

Monstrous Women: Feminism in Terry Pratchett's *Monstrous Regiment*

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1 *Monstrous Regiment* by Terry Pratchett is part of his larger series of books called *Discworld*. Although part of a series, *Monstrous Regiment* can stand alone because of its seemingly isolated events concerning the small country of Borogravia, the war it is fighting, and the small batch of newest recruits joining the army. The matter of the female hero in *Monstrous Regiment* is complicated because of the convoluted actions that the women take in order to enlist in the army and then to carry out their plans. The theories of bisociation, the real, and simulation lead to a feminist conclusion. Each of these themes contributes to comedy and fantasy, which comment on western culture's establishment of gender and its treatment of women.

Explication of Theories

2 Since *Monstrous Regiment* is both comedy and fantasy, the theories of bisociation, the real, and simulation work well in analyzing the feminist message. The theory of bisociation holds that there are two main plains of logical reactions to actions. When one action or saying interacts with another that seems unrelated and is unexpected, comedy may occur. This theory is laid out by Arthur Koestler in his work on comedy, *The Act of Creation*. Koestler makes it clear that comedy comes through an unexpected reaction that must be logical, though it does not need to adhere to the logical reaction we expect. Because the two different reactions — the one anticipated by the reader and the one actually provided by the character — are logical, the tension bursts, leading to comedy (Koestler 35).

3 The unanticipated reaction, because it does not follow the expected line of action and reaction, then forces the characters and situation to change accordingly, and this change in the plot can lead to further bisociation. "The higher forms of sustained humor, such as the satire or comic poem, do not rely on a single effect but on a series of minor explosions or a continuous state of mild amusement" (Koestler 37). In *Monstrous Regiment*, this phenomenon occurs as certain scenes include a series of minor bisociations which carry the comedy throughout the novel. [1]

4 Jacques Lacan's theory of the real is applied to certain key points within the plot, since it is recognized that both comedy and fantasy can hide the real while at the same time revealing it for the reader. The real consists of the impossible and dangerous, causing great anxiety for those who contemplate its possibility:

To the extent that a dream may get to the point of entering the order of anxiety, and that a drawing nigh of the ultimate real is experienced, we find ourselves present at this imaginary decomposition which is only the revelation of the normal component parts of perception. (Lacan 166)

Although the real may exist within one's perception, the occurrence in the real does not yet have a name and it is not recognized — it does not exist in 'the symbolic' which encompasses those actions and ideas that do have names and are recognized by people.

5 The theory of simulacra applies to *Monstrous Regiment* because a simulacrum is the copy of an item. As an exact copy, the imitation can be confused with the original and can even take the place of the original object. Simulacra are seen throughout *Monstrous Regiment*, and it is this simulacrum that also adds to the comedy. Gilles Deleuze says that simulacra produce an effect, and the different effects are seen throughout *Monstrous Regiment*. Deleuze posits that "[t]he simulacrum is not a degraded copy, rather it contains a positive power which negates both original and copy, both model and reproduction" (53). This positive power of the simulacrum negating the original and the copy is also seen within the novel. Thus, the simulacra in the novel create new, original gender expectations, especially for women. For each of the major scenes and instances throughout *Monstrous Regiment*, first the areas of bisociation will be analyzed, then the real will be critiqued as it is constructed as a result of the bisociation. The simulacra are analyzed in conjunction with bisociation and the real because the simulacra contribute to the comedy and challenge of gender stereotypes.

6 The theories of simulation, Lacan's the real, and bisociation are present in Terry Pratchett's *Monstrous Regiment* — it is this combination that generates the humor. *Monstrous Regiment* follows the story of Polly and the other recruits who join the Borogravian army and serve under Sergeant Jackrum. They disguise themselves as men so they may join the army in order to accomplish their own personal goals. As Polly and the recruits begin their journey across their country of Borogravia to join the rest of the military, their gender is discovered by Jackrum, who helps them to hide their identities. Along the way, they are set upon by a group of enemy cavalymen, whom they defeat, and they initiate an attack on a small band of enemy soldiers, whom they also defeat. Their ultimate success comes when Polly and the recruits disguise themselves once again — this time as washerwomen. They sneak into the Keep and take it back from the enemy. Tired of maintaining their different disguises, they reveal their true identities to their officers, whom they discover are also women disguised as men. Despite their successes in battle, Polly and the recruits are treated like silly women by being sent home with girly uniforms and orders to continue working female jobs. Polly and Maladicta — one of the recruits who is also a vampire — decide to remain in the army as soldiers. Though now they dress in girly uniforms, they are still intent on bringing equality to the women of Borogravia.

7 Although Polly does not discover Jackrum's identity until the end of the novel, Jackrum is also a female disguised as a man. Because Jackrum remains in her/his disguise throughout the novel, the novel uses male pronouns for Jackrum. Therefore, in this paper, I will also refer to Jackrum with male pronouns. I will, however, refer to Polly and the other recruits using female pronouns because readers and other characters learn very quickly that they are actually female and think and speak in terms that reflect their dual presentations of female and male.

When Jackrum helps Polly disguise her identity

8 When applying bisociation to the scene when Jackrum helps Polly disguise her female self, one notices that Jackrum provides the unexpected reaction which leads to comedy. Jackrum adds humor to the situation of being surrounded by women yet continuing to refer to them as his “little lads” as he tells Polly:

‘Still, I said I’d look after you. You are my little lads, I said.’ His eyes gleamed. ‘And you still are, even if the world’s turned upside down. I’ll just have to hope, Miss Perks [Polly], that you picked up a few tricks from ol’ Sarge, although I reckon you can think of a few of your own’.
(Pratchett, *Monstrous* 258)

9 The real, here, is the fact that someone who knows about a woman disguised as a man will sometimes help her and not always disclose her identity. Jackrum does this as he keeps Polly’s identity a secret. Indeed, Polly wonders why Jackrum would keep her secret. He surreptitiously tells her to use socks as a way to fill her britches, making it appear as if she had a penis. The idea of another man helping her is disquieting, because she does not know if he has some kind of malicious intent. The same suspicion is also raised in the reader who may even prepare for a harsh revelation of Polly’s identity. The idea that anyone would help a woman maintain her disguise in an exclusively male environment goes against hegemonic cultural standards Pratchett uses as a background for the narrative. The fact that Jackrum keeps her secret without any pleading by Polly adds to the unsettling feeling and questions about his intentions.

10 Here, the simulation of Polly’s imitation of a young man is shattered because at least one person — Jackrum — knows her identity. But the key here that adds to the comedy is the fact that Jackrum is willing to help Polly continue this simulation — to make her imitation of a young man even more convincing so that no one would be able to tell that Oliver Perks is really Polly Perks. In the first part of the novel, one may also wonder how much Colonel Strappi knows. Has Strappi recognized Polly and the other recruits as women? Strappi even messes up her name when Polly is pretending to shave her face with a blunt razor: “What d’you think you’re doing, Private Parts?” (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 36). With such a mistake, it is once again made clear to Polly that the one main difference that distinguishes her from a male soldier are her private parts. More comedy is introduced by this observation because socks aside, Polly is not an exact simulation of a male soldier. This fact arises in the issue surrounding the act of going to the bathroom: “In short, with care and attention to detail, she’d found that a woman could pee standing up” (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 33). Regardless, this clever tactic of Polly’s still is not enough because the idea of a woman getting away with her disguise in an army full of men is unrealistic: the soldiers sleep, bathe, and change clothing together. Although Polly and the recruits manage to get away with their impersonations in their small, ragtag army, it appears that a number of the male characters, and even some readers, may assert that male and masculine impersonations would not succeed in an actual army.

11 Nevertheless, it is evident that her impersonations help her to an extent. Elisabeth Rose Gruner analyzes the education that Polly instinctively uses: “she discovers, learning, like working as a

witch, mostly seems to mean keeping her eyes open" ("Teach" 225). Polly keeps her eyes open and learns how to act as a man by observing men before she begins her journey: "She watched how they [boys] moved, she listened to the rhythm of what passed, among boys, for conversation, she'd noted how they punched one another in greeting" (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 57). Even after she joins the regiment, she continues observing the men around her, at first not realizing that she is actually copying females who are also imitating males. Thus, more humor is added when she copies supposedly masculine behavior by women disguised as men.

When Polly and the recruits dress up as men

12 Much of the bisociation is caused by knowing that these women pretending to be men are completing 'typically male actions' in the army, which for them includes being physically rough and cussing. When Polly and Corporal Strappi spar, everyone expects Strappi to win. The bisociation appears when people do not expect Polly to outwit Strappi exactly by pretending to fight like an inexperienced swordsman. Later, when the recruits ready themselves to leave camp to move on to their next stop, they are set upon by a group of enemy cavalymen. One would not expect the recruits to fight, but to surrender. Instead, comedy occurs when they struggle against the cavalymen and succeed by dressing as women and using unconventional weapons.

13 These instances point to the main bisociation of gender that provides the humor. Many characters may expect the women to attempt these missions, but to fail as both soldiers and as men. The fact that the recruits are actually successful in their endeavors by using feminine tactics of warfare, including wielding pots and pans as weapons, and thus manage to triumph over their enemy adds humor to the story. Nevertheless, this humorous element also reflects misogyny in the fact that the women are successful as soldiers when they employ those feminine actions in battle: fighting with pots and pans instead of swords, and even wearing dresses instead of the soldier's uniform. Some of the recruits let their feminine actions and ways slip through their disguises, which heightens the comedy and adds to the bisociation. The feminine actions enable Polly to discover that the recruits are also women. Even Polly, though conscious to maintain her disguise, slips in her masculine portrayal under pressure when she has to prepare the tea for Blouse and an enemy officer they just captured by saying "Oh, *sugar!*" (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 162). This feminine statement in its allusion to the housewife who bakes and has a sweet tooth and is a substitute for cursing escapes her lips and reveals the delicate balance between her masculine and feminine roles. However, Jackrum completes the bisociation for her by telling her where the sugar is: "Just down there, in the old black tin" (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 162).

14 Jackrum intensifies the bisociation by telling Polly and the other recruits that their being females does not bother him: "Can't do anything, can I? You were born like it" (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 254). He could not help it that they were born female, and he would not gain anything by telling on them. Here, Jackrum refers to their natural state as women, pointing out an obvious fact: these women

had no choice in the sex they were born with. Likewise, they also had no control over the rules, laws, and conventions of society that influenced them as they matured. Amanda Cockrell, in anticipating the reader's reactions, writes

Ah, this is parody, we think, we know the parodied material, so we know where this is going—just as expected, only with a pie in the face. But one of the things that Pratchett also likes to do is stand fantastic convention on its head, so that parody departs from source material and takes on a deeper, more substantial life of its own. (7)

The reader may recognize that *Monstrous Regiment* is full of parody, yet Pratchett uses this to challenge readers' expectations. Jackrum acknowledges that the army should be open to women as they could not help their sex at birth or the cultural conventions. While Jackrum laments that he could not have any of his famous feats as herself, as a woman, both she and Polly recognize that Borogravia needs this easing-in period of women disguised as men in order to begin the process of change.

15 Jackrum encourages the young recruits because he recognizes that they have what it takes to be soldiers. Elisabeth Rose Gruner, in writing about the messages that fantasy literature sends to children regarding education states that "[e]ach child, in the tradition of hero stories, finds one or more mentors who to some extent help to direct his or her education" ("Teach" 219). Also in writing about education, Janet Brennan Croft observes a trend typified by Pratchett's Tiffany Aching and Hermione Granger from *Harry Potter*, which can be applied to the women in *Monstrous Regiment*: "Responding to a calling in the blood, Tiffany and Hermione both recognize that the opportunity to gain knowledge is the opportunity to gain power—power to control their environments, to chart their own courses in the world, and to protect those they care for" ("Education" 129-130). Both Jackrum and the recruits recognize that education means power. Here, education is not limited to book and school knowledge, but it is expanded to include training as men on the field and in battle. This training is important, because Jackrum helps these recruits, who are already performing well, in becoming soldiers. Jackrum — a woman who has spent at least twenty years as a man and surrounded by men — asserts that these recruits "were better than men at being like men" (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 379).

16 Croft comments on the links between education and a girl dressing as a boy in order to achieve the education she desires:

And in stories where girls disguise themselves as boys to get an education, we can see young people taking the initiative to tailor their education to their own needs, attempting with various degrees of success to bypass gender/education/power issues altogether. ("Education" 140)

The women in the regiment decide which education they need. Not only is there the political and cultural influences that women have to contend with as they defy the limitations placed on them, but religion also needs to be taken into account. Cockrell observes that "Pratchett's take on religion, organized and otherwise, like his take on most things that human beings can devise, is screamingly funny and bone-chillingly serious at the same time" (3). The combination of comedy and seriousness is reflected in the holy book for the people of Borogravia. The Book of Nuggan includes the various abominations against their god: such as women dressing in men's clothing and women learning how

to write. These taboos show how questionable some religious practices can be, especially those relating to women. Polly and the recruits challenge Nuggan and the book of abominations: "Rather, they [the characters] engage, directly or indirectly, with religion as a cultural force. Both take seriously the threat posed by unquestioning belief in the unseen, in a truth beyond knowing expressed especially in religious texts" (Gruner, "Wrestling" 278). The abominations are questioned and challenged, especially by the women who flaunt them. In doing so, the women contribute more actions which lead to more bisociations.

17 By analyzing religion in Pratchett's Discworld, Gruner observes: "Pratchett, by working outside the constraints of religious language and overtly religious (especially Christian) narrative, more subtly empowers his heroine to wrestle successfully with religion itself" ("Wrestling" 291). The struggle with religious mandates is evident in Polly's desire to find a middle ground for women so that they do not have to be seen as entirely lowly women or entirely celestial, perfect beings.

18 In these instances, the simulation morphs into women masquerading as men. Their simulation is wavering — it is no longer perfect and convincing. After all, Polly and the recruits have found out one another, which introduces a different aspect of simulation: the simulation is so similar and identical to the original that it can be mistaken for the original. But then the simulation changes and becomes its own entity. The women, by imitating men and then by allowing certain feminine qualities to mesh with their masculine fronts, create something different from male or female. They create a warrior woman who is not ashamed of her clean language, ability to cook, and sometimes irrepressible giggles. Despite the traits that are stereotypically associated with women that the females allow to seep into their simulations, they manage to perform their missions better than the actual male soldiers who could not capture the Keep. Also, we can even assert that stereotypical feminine traits may be irrelevant in regards to whether they are successful or not, because their success appears to depend largely on using logic and not on using traditional feminine or masculine traits.

19 These instances point to the real in Lacanian terms, which is something that can be true but which some people may have trouble accepting. In this case, the real posits the idea that 'women can make better men.' Polly and the recruits demonstrate that while they are female, they are just as capable (if not more so) than men, when it comes to fighting and ending a war. Qualities stereotypically associated with females slip through their disguises. The stereotypes of male and female actions both enable and complicate gender imitation because some people recognize that these are stereotypes and should not be held to, whereas others adhere to them. If feminine actions can taint the behavior by the recruits but not hinder them, then this means that gender — masculine and feminine — is unimportant when it comes to ending a war. Nevertheless, these women still retain some of the feminine behaviors.

When Blouse dresses up as a woman

20 Up to this point, the bisociations have occurred with the women disguised as men; however, bisociation is also present in the reverse situation. The scene where Blouse disguises himself as a woman illustrates the perversity of stereotypes. Polly's idea for infiltrating the Keep consists of her dressing as a washerwoman and entering through the lightly guarded servants' entrance. However, Blouse decides that he will complete this task because he tells Polly and the other recruits that they act too much like boys:

'But, y'know, a good officer keeps an eye on his men and I have to say that I've noticed in you, in *all* of you, little...habits, perfectly normal, nothing to worry about, like the occasional deep exploration of a nostril maybe, and a tendency to grin after passing wind, a natural boyish inclination to, ahem, scratch your...your selves in public...that sort of thing. These are the kind of little details that'd give you away in a trice and tell any observer that you were a man in women's clothing, believe me'. (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 238)

Therefore, he dresses up as a washerwoman, giving himself large breasts. He continues this performance as he joins the other washerwomen walking to the entrance. Later, Polly learns that Blouse has no trouble persuading the guards: Blouse speaks in falsetto, swings his hips, says what a silly girl he was for forgetting his work papers, and bursts into tears. This performance gets him into the castle without a problem — the guards do not suspect that this washerwoman who fulfills all the feminine stereotypes is actually a man.

21 There are several small bisociations that interact in order to create the larger bisociation of Blouse's female disguise. When Polly voices her idea of dressing up as washerwomen, she expects some argument from Blouse and Jackrum, but she believes that with some persuasion, they will allow her to try. Therefore, the comedy arises when Blouse tells Polly that she acts too much like a boy and that she has not grown into a refined man. The farting, belching, and scratching that Polly and the others have been doing in order to persuade Blouse and Jackrum that they are male is now backfiring. Acting as refined young men may not have been enough to cover their femaleness, so they went to extremes. This excess of young, inappropriate male behavior then convinces Blouse that they would not make convincing women. His reaction creates comedy, which is heightened as the reader knows that Polly and the other recruits should make the best representations of women simply because they are women. The dramatic irony here, which is reminiscent of Shakespeare and *Twelfth Night*, creates humor because the readers already know about the gender-associations and assignments by now.

22 Nevertheless, when Blouse executes his plan to enter the Keep as a washerwoman, Polly does not expect him to succeed because of his exaggerated feminine actions. However, overacting and over-performing gender seems to be the key to a successful gender performance. The comedy of bisociation occurs once again as Polly learns that the soldiers fall for Blouse's disguise. A man who speaks in falsetto, wears a ridiculous wig, swings his hips exaggeratedly, and bursts into tears should not be able to persuade anyone that he is a she. One would think that anyone could see through the disguise. But the guards believe it because it is easier for them to apply stereotypes and

generalizations to women than to accept the fact that true women exhibit different behaviors and mannerisms.

23 This combination of the bisociations — recruits making unbelievable women and Blouse succeeding in his female disguise — point to the real, which is the fact that men can make ‘better women’ than women, and can fool the men. Sometimes men can perform femininity better than women. This also indicates that men have delineated the stereotypes and expectations for women. Indeed, women have not set forth their own actions and claimed them as female. Instead, the men of a patriarchy have decided which actions to label as feminine, expecting women to fulfill them. Polly’s behavior asserts that no actions are inherently feminine or masculine, but assigned to these sexes in order to maintain some semblance of control and distinction. Without clear behaviors designated as masculine or feminine, one could posit that culture would fall apart. If there were no clear actions for women, then they could end up completing actions previously regarded as masculine. If there are no distinct labels, then the characters could even have difficulty distinguishing if someone were a man or a woman. The real is that only a few sexual differences distinguish men from women, and this threatens male dominance.

24 The simulation of a man impersonating a woman is supposed to be comical, especially because of the extremes he will go through in order to make a convincing woman. This resembles some instances of drag because Blouse gets distracted in the act of being a washerwoman: he becomes popular among the other washerwomen who recognize that he is a man. He teaches the women how to iron correctly, and he even agrees to an assignation with one of the enemy officers. Nevertheless, the simulation of a man imitating a woman likewise causes problems of gender and identity. Blouse’s getting through security in his gendered disguise consequently enables him to demonstrate how a woman ought to act. The patriarchal codes of conduct for women are then demonstrated in order to show them exactly what men want and expect. According to Blouse and the soldiers who fall for his disguise, men desire women to adhere to a certain physical type — never minding the fact that not all women are endowed with large breasts and hips for swaying. Some men also desire women to be so gentle and fragile that they burst into tears. The fact that Blouse poses as a washerwoman indicates that some men see women as fit for only certain chores such as washing and ironing clothing.

When Polly and the recruits dress up as women

25 More bisociations are created in the scenes that reflect Blouse’s cross dressing when the female recruits disguise themselves as washerwomen. The recruits reverse the damsel in distress trope when they believe that something has happened to Blouse and that they have to enter the Keep in order to save him and continue their mission. In order to save the male damsel in distress, they give up their male disguises as soldiers and dress as women. The narrator and the characters are careful to say that they dress up and disguise themselves, because these women are not simply putting on their former female selves. For one thing, they have to steal their dresses and costumes from a brothel

because they do not have any feminine clothing with them. As young men, these women did not need women's clothing; therefore, such garments were left behind. Once they obtain the ill-fitting clothing, they dress themselves to ensure that they look more like women. Polly and the others encounter the problem of their hair, for they cut it short in order to pass as boys. Polly further struggles with the issue of physicality: her small breasts enable her to pass as a boy, but can hinder her disguise as the dress she wears was made for a woman with more cleavage. The irony comes when Polly uses the socks, which were previously used as a penis, as fake breasts.

26 These women's female disguises lead to an outrageous bisociation: the women expect to pass the guards without any problems, but they are stopped, pulled aside for questioning, and then criticized as men impersonating women:

'Gentlemen, let's not mess about, shall we? You walk wrong. We do *watch*, you know. You walk wrong and you stand wrong. You,' he pointed to Tonker, 'have got a bit of shaving soap under one ear. And you, lad, are either deformed or you've tried the old trick of sticking a pair of socks down your undershirt'. (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 278)

The humor in the bisociation increases when the soldier accuses Polly of misshapen breasts, which give her away supposedly as a young man. With the collapse of gender constructions, there is nothing else left for the women to prove themselves besides revealing their female sex. The revealing of cleavage and breasts is not adequate as Polly's sock implants suggest; therefore, Shufti, the pregnant woman, lifts up her dress to reveal her sex to the soldier. That the women have to revert to such primitive and basic ways of distinguishing themselves from men attests to the real that the only difference between men and women is in the genitals and in becoming pregnant — apparently, having breasts simply is not enough evidence to establish that a female is in fact female. The idea that the physical differences are the only ones that matter — they allow one to distinguish between a male and female for biological purposes — add to the real presented about gender: women dress up as women because women are not inherently women.

27 The simulation of a woman dressing up as a woman refers to the impossible image of a woman. A simulation can certainly be an imperfect imitation, which is what the women are when they have long hair, wear dresses, and perform womanly chores such as cleaning and cooking. As women simulate women, they mock the idea of womanhood set up by the patriarchy, because they cannot perfectly imitate the ideal woman. Since the simulation of a woman falls apart, the imitation of women disintegrates as well, especially since a woman should know how to act like a woman. Whether or not she tries to impersonate a woman, she will fail for there will be some degree of masculinity in her.

When Polly and the recruits reveal their sexuality

28 Even more bisociations occur once the women are in the keep and reveal their true identities. After Polly and the recruits have been successful in capturing the Keep, there is a bit of confusion as to their gender: if they are men dressed as women, then job well done. But if they are women who accomplished this feat, then they are in trouble. These women know that there could be several

consequences for them if their officers learn that they impersonated men and that they really are women. The male disguises have worked thus far; therefore, there is no reason to believe that they would admit that they are women, but they do. Another instance occurs when the recruits are put on trial before the officers, where there ensues a confusing, convoluted discussion about men dressing as women, women dressing as men, and women dressing as women. The confusing conversation itself adds to the bisociation because such matters as cross dressing and gender apparently cannot be discussed in a logical, easy-to-follow manner. More comedy enters when Polly and the recruits have the chance to take back their assertion that they are indeed female. If they assert that they are men dressed as women then they can remain in the army. Yet if they verify their female sex, then the army will treat them as women and demote them from being in a male army.

29 Their revelation helps bring about the end of the war sooner, and the women are used as mascots as they are sent with the white flag and notice of surrender to the enemy. Polly sees through the celebration to realize that they have been treated as women, even by some of the other women. One treatment of women that Polly is all too familiar with is the idea of womanhood being temporary: once the war ends, she is no longer needed. This fleeting status of being merely temporary soldiers is reflected in the uniforms that are designed for them as females:

The uniforms that had been made for them had a special, additional quality that could only be called...girly. They had more braid, they were better tailored, and they had a long skirt with a bustle rather than trousers. The shakos had plumes too. (Pratchett 386)

The uniform with its braid, bustle, and plume, is constructed as visibly girly or feminine and values looks over practicality as it is intended to make it difficult for the women to walk, run, and fight.

30 She continues to reflect on her uniform — the outfit she would wear if she tried to earn women more rights — “Her tunic had a sergeant’s stripes. It had been a joke. A sergeant of women. The world had been turned upside down, after all....But maybe, when the world turns upside down, you can turn a joke upside down, too” (Pratchett, *Monstrous* 386). Yes, she had been jeered at and had been made to feel small, insignificant, and embarrassed, but she, as a woman, has the strength to overcome sexism. By continuing to take herself seriously, and even by taking the joke seriously by wearing it, she can prove to men and women alike that a woman does not have to pretend to be a male soldier in order to be respected; instead, she can be a female soldier and receive the respect that she rightfully deserves.

When we learn that the officers are women

31 Until this point, the bisociations have been limited to Polly, the recruits, and Lieutenant Blouse. The bisociations concerning gender have not exactly affected anyone besides them. However, in the scene where we learn that most of the officers are women, the bisociation expands, making it clear that the comedy, the real, and the simulations affect everyone. Many of the officers of Borogravia are women and they too reveal their gender identities. The ignorance of the female officers attests to the real that women enjoy the thought of being the only one: the only woman in the army, the only woman

disguised as a man and getting away with it. Therefore, these officers enjoyed thinking that they were the only ones.

32 Women become men because it is recognized that, “women’s work gets far less respect and it is considered illegal for a woman to own property, inherit a business, etc.” (Croft, “Education” 131). The fact that women’s work garners little respect inspires these women to abandon womanly items and become men so they may enjoy at least some of the rights and privileges reserved for men only. Since it is illegal for women to perform certain actions, own property, and inherit a business, these women then devise ways to maneuver around these limitations. These laws and the masculine women who transcend them send the message that if a woman desires to be more than a dolt, wife, mother, or prostitute, she must leave behind her womanly self and masquerade as a male. She cannot have the equal freedoms of education, choice of vocation, and respect as a woman while wearing a dress and acting like a woman, even if she does possess and demonstrate more masculine qualities. The fact that everyone can see her as a woman automatically places limits — both religious and societal — upon her.

Conclusion

33 Pratchett provides an essay that includes his thoughts about Discworld:

For what Discworld is, more than anything else, is...logical. Relentlessly, solidly logical. The reason it is fantasy is that it is logical about the wrong things, about those parts of human experience where, by tacit agreement, we don’t use logic because it doesn’t work properly. On Discworld all metaphors are potentially real, all figures of speech have a way of becoming more than words. (“Imaginary” 160)

Because Discworld still uses logic through alternate experiences, metaphors, and figures of speech, humor and bisociation occur. The logic of women dressing as men works temporarily, because the recruits defend themselves in small skirmishes, and other women become officers. Beyond a short time period, however, the logic of women disguised as men falls apart because it is impossible to continue such a disguise and to continue to promote women as men. Therefore, the patriarchal society needs to reevaluate the treatment of its women as women.

34 The comical idea of women disguising themselves to enlist in the army turns into a serious and poignant commentary on Western society. The theories of bisociation, Lacan’s the real, and simulation aid in analyzing the commentary on women present in *Monstrous Regiment*. Bisociation — the intersection of two actions that lead to comedy — reveals the comedic in gender assumptions and differences. Nevertheless, this comedy brings the issue of feminine gender to the forefront. By making gender stereotypes prominent throughout the novel, Pratchett puts the real into stark contrast with the symbolic. One example of the real occurs when the women disguise themselves as men, because the symbolic maintains that women would not dress as men, join the army, and in actuality make better men and soldiers than the actual men and soldiers themselves. The theory of simulation pervades the novel, and it also bolsters the two previous theories of bisociation and the real. Each instance of a woman imitating a man is a simulation of a man. This simulation leads to the comedy that is analyzed

throughout bisociation, and it also supports the feminist analysis. The two main simulations present throughout the novel and analyzed previously allude to the facts that the imitation of a man (a woman pretending to be a man) and the imitation of a woman (a man pretending to be a woman) are often more believable than the original. Once again, this leads to comedy.

35 Gideon Haberkorn observes that: "As the Discworld and its inhabitants have evolved and changed and gained complexity, lighthearted ridicule has often given way to serious reinvention" (322-323). The reinvention of women and their roles in society can influence the reader to reflect upon his or her own society and how women are treated. Although it is mainly assumed that women in Western society have already gained freedoms such as voting, education, and careers, the text questions the extent of these achievements. The text shows that women have come a long way in society, yet work can still be done toward equality. Caroline Webb points out that Pratchett "invite[s] the child reader to recognize and critique the conventions of story as they reflect and shape the conventions of society, and especially to resist the constraints such conventions place on their own agency and development of individual identity" (160). Pratchett invites not only the child reader, but the teen and the adult reader as well, to recognize the conventions in society: how women are treated in society and what women can do to challenge these conventions. As a comic fantasy, *Monstrous Regiment* certainly offers a critique of culture that must be analyzed by readers and critics alike.

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Notes

1) Bisociation has been previously used by Thomas Scholz to discuss the construction of comedy concerning the zombies and vampires in the Discworld novels.