries have been mentioned above. They appear in the *The Last Hero* and are referenced (but not named) in some of the other novels, such as *Guards! Guards!*:

the barbarian hublander folk had legends about great chain-mailed, armour-bra'd, carthorse-riding maidens who swooped down on battlefields and carried off dead warriors on their cropper to a glorious roistering afterlife, while singing in a pleasing mezzo-soprano.⁴¹

Similarly, in *The Fifth Elephant*, the character Vimes thinks of these maidens when he watches his wife singing opera.⁴² While the idea of the valkyries has roots in the *valkyrjur* of Norse mythological texts, the predominant image has been greatly changed in the popular imagination by later influences. Most notable of these is Wagner's four-part opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (premiered 1876). The considerable impact of this work is consciously alluded to by Pratchett's valkyrie descriptions. In *The Last Hero*, the valkyries are introduced along with their voice types ('soprano' and 'mezzo-soprano').⁴³ This is made even more evident in *The Folklore of Discworld*, where our conception of 'tall, powerfully built women, wearing chain mail and horned helmets, and riding magnificent airborne horses' is attributed to the German composer. Likewise, the authors joke, 'Since Wagner's time, a good singing voice is also a requirement for the job'.⁴⁴ This demonstrates an awareness of the multi-layered product that figures of mythology and folklore have become by the modern day. It is characteristic of Pratchett in his Discworld novels to blend "original" material with its later developments.

One particularly composite creature is the dragon, which is a feature of traditions so widespread that it is difficult to suggest an origin. The most famous dragon

⁴¹ Pratchett, *GG*, 98.

⁴² Pratchett, *FE*, 386.

⁴³ Pratchett, *LH*, 168-170.

⁴⁴ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 48.

in the world of Norse literature would be Fáfnir, the monster killed by the hero Sigurðr. The notorious Miðgarðsormr is probably more properly classed as a dangerous serpent rather than as a “dragon”. Other dragons tend to exist as briefer references and are remarkably less grand, such as the dragon (‘flugdreki’) said to have been killed by Þorkell hákr in *Njáls saga*.⁴⁵ The great dragon in *Guards! Guards!* is the most prominent in all the Discworld series. It is seemingly impervious to weapons, airborne and fire-breathing, resembling the dragon Smaug in Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* (1937), which is itself indebted to Old Germanic literature such as *Beowulf* and *Fáfnismál*.⁴⁶

The most direct allusions to Norse mythology found in the dragon-like creatures of the Discworld universe are the references to the Miðgarðsormr. In *The Folklore of Discworld*, these creatures are claimed to be a third species of dragon.⁴⁷ In *Equal Rites*, a wizard summons another world in miniature, which has a red-gold snake encircling it; in *The Colour of Magic*, a world is mentioned that is surrounded by a massive dragon covered in snow and glaciers.⁴⁸ The connection with glaciers further strengthens this allusion to the northern world of Norse mythology. Like the Miðgarðsormr, both of these creatures are said to hold their tails in their mouths.⁴⁹

The Ice Giants that feature in the nearly-apocalyptic events of *Sourcery* are a reconfiguration of the Norse *jǫtnar*. These creatures are huge in size and are made of ice.⁵⁰ They ride on enormous, zoomorphic glaciers that destroy the landscape beneath them.⁵¹ They have been imprisoned by the gods after their vanquishment, trapped in a ‘secret realm’ of ‘frozen lands’ beneath the gods’ mountain.⁵² In this way, the Ice Giants also resemble the Titans of Greek mythology, who are imprisoned deep in Tartarus by the gods.⁵³ When the gods are themselves trapped during the events of *Sourcery*, the Ice

⁴⁵ *Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, chap. 119, p. 303.

⁴⁶ Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth*, 296-297.

⁴⁷ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 180.

⁴⁸ Pratchett, *ER*, 233; *CM*, 194.

⁴⁹ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 34, p. 27, ll. 11-14.

⁵⁰ Pratchett, *Sourcery*, 263.

⁵¹ Pratchett, *Sourcery*, 261.

⁵² Pratchett, *Sourcery*, 116.

⁵³ Autenrieth, ‘Τάρταρος’.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0073%3Aentry%3D*ta%2Frtaros>

Giants attempt to fulfil the prophesy that they will bring the world to a frozen end.⁵⁴ The ‘end of the world’ in this book is partially styled after the Norse *ragnarøk*; it is predicted to be ‘the Teatime of the Gods’, a playful allusion to ‘The Twilight of the Gods’ (*ragnarøk(k)r*).⁵⁵ This form was used by Snorri Sturluson in *Snorra Edda* and appears once in the Eddic poem *Lokasenna*. In other Eddic poems, however, the form *ragnarøk* appears (‘judgement/doom of the gods/powers’).⁵⁶ Although less widely used in Norse literature, Snorri’s formulation became popularised by the title of Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung* (‘Twilight of the Gods’), the last opera of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.⁵⁷

Ragnarøk is particularly prominent in the Eddic poems *Völuspá* and *Vafþrúðnismál*, as well as Snorri’s *Gylfaginning*. It marks the end for most of the gods and represents chaos and destruction. The events of *ragnarøk*, however, result not in the world’s end but its renewal.⁵⁸ The nature of *ragnarøk* is characterised more by fire and water than the destructive glaciers of *Sourcery*.⁵⁹ The glaciers in *Sourcery* do, however, suggest the environment of Iceland, as well as the terrible winter (*fimbulvetr*), which, according to *Snorra Edda*, is to precede *ragnarøk*.⁶⁰ This winter and its relation to the events of *ragnarøk* is also mentioned in *Vafþrúðnismál*.⁶¹

The association between Pratchett’s Ice Giants and the Norse *jötnar* is superficially apparent, although its mythological background is questionable. The *jötnar* are the gods’ primary opponents, alongside the children of Loki, throughout many of the mythological narratives. The word *jötunn* has often been translated as ‘giant’ but exceptional size does not appear to have been one of their defining characteristics.⁶² The *jötnar* are at times associated with the cold but, again, this is somewhat circumstantial. The *jötunn* *Vafþrúðnir* in *Vafþrúðnismál* is implied to be *kaldrifjaðan* (literally ‘cold-

⁵⁴ Pratchett, *Sourcery*, 254.

⁵⁵ Pratchett, *Sourcery*, 48.

⁵⁶ Faulkes, Glossary to *Edda. Prologue and Gylfaginning*, 131.

⁵⁷ Lindow, *Norse Mythology*, 254.

⁵⁸ *Völuspá*, pp. 306-307, ss. 57-62 (Konungsbók); *Völuspá*, pp. 315-316, ss. 51-57 (Hauksbók); *Vafþrúðnismál*, pp. 363-365, ss. 44-51; *Gylfaginning*, chaps. 52-53, pp. 53-54.

⁵⁹ *Vafþrúðnismál*, p. 365, ss. 50-51; *Völuspá*, p. 303, s. 48, ll. 3-5; p. 304, s. 51, ll. 1-2; pp. 305-306, s. 55; *Gylfaginning*, chap. 51, p. 50, ll. 2-3, 14-15.

⁶⁰ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 51, p. 49, ll. 20-24.

⁶¹ *Vafþrúðnismál*, p. 363, s. 44, l. 6.

⁶² Motz, ‘Giants in Folklore and Mythology’, 74.

ribbed')⁶³ and Ymir is described as a 'hrímkalda' ('frost-cold') *jǫtunn*.⁶⁴ In *Gylfaginning*, Ymir is closely connected to the race of *hrímpursar* ('frost' or 'rime' *pursar*).⁶⁵ The *hrímpursar* are also mentioned at other points in *Snorra Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*.⁶⁶ There are suggestions of a connection between the *pursar* (normally translated as 'giants' or 'trolls') and *jǫtnar* but the exact relationship is unclear. The concept of giants, more specifically ice or frost giants, has dominated the *jǫtnar* in modern cultural perception such as the Marvel series of comics.⁶⁷

The trolls are another race of Discworld creatures in whose background the Old Norse *jǫtnar* can be discerned. *Jǫtnar* have been considered to be related to the trolls of later Germanic folklore.⁶⁸ The Discworld trolls are a silicon-based lifeform who originate from cold mountain regions. Their brains suffer in higher daytime temperatures and they become markedly less intelligent, sometimes turning to stone until nightfall.⁶⁹ Examples of *jǫtnar* and trolls in Old Norse literature who turn to stone at daybreak are given in footnote 89. The connection between 'huge mountain trolls who live in Iceland and Norway' and the Discworld trolls is also explicitly drawn in *The Folklore of Discworld*.⁷⁰

The allusions to Old Norse mythology and literature within Pratchett's Discworld are therefore substantial. Out of these, a key race with links to the Norse world remains the dwarfs. I will now proceed to the major topic of my study, the background to the Discworld dwarfs, beginning with an examination of the Old Norse *dvergar*.

⁶³ *Vafþrúðnismál*, p. 357, s. 10, l. 6.

⁶⁴ *Vafþrúðnismál*, p. 359, s. 21, l. 5.

⁶⁵ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 5, p. 10, ll. 12-16, 40; chap. 7, p. 11, ll. 22-26.

⁶⁶ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 3, pp. 8-9, ll. 27 (p. 8) – 8 (p. 9); chap. 21, p. 23, ll. 3-6; *Skírnismál*, p. 386, s. 30, l. 33; *Grímnismál*, p. 374, s. 31, l. 5.

⁶⁷ 'Giants of Jotunheim', Marvel: Marvel Universe Wiki.

<http://marvel.com/universe/Giants_of_Jotunheim>

⁶⁸ Motz, 'Giants in Folklore and Mythology', 70.

⁶⁹ Pratchett, *MA*, 203.

⁷⁰ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 125.

Norse *dvergar*

The *dvergar* appear in *Snorra Edda* and the *Poetic Edda* as a racial group and as individual characters. There are six *dvergr* characters in *Snorra Edda* (Littr, Fjalarr, Galarr, Brokkr, Sindri/Eitri, Andvari) and one in the *Poetic Edda* (Alvíss).⁷¹ *Dvergar* also feature in many of the sagas that are typically classed as *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. Their identity, however, is enigmatic at best and our understanding is confused by different cultural images. I will attempt to shed some light by focusing on features of the *dvergar* in the medieval Icelandic literary corpus. The texts within this corpus, as has been discussed in my introduction above, constitute diverse material and it is important to bear this in mind. This chapter will examine in turn the major ideas concerning potential attributes of the Norse *dvergar*:

1. Live in rocks and underground
2. Turn to stone/perish in the sunlight
3. Associated with the dead
4. Small in size
5. Craftsmen and smiths
6. An all-male race

1. Live in rocks and underground

On the majority of occasions, the *dvergar* are encountered near to, or have their homes in, stones and rocks. In the sagas, it is an exceedingly common motif for the human hero to find (a) *dverg(a)r* by a rock. In *Ynglinga saga*, a *dvergr* lures King Sveigðir into a rock and King Svafrlami encounters two *dvergar* by a stone in *Heiðreks saga*; upon his return they escape from him by running inside.⁷² In *Þorsteins þáttr Bæjarmagns*, *Sigurðar saga þøgla* and *Áns saga bogsveigis*, a *dvergr* is found by a large stone.⁷³ A dwarf child and an adult dwarf both inhabit a stone in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar*

⁷¹ Ármann Jakobsson, 'The Hole', 57.

⁷² *Ynglingasaga*, chap. 12, p. 19, ll. 21-27; *Heiðreks saga: Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs*, chap. 2, p. 2, ll. 24-25; chap. 2, p. 3, ll. 24-26.

⁷³ *Þorsteins þáttr Bæjarmagns*, chap. 3, p. 400; *Sigurðar saga þøgla*, chap. 7, p. 113; *Áns saga bogsveigis*, chap. 1, pp. 404-405.

berserkjabana.⁷⁴ Similarly, two dwarfs emerge from a rock in *Þjalar-Jóns saga*.⁷⁵ A dwarf named Littr has his home in a large stone in *Þorsteins saga víkingssonar*.⁷⁶ Reginn in *Völsunga saga* recalls that the *dvergr* Andvari mostly inhabited a waterfall in the form of a fish (his watery home can be put down to the decree of a *norn*, according to stanza 3); however, he also retreats into a stone following the loss of his gold.⁷⁷ The four *dvergar* visited by Freyja in *Sörla þáttur* also live in a rock.⁷⁸ In the case of the *dvergr* Mjondull in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, who is not found living in a stone, he reveals in the same breath that he is a dwarf and that he lives in the earth.⁷⁹

This characteristic is also known in the Eddic material. In *Alvíssmál*, the *dvergr* Alvíss claims to live underground in a rock.⁸⁰ According to *Völuspá*, *dvergar* were fashioned out of the earth: ‘þeir mannlíkun / mjörg um gørðu / dvergar ór jørðu’.⁸¹ They are also associated with stone halls (‘salar steini’) and stone doors (‘steindurum’).⁸² In *Snorra Edda*, the *dvergar* originate as maggots and live in the earth and in rocks.⁸³ One set of dwarfs are said to live in the soil, and another in rocks; there is also a third group who may have another distinct home.⁸⁴

It is additionally possible, as Lotte Motz believed, that the idea of *dvergar* in *Skáldskaparmál* as ‘cosmic pillars’ supporting the sky could link them with mountains.⁸⁵ Motz further suggested that the word ‘dvergmáli’ (‘echo’) in the sagas is based on idea of *dvergar* living in stone.⁸⁶ Place-name evidence also links *dvergar* and rocks, such as Dvergasteinn (Norway and Iceland).⁸⁷

From such widespread evidence in diverse texts, it is reasonable to conclude that in Old Norse mythology and legend there was a strong link between *dvergar* and

⁷⁴ *Egils saga einhenda ok ásmundar berserkjaban*, chap. 11, pp. 174-175.

⁷⁵ *Sagan af Þjalar-Jóni*, chap. 6, p. 16.

⁷⁶ *Þorsteins saga víkingssonar*, chap. 5, p. 195.

⁷⁷ *Völsunga saga*, chap. 14, pp. 31-32.

⁷⁸ *Sörla þáttur*, *Flateyjarbók*, chap. 228, p. 304.

⁷⁹ *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, chap. 25, p. 417.

⁸⁰ *Alvíssmál*, p. 438, s. 3, ll. 2-3.

⁸¹ (‘they made many an image of man, *dvergar* out of earth’) (*Völuspá*, p. 294, s. 10, ll. 5-7).

⁸² *Völuspá*, p. 294, s. 14, l. 6; p. 304, s. 50, l. 5.

⁸³ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 14, p. 15, ll. 34-37.

⁸⁴ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 14, pp. 16-17.

⁸⁵ Motz, ‘Of Elves and Dwarfs’, 103. See *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 23, p. 33, ll. 23-26.

⁸⁶ Motz, ‘Of Elves and Dwarfs’, 102.

⁸⁷ Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, 234.

underground or rocky dwellings. While the *dvergar* in some texts are associated with both territories, it is possible that we should keep a distinction in mind between the subterranean *dvergar* and those that are shown to live in large rocks mostly above ground.

2. Turn to stone/perish in the sunlight

Another significant feature that has been attributed to the *dvergar* is that they cannot endure daylight and may suffer fatal consequences. Something of this nature appears to happen to Alvíss in the final stanza of *Alvíssmál*: ‘Uppi ertu, dvergr, um dagaðr, / nú skínn sól í sali!’ (‘you are dawned upon, dwarf, now sun shines into the hall!’).⁸⁸ A possible interpretation is that Alvíss turns to stone at the end of the poem, partially on the basis of a parallel with a *jötunn*’s daughter who becomes stone at dawn in the poem *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*.⁸⁹ Gabriel Turville-Petre believed that ‘living as they do [in rocks and underground], dwarfs cannot face the sun’, similarly to ‘giants, trolls and suchlike rock-dwellers’ who were turned to stone by the sun.⁹⁰

There are further sources that indicate the *dvergar* not to be daytime creatures. It has been claimed that the ‘oldest dateable attestation’ for the word *dvergr* is to be found in the 9th-century skaldic verse *Ynglingatal*. In this early poem, the *dvergr* may already be linked to a fear of daylight: Lindow translates ‘dagskjarr’ as ‘day-shy’.⁹¹ In the prose account of *Ynglinga saga*, it is made clear that the *dvergr* is encountered after sundown.⁹² The *dvergar* in *Egils saga einhenda ok ásmundar berserkjabana* are also found during the night.⁹³ In *Heiðreks saga*, Svafrlami comes across the pair of *dvergar*

⁸⁸ *Alvíssmál*, p. 443, s. 35, ll. 6-7.

⁸⁹ Acker, ‘Dwarf-lore in *Alvíssmál*’, 219.

Referencing: *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, p. 265, s. 31.

See also the ‘trollkona’ (troll woman) in *Grettis saga*, chap. 65, p. 213.

⁹⁰ Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, 235.

⁹¹ Lindow, ‘Supernatural Others and Ethnic Others’, 9-10.

Referencing: *Ynglingatal*, stanza 4, p. 20, l. 1 (in *Ynglinga saga*, chap. 12).

⁹² ‘um kveldit eptir sólarfall’ (‘during the evening after sundown’) (*Ynglingasaga*, chap. 12, p. 19, ll. 23-24).

⁹³ *Egils saga einhenda ok ásmundar berserkjabana*, chap. 11, p. 174.

at ‘sólarsetr’ (‘sunset’).⁹⁴ Similarly, Olíus and Alíus (later identified as *dvergar*) in *Ásmundar saga kappabana* arrive one evening in winter to see the king.⁹⁵

One of the most ubiquitous *dvergr* names is Dvalinn, which is found throughout the *Poetic Edda* in *Völuspá* (stanzas 11, 14), *Hávamál* (143), *Alvíssmál* (16) and *Fáfnismál* (13). The reference to Dvalinn in *Fáfnismál* similarly appears in *Völsunga saga* and *Gylfaginning*; the latter also features Dvalinn in its catalogue of *dvergr* names.⁹⁶ Dvalinn’s mount Móðnir is mentioned in *Skáldskaparmál*, as is ‘Dvalins leika’ and ‘drykk Dvalins’ (‘Dvalinn’s plaything’ and the ‘drink of Dvalinn’).⁹⁷ Dvalinn is also one of the names of the two *dvergr*-sword-smiths in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* and one of the four *dvergr*-forgers of Freyja’s necklace in *Sǫrla þáttur*.⁹⁸ Paul Acker has suggested that this name could translate as ‘delayed’, alluding to a fatal delay along the lines of Alvíss and the dawn.⁹⁹ It is additionally possible that the name of the sun in the *dvergar*’s language (according to *Alvíssmál*) refers to this idea: ‘Dvalins leika’ (‘Dvalinn’s plaything’ or, according to Terry Gunnell, ‘the tricker of Dvalinn’).¹⁰⁰ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein interprets the phrase ‘fyr Dellings durom’ (‘before Dellingr’s doors’) in *Hávamál* to mean ‘at dawn’, since Dellingr in *Vafþrúðnismál* (stanza 25) and *Gylfaginning* (chapter 10) is the father of day.¹⁰¹ If this is indeed the case, then the *dvergr* Þjóðrörir’s chanting takes place before the sun rises.

The notion that sunlight is deadly for *dvergar*, however, is only fully substantiated by *Alvíssmál*. Even in this case, Alvíss’s true fate remains unknown, although literary parallels and the *dvergar*’s known connection with stones may point a certain way. The other sources discussed indicate a possible association between *dvergar* and the avoidance of daylight. It may be that *dvergr* episodes in the sagas take place at night because this is the time to meet the supernatural Other. Sunset in

⁹⁴ *Heiðreks saga*, chap. 2, p. 2.

⁹⁵ *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, chap. 1, p. 289.

⁹⁶ *Völsunga saga*, chap. 18, p. 39; *Gylfaginning*, chap. 15, p. 18, l. 22; *Gylfaginning*, chap. 14, p. 16, l. 15.

⁹⁷ *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 58, p. 89, l. 11; chap. 56, p. 85, ll. 19-20; chap. 3, p. 12, ll. 13-14.

⁹⁸ *Heiðreks saga*, chap. 2, p. 3, ll. 10-11; *Sǫrla þáttur*, *Flateyjarbók*, chap. 228, p. 304.

⁹⁹ Acker, ‘Dwarf-lore in *Alvíssmál*’, 219.

¹⁰⁰ *Alvíssmál*, p. 440, s. 16, l. 3.

See also Gunnell, ‘Dvergar (Dwarfs)’, forthcoming.

¹⁰¹ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, ‘Groaning Dwarfs at Granite Doors’, 35.

Referencing: *Hávamál*, p. 37, s. 160, l. 3.

particular has a liminality about it that could prove imaginatively appealing for such encounters. Any Eddic instances of this characteristic, aside from *Alvíss*, are extremely enigmatic. It would not be justified to assume that all stories involving *dvergar* occur out of the daylight.

3. Associated with the dead

An association between *dvergar* and the dead has also been posited. Chester Nathan Gould, in his article on *dvergr* names (1926), concluded that ‘The dwarves are the dead’.¹⁰² He made this argument forcefully, although somewhat tenuously, linking all names to the theme of death even when it is not a clear interpretation. For example, Gould claimed that the name ‘Nefi’ (‘nephew’) refers to a deceased relative.¹⁰³ ‘Gollmæavill’ (‘rich sea-king’) and ‘Frægr’ (‘famous’), he continued, describe the previous lives of dead men; meanwhile, names that indicate brightness would relate to gravemound fires.¹⁰⁴ Gould’s theory may accord with *dvergr* names such as *Dáinn* (‘dead’) but in plenty of cases such an association is not obvious and feels rather forced.

Other scholars have also discussed this theme; there has been a tendency to group the *dvergar* with the *jötnar*, pitted against humans and gods as representatives of chaos and death. John McKinnell, for example, has argued that such an ‘antagonistic dualism’ is essential to Norse myth. Gods and humans represent ‘This World’ and, across the divide, ‘monsters, giants and trolls, dwarfs, the dead, and *vǫlur*’ signify ‘The Other’. McKinnell further proposed that the members of each opposing group were often linked; hence, the earth- and rock-dwelling *dvergar* can be sometimes associated with *jötnar* or the dead.¹⁰⁵ Gabriel Turville-Petre has also suggested that ‘dwarfs were not far removed from the dead’, referencing the *dvergr* name *Dáinn* and the corpse-like appearance of *Alvíss*.¹⁰⁶ Margaret Clunies Ross, however, disagrees that there is

¹⁰² Gould, ‘Dwarf-Names’, 959.

¹⁰³ Gould, ‘Dwarf-Names’, 960.

¹⁰⁴ Gould, ‘Dwarf-Names’, 960-961.

¹⁰⁵ McKinnell, *Meeting the Other in Norse Myth and Legend*, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, 235.

Referencing: *Alvíssmál*: p. 438, s. 2: ‘Hvat er þat fira? Hví ertu svá fǫlr um nasar? / Vartu í nótt með ná? / Þursa líki / þykki mér á þér vera; / ertattu til brúðar borinn’ (‘What is that of men? Why are you so pale about the nostrils? Were you in the night with a corpse? The likeness of a troll you seem to me to be; you are not born for a bride’). The name *Dáinn* appears in reference

sufficient evidence to allow a justified identification of the *jǫtnar* or the *dvergar* with the dead.¹⁰⁷

A possible suggestion of this attribute occurs in *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, in which ‘*dvergar dauðir*’ (‘dead *dvergar*’) are accredited with the craftsmanship of a sword.¹⁰⁸ This line is somewhat enigmatic, since the sword-forgers were not identified as *dvergar* during their appearance in chapter one.¹⁰⁹ The adjective ‘*dauðir*’ may mean that these *dvergar* have died since they made this sword. It may, however, imply that the craftsmen encountered in the earlier chapter were in some sense creatures of the living dead.

The examples provided above, of certain *dvergr* names and deathly appearances, indicate that *dvergar* may have been associated with the dead at one point, at least for some audiences. This, however, does not appear to be a defining trait that is present throughout their occurrences. In *Gylfaginning*, for example, Snorri’s account of the *dvergar*’s origins as maggots has connotations with graves and corpses.¹¹⁰ Ívaldi’s sons in *Skáldskaparmál*, however, do not appear to have any association with death.¹¹¹ Fjalarr and Galarr, the killers of Kvasir, may be linked to death through their murderous actions, yet this is no more pronounced than for any other slayer in Norse mythology.¹¹² It may be their strong association with the earth and rocks that links *dvergar* with the dead in many minds, as these are the lairs of the departed. In addition to graves and burial mounds, there are some instances in medieval Icelandic literature where the dead are believed to dwell within mountains.¹¹³ This dead realm also ties in with the idea of coldly asexual, non-procreating creatures, which will be discussed below.

to a deer (*Grímnismál*, p. 374, s. 33, l. 4) and an *álfr* (*Hávamál*, p. 351, s. 143, l. 2), but is mostly used to refer to a *dvergr* (*Hyndluljóð*, p. 461, s. 7, l. 10; *Vǫluspá*, p. 309, s. 11, l. 6 of Hauksbók version).

¹⁰⁷ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, 56.

¹⁰⁸ *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, chap. 9, p. 306, s. 2, ll. 5-8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, chap. 1, pp. 289-291.

¹¹⁰ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 14, p. 15, ll. 31-37.

¹¹¹ *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 35, pp. 41-43.

¹¹² *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. g57, p. 3.

¹¹³ *Eyrbyggja saga*, chap. 4, p. 9; *Eyrbyggja saga* chap. 11, p. 19; *Landnámabók*, vol. I, p. 125.

4. Small in size

Another contested belief is that the *dvergar* of Norse literature were small in stature. From the Eddic sources, the best example to support this position occurs in *Reginismál*, in which Reginn is a ‘dvergr of vøxt’ (‘a dwarf in size’, or possibly ‘in shape’).¹¹⁴ This suggests the existence of a stature characteristic of the *dvergar*, which may be, but is not necessarily, diminutive size.¹¹⁵ Additionally, Ármann Jakobsson has suggested that the *dvergr* Littr in *Gylfaginning* ‘seems to be smallish’, referring to the easy way he is kicked into the fire by Þórr.¹¹⁶ Otherwise, this most famous of “dwarfish” features is not evident in the Eddic texts. In fact, the suggestion in *Skáldskaparmál* that four *dvergar* held up the sky suggests that these may have been conceived of as rather large, or at least strong.¹¹⁷ Alvíss in *Alvíssmál*, as well as the *dvergar* of *Sǫrla þáttr* and Mǫndull in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, are considered to be feasible (even threatening) sexual partners for goddesses and humans.

Anatoly Liberman has argued that *dvergar* were conceived of as ‘tiny creatures’ from sometime around the year 700 CE. His theory would imply that the *dvergar* were considered to be small in size from a point in heathen belief that predates the writing and compiling of the Eddas. Liberman acknowledged, however, that the ‘mythological dwarfs are never represented as short’ in the Eddas.¹¹⁸ Liberman proposed that ‘the diminution of their stature’ resulted from the *dvergar*’s ‘inferior social status’ as smiths for the gods (a servant role). He claimed that the linguistic change of rhoticism, through which ‘dwezg-’ became ‘dverg-’, paved the way for the ‘dverg-/berg- rhyme’, whose effect was ‘to settle dwarfs in rocks and underground and to turn them into the gnomes familiar from the Grimms.’¹¹⁹ It is worth noting, however, that a connection with rocks would not necessarily miniaturise creatures associated with them. In fact, most of the rocks by which the *dvergar* are encountered are specified to be very large. For example, the stone the *dvergr* lures the king into in *Ynglinga saga* is ‘svá mikill sem stór hús’ (‘as

¹¹⁴ *Reginismál*, prose introduction, p. 296, ll. 3-5.

¹¹⁵ Gunnell, ‘Dvergar (Dwarfs)’, forthcoming.

¹¹⁶ Ármann Jakobsson, ‘The Hole’, 67.

Referencing: *Gylfaginning*, chap. 49, p. 46, ll. 35-37.

¹¹⁷ *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 23, p. 33, ll. 23-26.

¹¹⁸ Liberman, ‘What Happened to the Female Dwarfs?’, 259.

¹¹⁹ Liberman, ‘What Happened to the Female Dwarfs?’, 260.

great as a big house’).¹²⁰ Similarly, the stone by the *dvergr* child in *Sigurðar saga þøgla* is nearly the size of a house.¹²¹ In *Áns saga bogsveigis*, *Þorsteins þátrr Bæjarmagns* and *Heiðreks saga*, the *dvergar*’s stones are described as ‘mikill’/‘mikinn’ (‘great in size’).¹²² The stone that the *dvergr* couple inhabit in *Þjalar-Jóns saga* is among ‘stórir steinar’ (‘big stones’) in a field and is large enough for a human to enter.¹²³ Egill likewise enters the stone of the *dvergr* family in *Egils saga einhenda ok ásmundar berserkjabana*, suggesting that it is not too miniature.¹²⁴

Outside of the Eddic texts there is some evidence that dwarfs were conceptualised as small in the thirteenth century.¹²⁵ One character, Túta in *Sneglu-Halla þátrr* (in *Morkinskinna*), is described as a ‘maðr’ who is ‘lagr sem *dvergr* oc digr’ (a man who is ‘short as a *dvergr* and strong’).¹²⁶ Such a description implies that Túta is not actually a *dvergr*, but is instead comparably short.¹²⁷

Some of the evidence that has been discussed suggests that *dvergar* were thought to be small. Whether or not this was considered a defining trait is unclear, since it is not obvious throughout the sources. This may therefore be deemed a non-essential, non-universal, feature of the mythological Norse *dvergar*, which became an important characteristic in later folklore and popular culture.

5. Craftsmen and smiths

The concept of the *dvergar* as smiths and craftsmen is also widespread. In modern Icelandic, *dvergsmíði* is a word still used to describe a beautifully-crafted item. The *dvergar* in medieval literature often appear in their capacity as creators. In *Völuspá*, as noted above, the *dvergar* appear to fashion more beings of their own race.¹²⁸ A boar in

¹²⁰ *Ynglinga saga*, chap. 12, p. 19, l. 23.

¹²¹ *Sigurðar saga þøgla*, chap 7, p. 113.

¹²² *Áns saga bogsveigis*, chap. 1, p. 404; *Þorsteins þátrr Bæjarmagns*, chap. 3, p. 400; *Heiðreks saga*, chap. 2, p. 2.

¹²³ *Sagan af Þjalar-Jóni*, chap. 6, p. 16.

¹²⁴ *Egils saga einhenda ok ásmundar berserkjabana*, chap. 11, p. 174.

¹²⁵ Ármann Jakobsson, ‘The Hole’, 67.

¹²⁶ *Morkinskinna*, 236.

¹²⁷ Ármann Jakobsson, ‘The Hole’, 67.

¹²⁸ *Völuspá*, p. 294, s. 10, ll. 5-7.

Hyndluljóð is said to be made by the *dvergar* Dáinn and Nabbi.¹²⁹ In *Grímnismál*, in a stanza that is also cited in *Skáldskaparmál*, the creation of Freyr's magical ship Skíðblaðnir is attributed to Ívaldi's sons (*dvergar*).¹³⁰ The chain that binds Fenrir's wolf is made by *dvergar*; to somewhat confuse matters, these *dvergar* live in Svartálfaheimr, suggesting that Snorri, at least, had a possible link with the *álfar* in mind.¹³¹ The most extended account of the *dvergar* as smiths appears in *Skáldskaparmál*, in which they craft the gods' greatest treasures: Gungnir, Sif's hair, Skíðblaðnir, Draupnir, Gullinbursti and Mjöllnir.¹³² The *dvergar* Fjalarr and Galarr are the manufacturers of the mead of poetry; this craftsmanship, however, is of a different nature and results in a cultural product rather than an artefact. The characters are also malevolent towards the gods, killing the wise Kvasir, and hence seem removed from the workmen of the gods that they appear as elsewhere.¹³³

In the sagas, the *dvergar* are often craftsmen, typically making weapons for the hero. In *Sörla þáttur*, Freyja obtains a necklace from four *dvergar*.¹³⁴ These *dvergar* are explicitly 'menn svá hagir, at þeir lögðu á allt görva hönd'.¹³⁵ Furthermore, it is this characteristic that identifies them as *dvergar*: 'Þess háttar menn, sem þeir váru, kölluðu menn dverga'.¹³⁶ In the opening chapter of *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, three swords are forged by the characters Olíus and Alíus; later in the saga, they are identified as *dvergar*.¹³⁷ A more famous example is the two *dvergar* of *Heiðreks saga* who make the sword Tyrfingr.¹³⁸ Tyrfingr's exceptional properties and *dvergr*-craftsmanship are also mentioned in *Qrvar-Odds saga*.¹³⁹ Both Tyrfingr and the third sword in *Ásmundar saga*

¹²⁹ *Hyndluljóð*, p. 461, s. 7, ll. 5-10.

¹³⁰ *Grímnismál*, p. 376, s. 43.

See also *Skáldskaparmál*, pages 18-19, chapter 7, s. 62, lines 27, p. 18 – 2, p. 19

¹³¹ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 34, p. 28, ll. 2-5.

See also Motz, 'Of Elves and Dwarfs', p. 93, for the 'partial fusion' of *álfar* and *dvergar* in Norse myth. See also Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, 235: 'If they are not of the same origin, the dwarfs are hard to distinguish from the dark or black elves.'

¹³² *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 35, pp. 41-42.

¹³³ *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 57, p. 3, ll. 17-23.

¹³⁴ *Sörla þáttur*, 304.

¹³⁵ *Sörla þáttur*, 304 ('men so skilful, that they made all kinds of apparel').

¹³⁶ *Sörla þáttur*, 304 ('Men of this mode, as they were, people called *dvergar*').

¹³⁷ *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, chap. 1, pp. 289-291; chap. 9, p. 306, s. 2.

¹³⁸ *Heiðreks*, chap. 2, pp. 2-3.

¹³⁹ *Qrvar-Odds saga*, chap. 14, p. 326.

kappabana are cursed by the *dvergar* who make them.¹⁴⁰ At another point in *Qrvar-Odds saga*, the superior qualities of certain arrows are attributed to their *dvergr* origin.¹⁴¹ Magical, *dvergr*-made arrows (and bow) also feature in *Áns saga bogveigis*.¹⁴² In *Egils saga einhenda ok ásmundar berserkjabana*, Egill receives a special sword that the *dvergr* attaches to the stump of his hand-less arm.¹⁴³ The *dvergr* Mõndull in *Gõngu-Hrólf's saga* announces as part of the declaration of his true identity that he is skilled at 'hagleik' ('craftsmanship').¹⁴⁴ Þorsteinn in *Þorsteins þátrr Bæjarmagns* receives magical gifts from a *dvergr*, including a silver ring, although it is not stated that he was their manufacturer.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Andvari in *Skáldskaparmál*, *Reginismál* and *Võlsunga saga* possesses a special ring along with his hoard of golden treasure (although he is not known to have himself been its forger); as with the sword-crafting *dvergar*, he places a curse on this treasure when it is taken away.¹⁴⁶

Many scholars have analysed *dvergr* characters and the race as a whole in the light of this characteristic. Edwin Bonsack has (somewhat over-confidently, through a method involving anagrams and analogy) identified the *dvergr* character Dvalinn in the texts *Sõrlla þátrr*, *Hávamál*, *Grímnismál* and *Ynglina saga* with Wayland/Wieland/Võlundr the smith.¹⁴⁷ Motz, in her work *The Wise One of the Mountain*, identified Icelandic *dvergar* as the 'north-Germanic form of the subterranean artisan'.¹⁴⁸ She synthesised figures from different traditions, including medieval Iceland, into a discussion of the 'Subterranean Smith' motif. Valdimar Tr. Hafstein highlights the *dvergar*'s role as craftsmen in his definition of the race.¹⁴⁹ While this is true of many saga *dvergar*, the *dvergar* of the Eddas are somewhat different in this aspect since the majority of the Eddic *dvergar* are not actually shown to be smiths.

¹⁴⁰ *Heiðreks saga*, chap. 2, p. 3; *Ásmundar saga kappabana*, chap. 1, p. 291.

¹⁴¹ *Qrvar-Odds saga*, chap. 4, p. 293.

¹⁴² *Áns saga bogveigis*, chap. 1, p. 405.

¹⁴³ *Egils saga einhenda ok ásmundar berserkjabana*, chap. 11, pp. 174-175.

¹⁴⁴ *Gõngu-Hrólf's saga*, chap. 25, p. 417.

¹⁴⁵ *Þorsteins þátrr Bæjarmagns*, chap. 3, p. 401.

¹⁴⁶ *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 39, p. 45, ll. 21-30; *Reginismál*, prose passage following stanza 4, p. 297; *Reginismál*, p. 297, s. 5; *Võlsunga saga*, chap. 14, pp. 31-32.

¹⁴⁷ Bonsack, *Dvalinn*, 37-142.

¹⁴⁸ Motz, *The Wise One of the Mountain*, 6.

¹⁴⁹ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, 'Dwarfs', 111.

6. An all-male race

The final characteristic of the Norse *dvergar* that I will address in this chapter is gender. It is a common belief among scholars that the mythical *dvergar* constituted an all-male race. Ármann Jakobsson has considered the *dvergar* to be a ‘unisexual race’, characterised by a ‘total lack of women’.¹⁵⁰ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein also believes that the *dvergar* are an ‘all-male race of supernatural beings’ that are ‘created asexually’.¹⁵¹ This is based on Eddic evidence: in *Völuspá*, the very first *dvergar* appear to be made from primeval corpses and to reproduce themselves through craft rather than sexual reproduction.¹⁵² In *Snorra Edda*, they grow as maggots in the flesh of Ymir.¹⁵³ Motz claimed that *dvergar* do not reproduce biologically or even engage in sociable activities; therefore, they are viewed only in the light of their profession (as smiths) and hence females are not required.¹⁵⁴ Clunies Ross has similarly linked their asexual beginnings with their apparent mono-gender.¹⁵⁵

Despite this confidence, there remain indications that female *dvergar* may have been possible in the minds of early audiences. In *Fáfnismál*, Fáfnir reveals that the *nornir* descend variously from three families: the *Æsir*, the *álfar* and the female line of Dvalinn.¹⁵⁶ As discussed above, the name Dvalinn is a key *dvergr* name and, according to this stanza, there are females among his descendants. The *nornir*’s *dvergr*-lineage is not referenced in any other context within Norse mythology,¹⁵⁷ although this piece of Fáfnir’s wisdom also appears in *Völsunga saga* and *Snorra Edda*.¹⁵⁸ While the authenticity of this belief is not beyond scepticism, its appearance in these texts remains

¹⁵⁰ Ármann Jakobsson, ‘The Hole’, 68.

¹⁵¹ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, ‘Dwarfs’, 111.

¹⁵² *Völuspá*, p. 293, s. 9, ll. 5-8: ‘hverr skyldi dverga / dróttin skepja / ór Brimis blóði / ok ór Bláins leggjum’ (‘who should shape the lord of *dvergar* out of Brimir’s blood and out of Bláin’s bones’); p. 294, s. 10.

¹⁵³ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 14, p. 15, ll. 31-37.

¹⁵⁴ Motz, ‘The Host of Dvalinn’, 84.

¹⁵⁵ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, 56, 59, 165.

¹⁵⁶ *Fáfnismál*, p. 305, s. 13: ‘Sundrbornar mjök / hygg ek at nornir sé, / eigut þær ætt saman; sumar eru áskunngar, / sumar álfkunngar, / sumar døtr Dvalins’ (‘I think that the *nornir* are greatly of different origins, they have not family in common; some are kin to the *Æsir*, some are kin to the *álfar*, some are daughters of Dvalinn’).

¹⁵⁷ Larrington, *Poetic Edda*, notes, 284.

¹⁵⁸ *Völsunga saga*, chap. 18, p. 39; *Gylfaginning*, chap. 15, p. 18, l. 22.

significant as a clear suggestion of female *dvergr* offspring. However, while Dvalinn can be assumed to represent the race of *dvergar*, this passage does not indicate for certain that his daughters are also *dvergar*. Their identity as *nornir* may supersede the race of their ancestors. It is entirely possible, given the traditions of Norse myth, that the offspring or descendants of a *dvergr* will not be *dvergar* themselves. The family of Loki Laufeyjarson is a good example of this. In *Gylfaginning*, he is introduced as one of the *Æsir* although has a *jötunn* father.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, in *Völuspá*, Loki may well be the *jötunn* mentioned in stanza 46.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, his children with a *gýgr* ('giantess') turn out to be Fenrir's wolf, the Miðgarðsormr and the ghastly Hel.¹⁶¹ The existence of female *dvergar* among the mythical Norse race remains disputable.

Further instances serve to complicate this issue. In *Grímnismál* and *Skáldskaparmál*, certain *dvergr*-smiths are referred to as 'Ívalda synir' ('Ívaldi's sons').¹⁶² This implies family relations and possibly sexual reproduction involving a mother. The offspring of males, however, need not be created in this way. It seems, as has been noted above, that the early *dvergar* in *Völuspá* fashion new *dvergar* through craft.¹⁶³ Furthermore, a *jötunn* in *Vafþrúðnismál* is said to have produced children from under his own arms and with his two or legs together.¹⁶⁴ The *dvergr* Alvíss in *Alvíssmál*, however, is clearly interested in marriage, which suggests that *dvergar* in sexual relationships was not such a strange idea. Many scholars, however, distance this example from the race of *dvergar* and consider it to be an adapted *jötunn* tale instead.¹⁶⁵ It is also worth noting that a character's desire for a sexual partner of another race does not imply that there must be females belonging to the character's own race; it may be necessary for them to look to other races for this reason. *Sǫrla þáttur* provides another case of *dvergar* who are interested in sex; once again, this is with a goddess (Freyja)

¹⁵⁹ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 3, p. 26, ll. 34-36.

¹⁶⁰ *Völuspá*, p. 303, s. 46, l. 4.

¹⁶¹ *Gylfaginning*, chap. 34, p. 27, ll. 4-6.

¹⁶² *Grímnismál*, p. 376, s. 43, l. 1; *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 35, p. 41, l. 34.

See also Ármann Jakobsson, 'The Hole', 68.

¹⁶³ *Völuspá*, p. 294, s. 10, ll. 5-8.

¹⁶⁴ *Vafþrúðnismál*, p. 361, ss. 32-33.

¹⁶⁵ Ármann Jakobsson, 'The Hole', 68.

Ármann, on the other hand, believes it better to take each of the few examples of *dvergar* seriously rather than to dismiss any as atypical.

rather than one of their own.¹⁶⁶ This episode, however, is more likely intended to demonstrate attributes of Freyja's character than to develop the mythical *dvergar* race. It is also a younger text, from the late fourteenth century, and may or may not have origins from the time period(s) of Eddic myth.

Female *dvergar*, and male *dvergar* that pose a sexual threat to human women, appear outside of the mythical narratives. Another lustful *dvergr* can be found in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*: Mondull sexually assaults the human woman Ingibjörg and later is believed to have abducted the king's sister.¹⁶⁷ Ármann Jakobsson has pointed to *dvergr*-children as evidence of families, hence possibly of multiple sexes.¹⁶⁸ In *Þorsteins þáttur Bæjarmagns*, the hero saves a *dvergr*-child at the request of his *dvergr*-father.¹⁶⁹ In this tale, the father is distressed over the fate of his son, suggesting family relations that resemble those of humans. There are also *dvergr*-children in *Sigurðar saga þögla* and *Egils saga einhenda ok ásmundar berserkjabana* who likewise have adult male guardians.¹⁷⁰ A *dvergr* couple are encountered in the fourteenth-century *riddarasaga Þjalar-Jóns saga*: a 'dvergr ok dyrgja' named Svamr and Svama. The two are married; Svamr refers to Svama as 'kerling mín' ('my wife') and mentions their children.¹⁷¹

This is the first recorded appearance of the noun 'dyrgja', which refers to a female *dvergr*. Liberman has addressed this evidence in an argument against the existence of female *dvergar* in ancient Scandinavian belief. He argued that, although old, the noun is not derived from *dwyrgja and was hence originally unrelated to 'dvergr'. Instead, Liberman proposed that the original meaning of *dyrgja* was a sort of 'troll woman' (a somewhat interchangeable member of The Other, as discussed above).¹⁷² It is important to note that Liberman's argument concerns the absence of female *dvergar* in older 'mythological thinking' rather than the corpus of medieval Icelandic literature and folklore, in which female *dvergar* can clearly be found (see

¹⁶⁶ *Sörla þáttur*, 304.

¹⁶⁷ *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, chap. 23, pp. 410-12; chap. 25, p. 416; chap. 34, p. 449.

¹⁶⁸ Ármann Jakobsson, 'The Hole', 68.

¹⁶⁹ *Þorsteins þáttur Bæjarmagns*, chap. 3, pp. 400-402.

¹⁷⁰ *Sigurðar saga þögla*, chap. 7, p. 114 ('duergsbarn') ('*dvergr*'s child'); *Egils saga einhenda ok ásmundar berserkjabana*, chap. 11, pp. 174-175.

¹⁷¹ *Sagan af Þjalar-Jóni*, chap. 6, pp. 16-17.

¹⁷² Liberman, 'What Happened to the Female Dwarfs?', 261.

Þjalar-Jóns saga).¹⁷³ A distinction should therefore be considered between the mythical race in ancient belief and the fictional race in literature from medieval times and onwards.

Two other *dvergr* names from the corpus are grammatically feminine. These names, *Herríðr* and *Túta*, have not been used as serious evidence of female *dvergar*. Chester Nathan Gould rejected *Herríðr* as a dwarfish name and discounted *Túta* as a clearly male creature who is not a *dvergr*.¹⁷⁴

It is worth noting as a final point here that the absence of females in medieval texts need not necessitate the nonexistence of females that belong to, or are thought to belong to, that race. While it is true that the lineage list of the *dvergar* in *Völuspá* contains males exclusively, and that only the father of *Ívaldi*'s sons is named, a number of similar instances could be produced in the sagas of human families, from which we could be led to believe that female humans were quite a rare occurrence in the medieval world. Of course, there are many women in the Norse sagas, yet there are also far more human characters than *dvergar* in total: the largest proportion of these characters remain male by a considerable margin. The creation myth in *Völuspá*, on the other hand, does account for the first woman as well as the first man, yet in its final stanzas the reborn world appears to be inhabited by males only.¹⁷⁵

Concluding remarks

I would therefore consider the *dvergar* of Old Nordic belief as beings that inhabit the realm of earth and stone. The idea that the *dvergar* represented the dead seems unconvincing, although due to their close association with the earth it is not unlikely that such a connection should sometimes be made. It is also doubtful that they were characteristically diminutive in size. More probable is the idea that, in early mythology, the *dvergar* were male in all instances, a race of a different nature to humanity and the gods. *Dvergar* may also have been thought involved with the activities of craftsmanship and the forge, and/or to experience trouble facing sunlight; these attributes are suggested in some cases but not others. As with our own ideas concerning mythical

¹⁷³ Liberman, 'What Happened to the Female Dwarfs?', 262.

¹⁷⁴ Gould, 'Dwarf-Names', 956, 958.

¹⁷⁵ *Völuspá*, p. 295, ss. 17-18.

creatures, it is very likely that the envisioned characteristics of *dvergar* would vary for different audiences, poets and compilers. Such variation should be especially expected across the wide historical and geographical range from which these texts originate.

There is, however, little evidence of actual *dvergr*-worship or their own cult.¹⁷⁶ We mostly encounter *dvergar* in a later, literary guise, found in mythological, legendary and folkloric material. This leaves their earlier nature, if this were anything substantial, immovably enigmatic.

In medieval Iceland, these literary *dvergar* appear in various guises across a range of texts and span of centuries. It could be said that these *dvergar* are apparently small, often smiths, inhabit rocks and may exhibit a tendency to appear after daylight hours. Their race does seem to include females. Once again, however, I speak in terms of family resemblance characteristics, rather than providing a defined identity.

In a later chapter I shall apply my findings from this study of Norse *dvergar* to Discworld dwarfs. It is first necessary, however, to consider other formative works of literature that have influenced Pratchett and shaped his race of dwarfs.

¹⁷⁶ This is the consensus of many scholars. Motz believed that *dvergar* were ‘not potent forces’ in the religion of the Eddic myths (Motz, ‘Of Elves and Dwarfs’, 106). Helmut de Boor argued that, despite place names containing the word, the *dvergr*/‘Zwerg’ was not part of the folk-belief of Scandinavia (de Boor, ‘Der Zwerg in Skandinavien’, 544). Turville-Petre thought that ‘there is little to suggest that [*dvergar*] were venerated’ (Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, 233). Paul Battles, however, has made an argument towards possible *dvergr*-worship, using as evidence a creature in the story of Kóthran’s conversion. This being in *Kristni saga* (chapter 2), the *ármaðr*, lives in a stone and is sacrificed to by Kóthran. In *Páttir Þorvalds ens víðförla* (chapter 2), a *spámaðr* is the guardian of Kóthran and lives in a large stone nearby. The *spámaðr* appears in Kóthran’s dreams at night while the bishop pours holy water on the stone in the day, eventually losing his handsome appearance to become black and ugly. Battles suggests from the stone dwelling-place that this may be an instance of *dvergr*-worship, and likewise connects the creature’s appearance in dreams and its revelation of a dark and unsightly true form to saga *dvergar* (*Sigurðar saga þogla* and *Göngu-Hrólf’s saga* respectively) (Battles, *Dwarfs in Germanic Literature*, 48-49). Such a comparison is interesting; however, the traits of rock-dwelling, dream visitations and changing appearances are too generic to support a strong claim on this basis.

Subsequent literature

The literary works to be focused on in this chapter are those of Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm and J. R. R. Tolkien, since these constitute such important source material regarding the Discworld dwarfs. *Zwerge* (“dwarfs”) and similar creatures appear in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812) and *Deutsche Sagen* (1816), the German fairy-tales and legends collected by the Brothers Grimm in their seminal works on folklore. As with the *dvergar*, these are not a uniform race of creatures; they feature in individual stories from different tellers and localities. There are also other terms for seemingly *Zwerg*-like creatures whose tales are grouped together within *Deutsche Sagen*. Many of these are rendered in English as ‘dwarfs’ by Donald Ward in his 1981 translation *The German Legends of the Brothers Grimm*. These include ‘Männlein’, ‘Bergmännlein’, ‘Fräuchen’, ‘Wichtlein’ and ‘kleinen Volks’. They will be identified as such but nonetheless considered in the following chapter, since they share many common features with the *Zwerge*. I will discuss these in the manner of the chapter above, this time considering the following topics:

1. Mining
2. Treasure
3. Homes
4. Character
5. Appearance
6. Females

The most significant features of the Middle-earth dwarves from Tolkien’s works *The Hobbit* (1937), *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1945-1955) and his extended legendarium (published posthumously) can also be addressed in these same sections and will form a complementary component of the discussion below. Tolkien’s dwarves are a later literary creation who themselves contain a mixture of influences from both German folklore and Norse mythology and literature: Tolkien acknowledged that *The Hobbit* ‘began as a comic tale among conventional and inconsistent Grimm’s fairy-tale dwarves’, who he also described as a ‘rabble of Eddaic-named dwarves out of

Völuspá'.¹⁷⁷ The twenty-first-century film adaptations by Peter Jackson will not form part of this discussion, since Pratchett's race of dwarfs was comprehensively developed and the majority of Discworld novels relevant to this study were published by 2001, the release year of Jackson's film *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

1. Mining

The most prominent *Zwerg* miners in German folklore appear in the tale 'Sneewittchen' (famous in English as 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs'), collected by the Brothers Grimm in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. In this tale, the *Zwerge* are miners of 'Erz' ('ore') and 'Gold'.¹⁷⁸ The dwarf miners in Walt Disney's 1937 *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* adaptation have played a large part in popularising mining as a dwarfish trait. In the film, the dwarfs mine diamonds instead of metal.

In the tales of *Deutsche Sagen*, *Zwerge* are not commonly associated with mining, although their tales are often set in mountainous regions known for raw materials. In certain legends, it is not the *Zwerge* but other small, similar beings that are linked to the mines:

The Little People, or Gnomes, look almost the same as Dwarfs, but they are only about ten inches tall. They have the figures of old men with long beards, dress like miners with white hoods attached to their shirts, and carry lanterns, picks, and hammers. [...] They especially like to appear in shafts rich in ore or where the prospects for making a strike are good.¹⁷⁹

It is also worth noting that the *Zwerge* can appear in opposition to the mining industry, an example of which will be discussed in the 'Homes' section below. As Valdimar Tr. Hafstein suggests, mining may signify modernity, while the *Zwerge* belong to a less-industrialised past.¹⁸⁰ It may be possible that the humans are taking over the mining that has previously been the domain of the *Zwerge*, on a new industrial scale.

¹⁷⁷ Tolkien, *Letters*, 26, letter to Stanley Unwin (16 December 1937); *The Return of the Shadow*, 7, letter to G. E. Selby (14 December 1937).

¹⁷⁸ Grimm, *KHM*, tale 53, pp. 300, 301.

¹⁷⁹ Translation by Ward: Grimm, *GL*, 'The Little People', tale 37, p. 43.

'Bergmännlein' (translated here as 'Gnomes') would more literally translate to 'little mountain men'; the German 'Wichtlein' has been translated to 'Little People'. For the German tale, see Grimm, *DS*, 'Die Wichtlein', tale 37, pp. 61-62.

¹⁸⁰ Hafstein, 'Groaning Dwarfs at Granite Doors', 38.

The dwarves in Tolkien's works are certainly associated with mining. The Mines of Moria are an ancestral, subterranean domain encountered in *The Fellowship of the Ring*.¹⁸¹ In Moria, the dwarfs mined a fictional substance called *mithril* that was found nowhere else; they did not seek out the iron, gold and jewels that were also present.¹⁸² The dwarves who inhabited the Lonely Mountain in the backstory to *The Hobbit* became wealthy by mining gold and jewels beneath the mountain.¹⁸³

2. Treasure

The *Zwerg* and similar beings in *Deutsche Sagen* are sometimes linked to treasure. This may be, but is not always, gold. In 'Die Ahnfrau von Rantzau', human women are rewarded with gold from little people who live in the mountains and underground (a 'Männlein' and a 'Fräuchen', also called a 'Bergfrau').¹⁸⁴ Such figures may equally be associated with silver, such as in 'Das quellende Silber' (a 'Männlein', in this case) and in 'Die Osenberger Zwerg'.¹⁸⁵ The 'kleine Männlein' ('small little men') in 'Der Untersberg' guard treasures inside their mountain.¹⁸⁶

The *Deutsche Sagen Zwerg* also occasionally bestow precious items upon humans. The *Zwerg* in 'Von Scherfenberg and the Dwarf', for example, gives a magic belt and a magic ring to von Scherfenberg.¹⁸⁷ Likewise, in 'Der Graf von Hoia', the count receives a sword, a cape and a golden ring with magical properties from a 'Männlein' (also called a 'Bergmännlein').¹⁸⁸ These items may indicate special *Zwerg/Männlein* craftsmanship; however, it is not made clear that these items are *Zwerg*-forged rather than merely *Zwerg*-owned. These may instead merely be instances of the supernatural folk- or fairy-tale benefactor.

These *Zwerg* are not encountered in the role of smiths. One relevant figure, however, is Grinken the Smith in 'Grinkenschmidt', who makes items such as unpickable locks. He is described as a 'wilden Man' ('wild man') who lives

¹⁸¹ Tolkien, *FR*, 281-315.

¹⁸² Tolkien, *FR*, 302.

¹⁸³ Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 20.

¹⁸⁴ Grimm, *DS*, tale 41, pp. 64, 65.

¹⁸⁵ Grimm, *DS*, tale 161, pp. 187-188; tale 43, p. 67.

¹⁸⁶ Grimm, *DS*, tale 27, p. 52.

¹⁸⁷ Grimm, *DS*, tale 29, p. 54.

¹⁸⁸ Grimm, *DS*, tale 35, p. 60.

underground in a cave and lends out his spit for weddings. When he is denied a roast in exchange for this service, he takes revenge.¹⁸⁹ Underground cave dwellings, lending equipment for weddings and taking revenge when wronged are all characteristics common of the *Zwerg*-type beings, so this is a potential connection.

Two of the examples above involve magical rings in particular as items of treasure, which is not an uncommon motif in folk- and fairy-tales. Magical rings (the Rings of Power) are a famous feature of Tolkien's Middle-earth, and pivotal to the plot of *The Lord of the Rings*. These rings, however, are associated with the elves rather than the dwarves; they are the greatest of many 'Elven-rings' made by 'Elven-smiths' in an ancient era.¹⁹⁰ Elvish craftsmanship in the works of Tolkien is held to be exquisite and precious, such as the fine swords found in *The Hobbit* and the gifts given to the Fellowship in Lórien.¹⁹¹

Tolkien's dwarves are also known as skilled smiths. In *The Hobbit*, the dwarf Thorin reminisces of great workshops within the Lonely Mountain and boasts that 'Kings used to send for our smiths' when it was ruled by his grandfather.¹⁹² He gives the protagonist Bilbo a *mithril* shirt that was made by his people and cannot be pierced by arrows.¹⁹³

The dwarves are lovers of 'things that take shape under the hands of the craftsmen' and also of gems.¹⁹⁴ Gold can have great power over 'dwarfish hearts' in Middle-earth and the desire of the dwarves in *The Hobbit* to reclaim their lost treasures is a powerful motivator for them.¹⁹⁵ Tolkien associated his dwarves and their love of gold and crafted objects with the Jewish people; the attribute in this light becomes uncomfortably in the mode of anti-Semitic stereotyping.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹ Grimm, *DS*, tale 157, pp. 184-185.

¹⁹⁰ Tolkien, *FR*, 53.

While it is true that the dwarves possessed seven of the Rings of Power, this does not constitute an exclusive connection since the elves and men likewise had a share of them (Tolkien, *FR*, 57).

¹⁹¹ Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 39, 47; *FR*, 355-357.

¹⁹² Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 20.

¹⁹³ Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 222, 259.

¹⁹⁴ Tolkien, *RK*, Appendix F, 381.

¹⁹⁵ Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 247.

¹⁹⁶ Vink, "'Jewish' Dwarves", 123-124.

3. Homes

Similarly to the Norse *dvergar*, the *Zwerge* and other small beings in *Deutsche Sagen* are connected with rocks and stone. They are often said to live in caves (especially in the cliffs) or in mountains.¹⁹⁷ In one legend, many *Zwerge* are turned into stone, or imprisoned in stone.¹⁹⁸

An additional characteristic of the *Zwerge* is their tendency to depart a region en masse, to be rarely – or never – seen again. The absence of *Zwerg* sightings in the contemporary age may be explained in this way, since their existence is firmly situated in the past. The *Zwerge* who live in a cave underground in ‘*Zwerge leihen Brot*’ depart because of ironworks that have been built in the area and similar events occur in ‘*Zwerge ausgetrieben*’:

When the iron forges and stamping mills were built in the Erz Mountains, the noise drove the Dwarfs out. They complained bitterly about the situation but told people they would return once the noisy works were removed.¹⁹⁹

In this legend, the mining industry that is established in Erzgebirge (‘Ore Mountains’) drives the *Zwerge* out of their home. Valdimar Hafstein has interpreted this departure to indicate social change and the passing of the old ways.²⁰⁰ He links such a ‘temporal break’ (historical change), indicated by ‘the departure of the supernaturals’, to the *dvergar* in *Völuspá* who signify the great cosmological change of *ragnarøk*.²⁰¹ In other

¹⁹⁷ The *Männlein* in ‘Der Untersberg’ live inside a hollowed-out mountain (Grimm, *DS*, tale 27, p. 52). In ‘Steinverwandelte Zwerge’, the *Zwerge* live in a cave and tunnels in the cliffs and are also called ‘Bergzwerge’ (‘mountain dwarfs’) (tale 32, p. 57). The *Zwerge* also live in a mountain in the legend ‘Zwergberge’ (tale 33, p. 58). *Bergmännlein* (‘little mountain people’) appear in ‘Der Graf von Hoia’ (tale 35, p. 60). The little people’s kingdom in ‘Die Ahnfrau von Rantzau’ is also found in a hollow mountain (tale 41, p. 64). *Zwerge* also dwell in the mountain in ‘Die Osenberger Zwerge’ (tale 43, p. 66-67). In ‘Die Zwerglöcher’, the *Zwerge* live in holes high up in the cliffs (tale 303, p. 290). In ‘Die Füße der Zwerge’, the *Zwerge* live in cliffs and peaks, eventually retreating further inside the mountains (tale 150, pp. 178-179). In ‘Die Heilingszwerge’, the *Zwerge* live in a cave in the foot of the cliffs (tale 152, p. 180).

¹⁹⁸ Grimm, *DS*, ‘Steinverwandelte Zwerge’, tale 32, pp. 57-58.

¹⁹⁹ Grimm, *DS*, tale 34, p. 59; tale 36, p. 60.

Translation by Ward: Grimm, *GL*, ‘The Migration of the Dwarfs’, tale 36, p. 42.

²⁰⁰ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, ‘Groaning Dwarfs at Granite Doors’, 38.

²⁰¹ Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, ‘Groaning Dwarfs at Granite Doors’, 43.

Referencing: *Völuspá*, p. 304, s. 50, ll. 4-6.

legends, the reasons for the *Zwerge*'s departure varies. It may be due to the trickery of humans,²⁰² discovery of theft,²⁰³ or disputes with humans.²⁰⁴

Something similar can be observed of the Middle-earth dwarves, who live underground in mountains and hills; their homes of Moria and the Lonely Mountain have been discussed in the 'Mining' section above. Furthermore, the verse containing the Ring-lore refers to 'Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone' and the dwarf ruler Dáin inhabits the Iron Hills.²⁰⁵ Gimli, the major dwarf character in the *The Lord of the Rings*, is described as a 'dwarf of the mountain-race' and one who has 'walked unafraid in many deep places of the world'.²⁰⁶ He expresses shame that he is the last of his company to enter the Paths of the Dead below the White Mountains: 'Here is a thing unheard of! [...] An Elf will go underground and a Dwarf dare not!'²⁰⁷

Both Moria and the Lonely Mountain are encountered in the present day of the narrative as lost homelands, out of which the dwarves have been driven by enemies. Tolkien recognised this as a trait of the race and it also appears to have played a part in his identification of the dwarves with the Jewish people: 'I do think of the 'Dwarves like Jews,' he wrote, 'at once native and alien in their habitations'.²⁰⁸

4. Character

Unlike the *dvergar* of Norse literature, the *Deutsche Sagen Zwerge* are generally sociable and are often associated with feasts, especially weddings. In many tales they are encountered lending or borrowing kitchen equipment and venues.²⁰⁹ In 'Die

²⁰² Grimm, *DS*, 'Die Zwerge auf dem Baum', tale 148, p. 177; 'Die Zwerge auf dem Felsstein', tale 149, pp. 177-178; 'Die Füße der Zwerge', tale 150, pp. 178-179.

²⁰³ Grimm, *DS*, 'Der Abzug des Zwergvolks über die Brücke', tale 153, pp. 181-182; 'Der Zug der Zwerge über den Berg', tale 154, pp. 182-183.

²⁰⁴ Grimm, *DS*, 'Die Zwerge bei Dardesheim', tale 155, pp. 183-184.

²⁰⁵ Tolkien, *FR*, 57; *The Hobbit*, 242.

²⁰⁶ Tolkien, *FR*, 296; *RK*, 51.

²⁰⁷ Tolkien, *RK*, 51.

²⁰⁸ Tolkien, *Letters*, 229, letter to Naomi Mitchison (8 December 1955).

²⁰⁹ Grimm, *DS*, 'Des kleinen Volks Hochzeitfest', tale 31, pp. 56-57 (these are 'kleinen Volks' ('small people') rather than *Zwerge*); 'Steinverwandelte Zwerge', tale 32, p. 57; 'Zwergberge', tale 33, p. 58; 'Der Graf von Hoia', tale 35, pp. 59-60 (*Bergmännlein*); 'Zwerge ausgetrieben', tale 36, p. 60; 'Das Bergmännlein beim Tanz', tale 39, pp. 62-63 (*Bergmännlein*); 'Herrmann von Rosenberg', tale 42, p. 66 ('Erdgeister, kaum zwei Spannen lang'); 'Die Zwerglöcher', tale

Osenberger Zwerge', the *Zwerge* repeatedly visit an inn and pay for beer.²¹⁰ In many tales they also appear to form their own society, emigrating together in large numbers or having their own kings and queens.²¹¹

The *Zwerge* in *Deutsche Sagen* are also mostly helpful towards humans; they are generally benevolent and on occasion appear extremely virtuous and explicitly Christian.²¹² They will be especially good to humans who have treated them well; however, like the *dvergar* of the Icelandic sagas, they may also bring bad luck and curses when they are wronged.²¹³

The dwarves in Tolkien's Middle-earth, like his elves, are a proud race and insular race. They are said in the Later *Quenta Silmarillion* to be 'stone-hard, stubborn, fast in friendship and in enmity'.²¹⁴ In Appendix F, they are described as 'a tough, thravn race for the most part, secretive, laborious [...] they are not evil by nature'.²¹⁵

303, p. 290; 'Der Zug der Zwerge über den Berg', tale 154, pp. 182-183; 'Die Zwerge bei Dardesheim', tale 155, pp. 183-184.

²¹⁰ Grimm, *DS*, tale 43, pp. 66-67.

²¹¹ Royalty can be found in 'Der Scherfenberger und der Zwerg' (Grimm, *DS*, tale 29, p. 53) and 'Die Ahnfrau von Rantzau' (*Männlein* and *Fräuchen*) (tale 41, pp. 64-66).

²¹² Explicitly Christian *Zwerge* and *Bergmännlein* can be found in 'Der Scherfenberger und der Zwerg' (Grimm, *DS*, tale 29, p. 54) and 'Das Bergmännlein beim Tanz' (tale 39, p. 63). A female *Zwerg* in 'Zwerge leihen Brot' is bothered by humans' blasphemous behaviour (tale 34, p. 59). The 'little cellar man' in 'Das Kellermännlein' prays with a maid and prevents a house-fire (tale 40, p. 64). In 'Das quellende Silber', a girl encounters a *Männlein* dressed all in white who takes her to a hoard of coins stamped with the Virgin Mary (tale 161, pp. 187-188).

Benevolent *Zwerge* can be found in 'Steinverwandelte Zwerge' (tale 32, p. 57). In 'Die Zwerglöcher', the *Zwerge* are likewise good to the people of Elbingerode (tale 303, p. 290). *Zwerge* help humans with their work in the legends 'Die Zwerge auf dem Baum' and 'Die Füße der Zwerge' (tale 148, p. 177; tale 150, p. 178).

²¹³ The *Zwerge* in 'Die Zwerge auf dem Felsstein' swear revenge after burning themselves on coals left by humans (Grimm, *DS*, tale 149, p. 178). The *Zwerg* in 'Der Scherfenberger und der Zwerg' attempts to take back his magic ring when its recipient does not provide the promised battle help (tale 29, p. 55). In 'Das Männlein auf dem Rücken', a man upsets a boy and his father (the *Männlein*) causes his death by jumping onto his back (tale 146, pp. 174-175). A hunter in 'Der Gemsjäger' is killed by a *Zwerg* after he breaks his promise not to hunt the *Zwerg*'s herd (tale 302, p. 289). In 'Der einkehrende Zwerg', only one couple feed a *Zwerg* and that night he prevents the destruction of their house in a storm (tale 45, pp. 68-69).

²¹⁴ Tolkien, *The War of the Jewels*, 204.

²¹⁵ Tolkien, *RK*, Appendix F, 381.

The dwarves are thought prone to greed; this is particularly the case for Thorin in *The Hobbit*, whose nature is temporarily overcome by the dragon's hoard.²¹⁶

5. Appearance

Small size is a common attribute of the *Deutsche Sagen Zwerge*, although this detail is not mentioned in every tale. The names of the similar creatures under consideration here suggest this characteristic, containing the diminutives '-lein' or '-chen' and the adjective 'kleine(n)' ('small'). In 'Herrmann von Rosenberg', there are 'Erdeister, kaum zwei Spannen lang' ('earth spirits, just two spans tall') who celebrate their wedding in a manner typical of other beings discussed in this chapter.²¹⁷ The *Zwerge* in 'Die Heilingszwerge' are likewise explicitly small in stature: they are 'kleinen Zwerglein' ('small little dwarfs').²¹⁸ A *Zwerg* that is described as a 'Zwerglein' ('little dwarf') in 'Der einkehrende Zwerg' later turns into a giant.²¹⁹

Zwerge in fairy-tales are typically depicted as small, bearded and dressed in pointed hats. The 'Sneewittchen' *Zwerge* are depicted in illustrations by John Gruelle in a 1914 *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* edition with big beards, wearing pointed hats and as a similar height to small woodland animals.²²⁰ This image is extremely similar to Gruelle's depiction of three *Männlein* (translated as 'gnomes') in the same edition.²²¹ Nineteenth-century illustrations by Theodor Hosemann likewise portray small men with pointed hats and large beards.²²² A large beard is a prominent feature of the *Zwerg* in the tale 'Schneeweißchen und Rosenrot', which is caught in a tree and a fishing line;

²¹⁶ Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 249.

²¹⁷ Grimm, *DS*, tale 42, p. 66.

²¹⁸ Grimm, *DS*, tale 152, p. 180.

²¹⁹ Grimm, *DS*, tale 45, p. 69.

²²⁰ Grimm, trans. Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs', 183, 187. Illustrations by John B. Gruelle, as first appeared in *Grimms Fairy Tales* (1914, trans. Margaret Hunt).

²²¹ Grimm, trans. Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, 'The Three Little Gnomes in the Forest', 47. Illustration by John B. Gruelle, as first appeared in *Grimms Fairy Tales* (1914, trans. Margaret Hunt).

For the German tale, see Grimm, *KHM*, 'Die drei Männlein im Walde', tale 13, pp. 107-112.

²²² Grimm, *KHM*, 'Sneewittchen', tale 53, pp. 297-308. Illustrations by Theodor Hosemann: pp. 300, 305, 306, 307.

this character was depicted with similar imagery to those mentioned above in nineteenth-century illustrations by Franz Pocci.²²³ On a similar note, the *Männlein* in ‘Das Männlein auf dem Rücken’ from *Deutsche Sagen* is described as a small, old man with a grey beard.²²⁴

Beards are an important physical characteristic of Tolkien’s dwarves. In the Later *Quenta Silmarillion*, it is said that ‘no Man nor Elf has ever seen a beardless dwarf’ and that to be shaven is a source of shame; regardless of whether they are male or female, all dwarves are bearded.²²⁵ The dwarves are also shorter in height than humans and elves, although taller than hobbits.²²⁶ They typically have a much longer lifespan than humans.²²⁷

The dwarves in battle are typically presented with axes as their weaponry. In Appendix A to *The Lord of the Rings*, Thorin’s lack of warriors is said to be that ‘the axes of his people were few’ and a dwarfish battle-cry is translated in Appendix F as ‘Axes of the Dwarves! The Dwarves are upon you!’.²²⁸ Gimli fights with an axe in *The Lord of the Rings* and Thorin likewise in *The Hobbit*.²²⁹ In this final battle, he appears with his axe and golden armour.²³⁰ Thorin is first introduced wearing ‘a sky-blue [hood] with a long silver tassel’ while his companions also wear hoods of different colours.²³¹ One of these characters, Glóin, later appears in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, where he is grandly dressed:

his beard, very long and forked, was white, nearly as white as the snow-white cloth of his garments. He wore a silver belt, and round his neck hung a chain of silver and diamonds.²³²

²²³ Grimm, *KHM*, ‘Schneeweißchen und Rosenrot’, tale 161, pp. 674-685. Illustrations by Franz Pocci: pp. 680, 681, 683.

²²⁴ Grimm, *DS*, tale 146, p. 174.

²²⁵ Tolkien, *The War of the Jewels*, 205.

²²⁶ Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 2.

²²⁷ Tolkien, *The War of the Jewels*, 204.

²²⁸ Tolkien, *RK*, Appendix A, 324; Appendix F, 381.

²²⁹ See, for example, Tolkien, *TTT*, 4, 33; *The Hobbit*, 266.

²³⁰ Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 266.

²³¹ Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 8, 6-7.

²³² Tolkien, *FR*, 219.

6. Females

Some of the tales in *Deutsche Sagen* feature female *Zwerge*, although males are more common. A *Zwerg* woman ('Zwergweiblein') in 'Zwerge leihen Brot' bakes bread for her children.²³³ A 'Fräuchen' ('little woman')/'Bergfräuchen' ('little mountain woman') and her queen (who is in labour) are encountered in 'Die Ahnfrau von Rantzau'.²³⁴

Female dwarves are notably absent in the works of Tolkien. *The Hobbit*, which features dwarves as the majority of its protagonists, is in fact devoid of female characters entirely. The atmosphere of this dwarf-heavy book is therefore extremely female-light.²³⁵ In Appendix A to *The Lord of the Rings*, it is made clear that there is only one female dwarf who is named in the novels and extended writings. There are said to be fewer female dwarves overall than males and hence many dwarf-men do not marry. In addition:

[Dwarf-women] seldom walk abroad except at great need. They are in voice and appearance, and in garb if they must go on a journey, so like to the dwarf-men that the eyes and ears of other peoples cannot tell them apart. This has given rise to the foolish opinion among Men that there are no dwarf-women, and that the Dwarves 'grow out of stone'.²³⁶

It is likewise written in the Later *Quenta Silmarillion* that dwarf-women are few in number, rarely leave their homes, and appear in all ways so similar to the men that they cannot be distinguished by those of other races.²³⁷ It should therefore be expected that they are bearded as the dwarf-men are.

²³³ Grimm, *DS*, tale 34, 58-59.

²³⁴ Grimm, *DS*, tale 41, 65.

²³⁵ The one named female figure in *The Hobbit* (Belladonna Took) is deceased prior to the beginning of the story and hence is not a character within it (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 2). 'Hobbit-girls' are mentioned at one point and twice the women of Lake-town are referred to as a group (3, 231, 238). The mother of Fili and Kili is also briefly referred to, although not named (274).

²³⁶ Tolkien, *RK*, Appendix A, 326.

²³⁷ Tolkien, *The War of the Jewels*, 205.

Discworld dwarfs

The aim of this study so far has been to reach a clearer understanding of the Norse *dvergar*, the *Zwerg* of German folklore and the dwarves of Tolkien's Middle-earth. I shall now proceed to examine Pratchett's Discworld dwarfs in the light of the characteristics identified above, also making note of additional Norse elements that enhance the picture. It is important to bear in mind that the Discworld novels are works of parody and satire. Some authorial comments may have been introduced as throwaway jokes, and it is necessary to recognise the approach through which Pratchett created both light-hearted and serious comedy.

Although adhering to stricter consistency than the Norse *dvergar* or German folk *Zwerg*, the dwarfs in the Discworld are not a completely coherent creation. Pratchett developed and adapted his ideas as he progressed through the decades of Discworld writing. One example of this development is the dwarfish axe. In *Guards! Guards!*, it is considered a strange obsession of immigrant city dwarfs to carry an axe, which is uncharacteristic for dwarfs in their traditional mountain homes.²³⁸ In later books, however, the axe becomes an essential and traditional dwarfish cultural item.²³⁹ Similarly, one of the first accounts of the race of dwarfs describes them 'dutiful, serious, literate, obedient and thoughtful people';²⁴⁰ this is a very different portrayal than that contemplated by King Rhys Rhysson in *Raising Steam*:

He looked at the angry councillors brandishing weapons around the huge table. It was as if being a dwarf meant that you lived in a permanent state that the term 'grumpiness' simply couldn't convey. A conference of dwarfs was, in their language, a confusion of dwarfs.²⁴¹

These two works were published almost 25 years apart, during which time the dwarfs have evolved from a largely pastoral image into a vehicle for the discussion of demagoguery and extremism.

These discrepancies result from the fact that the Discworld emerged through a series of individual books published over the course of several decades, each making its

²³⁸ Pratchett, *GG*, 58.

²³⁹ See, for example, Pratchett, *FE*, 270; *Thud!*, 272, 288.

²⁴⁰ Pratchett, *GG*, 27.

²⁴¹ Pratchett, *RS*, 59.

own jokes and socio-political comments. Ideas from early books are revisited and elaborated upon, such as the Battle of Koom Valley and dwarfish gender identities. Initially details introducing these fictional races to the reader, such comments became important themes that Pratchett seized with greater interest to expand. Despite the efforts of the Discworld companion books, there is no official Discworld doctrine in this fantasy world of changing ideas.

The fictional culture of the Discworld dwarfs nevertheless bears some clear resemblances throughout to the Norse world. There are connotations of Norse literature in the literary culture of the Discworld dwarfs. Their language is written in runes, and therefore associated with ancient Scandinavia.²⁴² The style of dwarfish report-writing is also said to resemble a saga, which brings to mind medieval Norse literature; however, the dwarf Cuddy's police report in *Men at Arms* is rich in descriptive setting and grandiose language, very unlike a typical Norse saga.²⁴³ This is a more amusing style for a police report; evidently, however, the image of the dwarf envisioned is intended to be North Germanic.

The dwarfs are also linked to the Norse world through their cultural connection with the Ginnungagap myth. They invoke the name of the Ginnungagap (or more simply 'the Gap') to curse others; for them, it is conceived of as a void of damnation.²⁴⁴ This feature of Norse myth is found in *Völuspá* and in *Gylfaginning* as a chaotic primordial void; within Norse mythology, Ginnungagap is not associated with the *dvergar*.²⁴⁵ This allusion to the literature of medieval Iceland enhances the Nordic image of the Discworld dwarfs without specifically relating to their *dvergr* predecessors.

It is possible to make similar observations concerning the names of the Discworld dwarfs. It will not be possible to discuss all dwarf names from the Discworld books in this section, so I have provided a selection to demonstrate the key naming practices.

²⁴² Dwarf runes are repeatedly mentioned throughout the series, such as in *MA*, 191; *FC*, 44; *Thud!*, 91, 201.

²⁴³ Pratchett, *MA*, 191.

²⁴⁴ Pratchett, *RS*, 42, 61, 149. See also Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 59.

²⁴⁵ *Völuspá*, p. 292, s. 3, l. 7; *Gylfaginning*, chap. 4, p. 9, l. 18 (citing *Völuspá*); chap. 5, p. 10, ll. 4-12; chap. 8, p. 11, ll. 35-36; chap. 15, p. 17, l. 13.

Many names of the Discworld dwarfs are influenced by Old Norse-Icelandic literature in some way. This is stated clearly by Pratchett and Simpson in *The Folklore of Discworld*, in which they claim that there are ‘echoes’ of the ‘Nordic and Germanic dwarfdom’ in the ‘names, nicknames and patronymics’ of the Discworld dwarfs.²⁴⁶ The ancient dwarf king B’hrian Bloodaxe²⁴⁷ shares the nickname of 10th-century Norwegian ruler Eiríkr blóðøx (Eiríkr Haraldsson) – a historical figure and a character in works such as *Egils saga* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*. There are also multiple instances of dwarf characters that bear old Icelandic first names, for example: Olaf Stronginthearm, Snori Shieldbiter, Snori Glodssonsunclesson, Hrolf Thighbiter, Hrolf Pyjama, Bjorn Hammerhock, Bjorn Stronginthearm, Bjorn Tightbritches and Magnus Magnusson.²⁴⁸ The second names in these examples correspond to different extents with Old Norse tradition. ‘Shieldbiter’, for example, suggests the *berserkr* rage described in several sagas and possibly depicted in the Lewis game pieces (commonly believed to have their origin in medieval Scandinavia).²⁴⁹ ‘Tightbritches’ is probably an allusion to the saga character Ragnarr Loðbrók (‘Shaggy-Breeches’).

‘Stronginthearm’ and ‘Thighbiter’ resemble many epithet-style names that are common for Discworld dwarfs, such as Armstrangler, Mr Oresmiter, Lars Skulldrinker, Thunderaxe, Minty Rocksmacker and Grabthroat Shinkicker.²⁵⁰ Descriptive names of this kind resemble the epithets of many Viking heroes in the Norse sagas.²⁵¹ Other names, including the previously-mentioned Oresmiter and Hammerhock, along with those such as Mr Longshaft, Mr Ironcrust, Constable Ironbender, Corporal Ringfounder

²⁴⁶ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 66.

²⁴⁷ Pratchett, *FC*, 44. This character from the Discworld’s history is prominently referenced in the later novel *Thud!*.

²⁴⁸ Pratchett, *FC*, 32, 83, 188, 332; *MA*, 323, 83; *GG*, 26; *RS*, 13.

²⁴⁹ For shield-biting *berserkir* in Norse literature, see: *Ynglinga saga*, chap. 6, p. 14; *Grettis saga*, chap. 40, p. 136; *Vatnsdæla saga*, chap. 46, p. 124.

For possible *berserkr* depictions among the Lewis game pieces, see: Caldwell, Hall and Wilkinson, ‘The Lewis Hoard of Gaming Pieces’, 178-179; Price, *The Viking Way*, 374.

²⁵⁰ Pratchett, *FC*, 151, 187, 286; *TT*, 16; *GG*, 24, 58.

²⁵¹ Characters with epithets of this style can be found, for example, in *Landnámabók*, such as Ketill flatnefr, Þorfinnr hausakljúfr, Án bogsveigi, Óláfr vǫlubrjótr, Þórir þursasprengir and Gunnsteinn berserkjabani (*Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, vol. 1, 46, 138; vol. 2, 217, 254, 257, 366). Some of these characters also appear in other texts, such as *Áns saga bogsveigis*. (English: Ketill flat-nose, Þorfinnr skull-cleaver, Án bow-bender, Óláfr seeress-destroyer, Þórir troll-burster and Gunnsteinn berserker-slayer.)

and the major character Carrot Ironfoundersson himself, are connected through their names to the trades of mining and metalwork.²⁵² The thematic link of the smithy serves as an association with the Norse *dvergar* (this theme will be discussed in greater detail below).

Several dwarf names display the Nordic naming method of patronymics. Of the examples given above, Carrot Ironfoundersson, Magnus Magnusson and Snori Glodssonsunclesson are named according to this tradition. With the latter, the concept is clearly the subject of some authorial fun, being extended to include three family relations. Others in this tradition include Gimletsson and Glodsnephew.²⁵³ The two contenders for dwarf King in *The Fifth Elephant*, Albrecht Albrechtson and Rhys Rhysson (later known as Blodwen Rhyddaughter in *Raising Steam*), are also named in this tradition, which is emphasised by the repetition in their patronymic and personal name.

Another dwarf with a patronymic name is Bashful Bashfullsson who appears in *Thud!* and *Raising Steam*. In this case, the Norse naming tradition is combined with a dwarf name directly taken from Walt Disney's 1937 film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Other Discworld dwarfs also have names of this type, such as Dozy Longfinger in *The Fifth Elephant*, the major character Cheery Littlebottom and her relatives Jolly, Beaky and Snorey.²⁵⁴ It is possible to detect a pun with the latter, considering the name 'Snorey' and the Norse name 'Snori'. These names are explained in *The Folklore of Discworld* as follows, referencing events in the novel *Moving Pictures* (1990):

these must be due to some alien influence, possibly that which affected the Discworld during the time when moving pictures were being made at Holy Wood. It was certainly at that time that some dwarfs first felt an urge to sing the irritating, and previously unknown, Hiho Song²⁵⁵

The 'Hiho Song' is a further allusion to Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. This is a conscious recognition of Pratchett's method, indulging in multiple influences to create composite cultural references.

²⁵² Pratchett, *TT*, 123; *FC*, 31; *Thud!*, 59.

²⁵³ Pratchett, *FC*, 113.

²⁵⁴ Pratchett, *FE*, 278; *FC*, 19; *FE*, 230.

²⁵⁵ Pratchett and Simpson, *FD*, 66.

The dwarfs Cuddy and Carrot sing the 'Hiho Song' in *Men at Arms* (Pratchett, *MA*, 260).

This overview has intended to demonstrate influences from Old Norse literature that have played a part in the creation of Pratchett's fictional race. On the whole, the features referenced in this section are not especially related to the *dvergar*: runes, the Ginnungagap, *berserkir*, epithets and patronymics are not associated, or not strongly associated, with the *dvergar*.²⁵⁶ The names discussed above are found as human names rather than *dvergr* names in the Old Norse corpus. The most relevant of the Discworld dwarf names to the *dvergar* would be Constable Brakenshield.²⁵⁷ This name mimics 'Eikinskjalldi' from the *Dvergatal* of *Völuspá* and, importantly, was used by J. R. R. Tolkien in *The Hobbit* for the dwarf king Thorin Oakenshield.²⁵⁸ It is the relationship of the Discworld dwarfs to the specifics of the Old Norse *dvergar*, and "dwarf" figures in subsequent literature, that will be the central focus in the remainder of this chapter.

In the remainder of this study, I will revisit the characteristics set out in the previous two chapters, this time with regard to the Discworld dwarfs.

1. Live in rocks and underground

One strong staple of dwarfish identity in the Discworld is the idea that dwarfs traditionally live underground. They are miners by nature, custom and practice. Mining is not a characteristic activity of the Norse *dvergar*; however, it has been discussed in relation to subsequent literature and will be elaborated upon below. Throughout the series, dwarfs are said to live by preference underground. Pratchett wrote in *Men at Arms*, for example, 'Dwarfs always felt happier underground.'²⁵⁹ In *The Fifth Elephant*, the dwarf Cheery explains that 'inside every dwarf in Ankh-Morpork is a little part of him – or her – that knows real dwarfs live underground.'²⁶⁰ Due to this, their world-view is different from the humans; their leader, for example, is termed the "Low King".

In this way, the Discworld dwarfs resemble the subterranean *dvergar* and cave-dwelling *Zwerge*, as well as the Middle-earth dwarves who are also substantially based

²⁵⁶ It should be noted that the *dvergar* are associated with runes in *Hávamál* (p. 351, ss. 142-143); these runes are not, however, exclusively linked to the *dvergar* as the *æsir* and *álfar* are also mentioned. The *dvergar* are generally not connected with runes elsewhere in the corpus.

²⁵⁷ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 30.

²⁵⁸ *Völuspá*, p. 294, s. 13, l. 8.

Thorin ('Þorinn') is also a *dvergr* name from *Völuspá* (p. 294, s. 12, l. 3).

²⁵⁹ Pratchett, *MA*, 237.

²⁶⁰ Pratchett, *FE*, 52.

upon these traditions. Discworld dwarfs do not, however, have homes in rocks above ground like the Norse saga *dvergar*; instead, they tunnel and mine through stone under the earth.²⁶¹

2. Turn to stone/perish in the sunlight

The dwarfs' underground lifestyle is taken to the extreme in the later books with the introduction of the fundamentalist, 'deep-down' dwarfs. These dwarfs refuse to surface into the daylight, believing that 'The sunlight world is a bad dream'.²⁶² If they must come above ground, these dwarfs cover themselves completely so as to avoid the sun's light.²⁶³ The deep-down dwarfs in *Thud!* prefer to send a junior dwarf, the 'daylight face', to complete tasks above ground.²⁶⁴ It is said that some dwarfs, such as the traditionalist Albrecht Albrechtsson and his clan, have never seen daylight.²⁶⁵

The Discworld dwarfs' idiosyncratic world-view once again accords with these ideas. The dwarf creation-myth recalls the first dwarf who was 'endarkened' by their creator's laws, while the first human was merely 'enlightened'.²⁶⁶ The fundamentalist dwarf Ardent explains that, in their language, 'To see the light is to be blinded. Do you not know that in darkness the eyes open wider?'.²⁶⁷

The dwarfs' avoidance of sunlight most likely traces its roots to the *dvergar* of the medieval Norse-Icelandic literary corpus, where it appears to have been a shared attribute of many creatures of The Other (see above). In the Discworld too, the trolls, as noted above, are not daylight creatures. This is in the tradition of Icelandic trolls and *jǫtnar* but due to a new fantasy logic (their silicon brains). Pratchett in this way questions clichés of "The Other" and continues to rationalise the workings of his fantasy world. The dwarfs are sun-shy due to cultural traditions, and the trolls likewise due to their particular "biology". Additionally, the fanaticism of the deep-down dwarfs, who

²⁶¹ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 90.

²⁶² Pratchett, *Thud!*, 305; see also, 87.

²⁶³ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 28.

²⁶⁴ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 75.

²⁶⁵ Pratchett, *FE*, 50.

²⁶⁶ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 33 (opening pages).

²⁶⁷ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 87.

are hostile to other races and judgemental of their own who have chosen other ways to live, is an echo of much extreme fundamentalism that can be found in the real world.

3. Associated with the dead

Despite traditionally living underground in the darkness, the Discworld dwarfs are not associated with corpses or the realm of the dead. They are sociable creatures who live in large communities, have strong family ties and engage in all aspects of life. In this way, they are more similar to the dwarfs of German folklore and Middle-earth than the Norse *dvergar*, who tend to be encountered singularly or in small families. The dwarfs' physiology is not especially different from that of humans: in *Raising Steam*, there is a wedding between a dwarf and a human.²⁶⁸ Discworld dwarfs also have their own burial customs. These involve burial weapons, which they have in common with many world cultures, including a significant portion of Viking Age Scandinavia.²⁶⁹

4. Small in size

The Discworld dwarfs are shorter than most humans, typically four-feet high.²⁷⁰ They are frequently arrested for attacking people's knees and insulted with remarks concerning their height.²⁷¹ The image of dwarfs as short, humanoid beings is the enduring image in popular contemporary belief, and true of both the German folklore *Zwerg* and Tolkien's Middle-earth dwarves. Whether or not this is a characteristic feature of Old Norse *dvergar* has been debated in a previous chapter and is not a clear issue.

In the Discworld, a small stature is certainly typical of the dwarfs, but its status as a defining feature is questionable. In *Guards! Guards!*, Carrot's belief that he is a dwarf is a source of humour, since he is clearly a tall, human man.²⁷² In *Men at Arms*, Carrot tells Angua, 'I'm a dwarf, too, but the dwarfs here don't believe it.'²⁷³ In later

²⁶⁸ Pratchett, *RS*, 41.

²⁶⁹ Pratchett, *MA*, 132; Pedersen, 'Viking Weaponry', 205-208.

²⁷⁰ Pratchett, *GG*, 60.

²⁷¹ Attacking people's knees: Pratchett, *GG*, 27; *FC*, 86.

Insults about their height: 'little buggers' *GG*, 51; *MA*, 100; 'little devils' *MA*, 271; 'shortarse' *FE*, 224.

²⁷² Pratchett, *GG*, 22.

²⁷³ Pratchett, *MA*, 24.

books, however, Carrot is presented as an accepted member of the dwarf community. This may be due to the popularity Carrot achieves in Ankh-Morpork, or to Pratchett's developing idea of "dwarfishness" that moves beyond the idea of simple size into more complex territory:

[Cheery] '[Carrot] is a dwarf. He was adopted by dwarfs, he's performed the *Y'grad*, he observes the *j'kargra* insofar as that's possible in a city. He's a dwarf.'
[Vimes:] 'He's six foot high!'
'He's a tall dwarf, sir. We don't mind if he wants to be human as well. Not even the *drudak'ak* would have a problem with that.'²⁷⁴

The 'drudak'ak' is Pratchett's dwarfish term for the deep-down dwarfs.²⁷⁵ Later in the series, it appears that the *drudak'ak* in fact *do* have a problem with Carrot: 'To your dwarfs here, yes, he is a dwarf,' says Ardent, 'He would be unacceptable to the grags.'²⁷⁶

Nevertheless, although Carrot's dwarfishness comes under criticism, so does any dwarf who does not strictly adhere to their traditional ways.²⁷⁷ It would be fair to consider size as a nonessential characteristic of the Discworld dwarfs, although an exceptionally common one. This is additionally demonstrated in *Feet of Clay* through the human blacksmith Thomas Smith who renames himself with the dwarfish "Stronginthearm" in order to improve his profits, since "dwarf-made" is considered to be better:

The Committee for Equal Heights had objected but things had mired somewhat because [...] their position hinged on pointing out that Mr Stronginthearm *né* Smith was too tall, which was clearly a sizeist discrimination and technically illegal under the Committee's own rules.²⁷⁸

The joke here, punning on 'Equal Rights' groups, turns issues of racial identity, cultural appropriation and marketing ethics into a humorous aside. It draws upon preconceptions

²⁷⁴ Pratchett, *FE*, 49.

²⁷⁵ Pratchett's dwarfish language (which consists of a few terms rather than as a full, developed language) appears to parody Khuzdûl, the language of Tolkien's dwarves. This language was constructed by Tolkien to resemble a Semitic language, in-keeping with his conception of the dwarves' Jewish resemblance (Vink, "'Jewish' Dwarves", 123).

²⁷⁶ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 88.

²⁷⁷ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 87.

²⁷⁸ Pratchett, *FC*, 156.

that are shared by the reader, held not from real-life society but from folklore and literature (the size and profession of dwarfs).

5. Craftsmen and smiths

Thomas Smith's desire to be perceived as a dwarfish craftsman leads us to the most significant characteristic shared by the Discworld dwarfs and the Icelandic *dvergar*: craftsmanship. In *Guards! Guards!*, Vimes observes a lock that is 'one of those dwarfish-made buggers that it'd take years to pick.'²⁷⁹ The dwarf Cuddy in *Men at Arms* constructs a 'special clockwork thinking helmet' for a troll.²⁸⁰ In the same book it is said that dwarfs 'were skilled with metal all right, and they made good swords and jewellery'.²⁸¹ These two examples of dwarfish specialities, swords and jewellery, echo famous *dvergr*-made items of Norse literature: swords for saga heroes (see above) and jewellery including Freyja's Brisingamen and Óðinn's ring Draupnir.

The Discworld dwarfs' proficiency as smiths is testified to on many other occasions; for example, in *Thud!*, Ardent boasts, 'You've seen how dwarfs can build. We are craftsmen.'²⁸² In *Feet of Clay*, the human Vimes and the dwarf Cheery agree that 'a dwarf who can't get the hang of metal' is 'pretty rare'.²⁸³

As has been discussed above, the *Zwerge* of the Brothers Grimm are not notable smiths, while Tolkien's dwarves are superb craftsmen. This trait, however, is shared with the elves in Middle-earth. The smithy as a speciality particular to the dwarfs has a probable basis in Norse mythology and literature.

6. Mining

The roles of the metal miner and the blacksmith are linked through raw materials and the production process; however, the occupations were not always aligned in stories featuring dwarfs. Norse *dvergar*, as has been noted, were commonly craftsmen but not associated with mines, while the German *Zwerge* in the Grimm's tales are sometimes

²⁷⁹ Pratchett, *GG*, 278.

²⁸⁰ Pratchett, *MA*, 349.

²⁸¹ Pratchett, *MA*, 192.

²⁸² Pratchett, *Thud!*, 82.

²⁸³ Pratchett, *FC*, 18.

connected to mining but are not involved with the forge. In Tolkien's Middle-earth legendarium, however, the dwarves are entwined with both.

The Discworld dwarfs are likewise traditionally craftsmen and enthusiastic miners. This plays a crucial role in their cultural identity. In *The Fifth Elephant*, it is said that dwarfs 'mine a lot deeper than other people' and also that 'every dwarf dreams of going back home when he's old and starting up a little mine'.²⁸⁴ This latter statement is held to be true even for the dwarfs born in Ankh-Morpork, who drink in bars with mining tools on the walls.²⁸⁵ The traditionalist dwarfs in *Thud!* consider the city dwarfs as not "true" dwarfs since they do not mine metal for a living.²⁸⁶

The ubiquitous dwarfish axe is also linked to this industry, described as 'a mining axe, with a pick point on one side, in order to go prospecting, and a real axe blade on the other, in case anyone tried to stop you'.²⁸⁷ This image incorporates the battle axe favoured by dwarf warriors, encountered in Middle-earth and much of the "consensus fantasy universe", and the pick axe of the dwarf miners in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The motif of dwarf miners can likewise be supposed to come primarily from these works (Middle-earth and *Snow White*).

7. Treasure

The Discworld dwarfs' obsession with one particular metal, gold, is another of their major attributes. This has some precedent in the Norse corpus with the gold that Loki obtained from the *dvergr* Andvari.²⁸⁸ The *Zwerg* Alberich in the Middle High German epic poem *Das Nibelungenlied* also plays a role in the story of the treasure hoard, which the hero Siegfried obtains from two brothers. Siegfried wins a strength-giving invisibility-cloak from Alberich when the *Zwerg* tries to avenge his masters, the slain brothers. Alberich is subdued and the treasure placed in his charge.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Pratchett, *FE*, 1, 238.

²⁸⁵ Pratchett, *FE*, 225.

²⁸⁶ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 67.

²⁸⁷ Pratchett, *FE*, 395.

²⁸⁸ *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 39, p. 45, ll. 21-30; *Reginismál*, p. 297, prose passage following stanza 4; p. 297, s. 5; *Völsunga saga*, chap. 14, pp. 31-32.

²⁸⁹ *The Nibelungenlied*, translated by George Henry Needler, stanzas 91-98
<<http://www.authorama.com/nibelungenlied-6.html>>.

Norse *dvergar* also work with gold, creating the Brísingamen (‘gullmen’), Freyr’s boar, Sif’s hair and the golden ring Draupnir.²⁹⁰ Dwarfs with special rings in the *Deutsche Sagen* have been mentioned above. Rings are referenced in another conversation between the Cheery and Vimes in *Feet of Clay*, who states, ‘No one quite like a dwarf for forging a magical ring’.²⁹¹ In *The Fifth Elephant*, the Low King informs Vimes that rings are a traditional ceremonial gift between dwarfs, echoing the Germanic practise of ring-giving.²⁹²

The famous cursed rings of Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, which can be traced back to the cursed treasure of Andvari and Alberich in the *Völsunga* cycle and *Das Nibelungenlied*, also come to mind here. As has been discussed above, it is not known whether Andvari, the first-known owner of the gold, was the ring’s forger (although he is its curser); however, in *Das Rheingold*, the first opera of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, it is the *Zwerg* Alberich who forges the ring of power from the Rhinegold, and later places a curse upon it.²⁹³

The Discworld dwarfs’ love for gold appears to be significantly influenced by the works of Tolkien. In *Guards! Guards!*, it is a ‘dwarfish custom’ to sing about gold, which is also mentioned in subsequent books such as *Men at Arms*, *Feet of Clay* and *The Fifth Elephant*.²⁹⁴ The background for this custom can most likely be found in *The Hobbit*, in which the dwarf company sing about their lost gold.²⁹⁵

8. Homes

The Discworld dwarfs come from two main regions, Uberwald and the Ramtop Mountains, where they live underground in mines (as has been discussed above). As the Discworld series progresses, greater numbers of dwarfs are to be found in Ankh-Morpork. By *The Fifth Elephant*, Ankh-Morpork is said to be the biggest dwarf city

²⁹⁰ *Sörla þáttr*, *Flateyjarbók*, chap. 228, p. 304; *Skáldskaparmál*, chap. 35, pp. 41-42.

²⁹¹ Pratchett, *FC*, 168.

²⁹² Pratchett, *FE*, 439.

²⁹³ The Metropolitan Opera, ‘Synopsis: *Das Rheingold*’
<<http://www.metopera.org/Discover/Synposes-Archive/Das-Rheingold/>>.

²⁹⁴ Pratchett, *GG*, 59; *MA*, 252; *FC*, 96; *FE*, 439.

²⁹⁵ Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 11-14.

outside of Uberwald and there are many dwarfs who have been born there.²⁹⁶ Finally, in *Raising Steam*, Ankh-Morpork is ‘now well known to have the largest dwarf community in the world’.²⁹⁷ The immigration of dwarfs into the city, as well as other creatures such as trolls and the undead, is used to comment on real-life movements of people and the resulting tensions: ‘But we’re diminished, less important,’ cries one dwarf; ‘Don’t you think the trolls consider themselves diminished too?’ replies his wife, ‘People mingle and mingling is good!’.²⁹⁸

The theme also plays a part in the development of the city. Contrary to the ‘static’ setting of much fantasy literature that Pratchett did not rate highly, in Ankh-Morpork the familiar is supplanted by the new.²⁹⁹ In the later novels, modernity thunders in so rapidly that the industrialised, multi-cultural city in *Raising Steam* is almost unrecognisable from the medieval aesthetic of *Guards! Guards!*. Unlike the *dvergar* in *Völuspá* who groan at impending doom, the *Zwerge* in German folklore who emigrate from regions as the times move on, and Tolkien’s dwarfs who search nostalgically for a lost homeland, the dwarfs of the Discworld are shown, despite obstacles, to belong in an essential fashion to the future and the new face of Ankh-Morpork.

9. Character

The temperament, outlook and disposition of the Discworld dwarfs is varied. Pratchett ironically referenced the *Zwerge* of German folklore and their subsequent cultural influence (mainly by way of Disney) to comment upon his dwarfs. This fairy-tale image is evoked by Carrot when he remarks to Vimes:

any dwarf who rises sufficiently in dwarf society to even be considered as a candidate for the kingship did not get there by singing the hi-ho song and bandaging wounded animals in the forest.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ Pratchett, *FE*, 31, 50.

²⁹⁷ Pratchett, *RS*, 12.

²⁹⁸ Pratchett, *RS*, 95.

²⁹⁹ Pratchett, ‘Notes from a Successful Fantasy Author: Keep It Real’ (2007), *A Slip of the Keyboard*, 79-82: 80.

³⁰⁰ Pratchett, *FE*, 33.

Lady Sybil likewise contrasts the increasingly fanatical and dangerous dwarfs with the “Disneyfied” image: ‘Whatever happened to all that, you know, hi-ho, hi-ho and being kind to poor lost orphans in the forest, Sam?’³⁰¹ The dwarfs envisioned in these quotations are far-removed from the deep-down grags in *Thud!* and terrorists in *Raising Steam*. They are dangerous and murderous, more in line with Fjalarr and Galarr from the Norse material. The dwarfs of the earlier Discworld novels, however, are not so divergent from the *Snow White* dwarfs. When they are first encountered in *Guards! Guards!*, Carrot’s adoptive dwarf father recounts how they took in the orphaned baby Carrot when they found him in the woods.³⁰² Pratchett’s dwarfs are likewise seen to sing the “hi-ho song”.³⁰³

10. Appearance

The Discworld dwarfs are called ‘lawn ornaments’ by characters of other races as an insult. This is a reference to the garden gnomes that can be found around Britain.³⁰⁴ Garden gnomes were introduced to England by Charles Edmund Isham, who brought them back from Germany in 1847.³⁰⁵ He termed these figures ‘gnomes’ due to his mistranslation of the German ‘Gnomenfiguren’ (‘miniature figures’); in Germany, the figures are known as ‘Gartenzwerge’ (‘garden dwarfs’).³⁰⁶ This reference conjures up the particular image that is common to these figures – large white beards, pointed hats and friendly expressions – and which accords with the early illustrations in the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* editions discussed above.

The Discworld dwarfs do have the standard look of old men: ‘dwarfs started looking old around the age of five years and were still looking old three hundred years later’.³⁰⁷ The garden gnome or fairy-tale dwarf, however, is not the predominant image of the dwarfs created by Pratchett’s descriptions. They are typically clad in leather,

³⁰¹ Pratchett, *Thud!*, 268.

³⁰² Pratchett, *GG*, 24.

³⁰³ Pratchett, *MA*, 260.

³⁰⁴ Pratchett, *FE*, 184, 224.

³⁰⁵ ‘Gnome’, BBC: A History of the World.

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/bUxFSfmyuqQKi5UoOQcpGPig>>.

³⁰⁶ Fimi, *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, 31.

³⁰⁷ Pratchett, *FE*, 223.

chain mail and ‘statutory’ round iron helmets.³⁰⁸ The dwarfs always wear iron boots, a pair of which Cheery adapts in *Feet of Clay* with added high heels.³⁰⁹ They are also generally carrying weapons, particularly axes.³¹⁰ Their look is comically similar and timeless, as suggested in *The Truth*:

[Sacharissa:] ‘what’s the modern dwarf wearing this season?’
‘Chain mail and leather,’ said Goodmountain, suddenly perplexed. ‘What are you talking about? It’s always chain mail and leather!’³¹¹

The image of the dwarfs presented in the Discworld series accords with that of the dwarf in the “consensus fantasy universe”. It draws on popular “Viking” imagery: for example, one dwarf in *Thud!* is said to be wearing a ‘three-horned helmet’ and a troll is seen ‘drinking out of a horn, like the dwarfs do’.³¹² Although this became the aesthetic of the dwarves in Peter Jackson’s *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy (which, as has been mentioned, is predated by Pratchett’s dwarfs), the dwarves in the works of Tolkien are known to dress in bright colours, fairy-tale hoods, precious metals and jewels (see above).

One feature of the Discworld dwarfs that is common to the *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* illustrations, *Deutsche Sagen Zwerge*, garden gnomes/*Gartenzwerge*, Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Tolkien’s dwarves and the dwarfs of the “consensus fantasy universe” is the large beards sported by all. This is not, however, a specified feature of the *dvergar* in the Norse texts, whose physical appearances are scarcely remarked upon. It is possible to speculate that male humanoid figures would have been envisioned with beards in the Norse tradition, since it appears to have been the norm for men. The character Njáll in *Njáls saga*, for example, famously does not have a beard as other men do.³¹³ Large beards are also a typical feature of the popular imagery surrounding Viking Age Norsemen, and such imagery may link in dwarfs drawn in a Nordic fashion. Not enough is known of the Norse *dvergar*, however, to claim whether or not they shared the now-dominant idea of dwarfs as shorter human-

³⁰⁸ Pratchett, *TT*, 15.

³⁰⁹ Pratchett, *FC*, 270.

³¹⁰ Pratchett, *FE*, 213.

³¹¹ Pratchett, *TT*, 365.

³¹² Pratchett, *Thud!*, 289, 252.

³¹³ *Njáls saga*, chap. 20, p. 57; chap. 44, p. 113.

like figures. Although they may have been ‘mannlíkun’ of sorts,³¹⁴ they are also a race of a different nature and in all probability differ significantly the corpus. The dwarf Alberich in the Middle High German poem *Das Nibelungenlied* is definitely bearded.³¹⁵

Pratchett frequently refers to the beards of the Discworld dwarfs, which are portrayed as an important cultural characteristic. Even Cheery, the enthusiastically feminine dwarf, expresses horror at the idea of shaving off her beard.³¹⁶ Dwarfs’ beards as a seemingly integral feature of their appearance is most likely connected to the predominantly male conceptualisation of them that many hold today.

11. Gender

Terry Pratchett engages with the excessive masculinity of this dwarfish image for comic effect. Beginning as a throwaway joke at the expense of fantasy stereotypes, it becomes an extended satire regarding social expectations about gender that is of high importance within the Discworld series.

In *Guards! Guards!*, there is no societal ban on the female gender in the dwarfish community. The basic premise is set out in a footnote:

The [masculine] pronoun is used by dwarfs to indicate both sexes. All dwarfs have beards and wear up to twelve layers of clothing. Gender is more or less optional.³¹⁷

Earlier in the book, Carrot refers to his girlfriend, Minty Rocksmacker, as a ‘she’. Her name is more feminine and she apparently boasts an attractively soft beard.³¹⁸ Moving forwards to *Feet of Clay*, the reader finds Carrot expressing distaste at using the female pronoun for dwarfs.³¹⁹ Dwarf mothers and wives are mentioned on several occasions, which seems to indicate an initial gender distinction when it comes to relatives.³²⁰ In *Men at Arms*, Vimes meets the widow of the deceased dwarf Hammerhock. She is identified as ‘Mrs Hammerhock’ and it is therefore clear which is the husband and

³¹⁴ *Völuspá*, p. 294, s. 10, l. 5.

³¹⁵ Battles, ‘Dwarfs in Germanic Literature’, 52. Referencing: *Das Nibelungenlied nach der Ausgabe von Karl Bartsch*, ed. Helmut de Boor, 21st ed., rev. Roswitha Wisniewski (Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus, 1979), p. 497, ll. 2-3.

³¹⁶ Pratchett, *FC*, 194.

³¹⁷ Pratchett, *GG*, 344.

³¹⁸ Pratchett, *GG*, 24.

³¹⁹ Pratchett, *FC*, 213-214.

³²⁰ Pratchett, *GG*, 23, 60; *MA*, 108; *FC*, 213, 232.

which the wife in this marriage, despite the masculine appearance of both males and females.³²¹ The total eradication of the female gender in traditional dwarfish culture is a development from *Feet of Clay* onwards, beginning with the introduction of the character Cheery and escalating with the fundamentalist dwarfs. By *The Fifth Elephant*, there is no longer gender differentiation within dwarf couples:

[Lady Sybil:] '[The dwarf opera *Bloodaxe and Ironhammer*] is really one of the great romances of history.'

'Romances?' said Vimes. 'Like... a love story?'

'Yes. Of course.'

'Bloodaxe and Ironhammer were both... er... weren't both...' Vimes began.

'They were both *dwarfs*, sir,' said Cheery.

'Ah. Of course.' Vimes gave up. All dwarfs were dwarfs.³²²

Likewise, in *The Truth*, two dwarf characters who are outwardly males are revealed to be engaged.³²³

Cheery Littlebottom in *Feet of Clay* decides that she will break centuries of tradition to display her feminine gender. She becomes the first dwarf to wear a skirt and is initially met with outrage; it is not long, however, before it is apparent that plenty of others feel the same.³²⁴ From something shocking, this gains rising momentum towards a new normal:

Cheery was only the frothy bit on the top of the wave. Some younger dwarfs were shyly wearing eyeshadow and declaring that, as a matter of fact, they *didn't* like beer. A current was running through dwarf society.³²⁵

This is one of the many ways that fantasy stereotypes are reimaged by Pratchett, who tears up clichés and uses the parts to engage with real-world issues. Pratchett demonstrates an awareness of masculine-dominated fantasy worlds such as Middle-earth and its successors, in which females may be assumed to exist but often remain somehow out of sight. Additionally, the female dwarfs' public admittance of their true

³²¹ Pratchett, *MA*, 108, 125.

³²² Pratchett, *FE*, 275.

³²³ Pratchett, *TT*, 247.

Within this tradition, there would of course be the possibility for homosexual dwarf relationships; however, since this topic is not explored in the novels it will not form a part of this discussion.

³²⁴ Pratchett, *FC*, 232-233.

³²⁵ Pratchett, *FE*, 43.

gender in the face of social disapproval and aggression bears some analogy to “coming out” for non-heterosexual people in societies around the world. It also connects to issues of gender identity and preferred pronouns. Just as human society generally acknowledges a gender binary of male and female, with a growing movement to recognise non-binary identities, the dwarfish society on the Discworld has developed a mono-gender system, which many of its members wish to extend to include the true gender that they feel themselves to be. A significant component of this movement is the desire for the English language to include a third gender or gender neutral pronoun. This debate is reflected in the Discworld series, transposed onto the female pronoun: Vimes notes when their dwarf guide at the Uberwald mines refers to Cheery as ‘her’ that, ‘Dee has discovered a new pronoun, even if he does spit it.’³²⁶ The apparently all-male nature of the dwarfs is therefore used by Pratchett for satirical comment on contemporary issues.

As has been discussed above, this all-male nature is a sometime feature of the race of Old Norse *dvergar* (although this is not the case throughout the corpus). It is also a predominant characteristic of Tolkien’s dwarves, who have substantial roots in medieval Icelandic literature. Pratchett’s female dwarfs, like Tolkien’s, are bearded and hidden from sight behind masculine garb. Pratchett appears to have been fully aware of Tolkien’s declaration that female dwarfs existed in this way, although were often not perceived by those of other races.³²⁷

³²⁶ Pratchett, *FE*, 275.

³²⁷ Pratchett, *MA*, 125: “you never see their women,” said Lady Sara Omnius. “I find that very... suspicious. [...]” Vimes sighed. He was just about aware that you saw their women all the time, although they looked just like the male dwarfs. Surely *everyone* knew that, who knew anything about dwarfs?”

Conclusion

This thesis has examined a number of characteristics belonging to the Old Norse mythological and legendary *dvergar*, the *Zwerg* of German folklore, Tolkien's fictional race of dwarves, and finally the dwarfs in Terry Pratchett's Discworld series. Although any analysis of such source material faces multiple difficulties, as have been set out above, requiring a nuanced approach and moderated assertions, a number of conclusions have been reached through sustained comparison.

Firstly, it can be said that Pratchett's dwarfs are indebted to Norse *dvergar* for their specialist role as craftsmen and aversion to sunlight. They are also influenced by *dvergar* – possibly directly but also likely via the works of the Brothers Grimm, Wagner and Tolkien – concerning their attributes such as love for gold and rings, subterranean dwelling and diminutive stature. The Discworld dwarfs' masculine mono-gender is based mostly on the works of Tolkien, but underlined by the older *dvergar* race. Certain other aspects of the Discworld dwarfs result from subsequent culture rather than the Norse *dvergar*, such as their mining enthusiasm, “Hi-Ho” song, axes and beards. Elements of their appearance, behaviour and culture have common ground with the image and literature of the “Viking” and medieval Nordic world, although are not specifically related to the Norse *dvergar*. This does, however, testify to the strength of the association between “dwarfs” and the north Germanic world, to which the cultural influence of the *dvergar* is crucial.

The Discworld dwarfs are above all a composite creation, comprising many popular ideas and motifs that have come to surround numerous types of “dwarfs”. As has been shown, they are used as a vehicle for commentary on a range of topics. In this way, elements from centuries-old material, such as the *dvergar*'s aversion to daylight, are made fresh and relevant to our society.

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