# Choose a Historical Figure that Reminds You of Either Vorbis or Brutha in Small Gods

## Compare the Real Person to the Fictional

Pratchett’s *Small Gods* is a novel with numerous protagonists and encompassing themes. Primarily, the author satirizes the religious, cultural, and social practices of the people, the responsibilities of the religious institutions, and the role that religion plays in both social and political live. Pratchett, therefore, models his characters such that the protagonists antagonize one another. The differences between the protagonists, particularly Vorbis and Brutha are dichotomous. In other words, the protagonists are differentiated by aspects such as literacy versus illiteracy, bad versus good, exposed versus novice, and egocentric versus altruistic. It is indubitable that works of literature are like a mirror in which the society reflects upon. Again, writers have a target audience and the audience change with time and from one place to another. In other words, the audience may change according to the context. The general argument in this perspective is that Pratchett's *Small Gods* though written a few decades ago still relates to the events in the past and present societies. Principally, this paper compares Vorbis, one of the main characters in the *Small Gods* to a historical figure, Adolf Hitler, a German politician and the leader of the Nazi party.

Deacon Vorbis was the head of the Omnian Quisition. The Omnian Quisition comprised of the government institutions. According to the Omnian faith, there was only one god, Om and any faith contrary to this was punishable. Despite the unwavering faith in Om, Pratchett frames an irony such that the Omnians outwardly express their belief in the deity Om but they are inwardly subjects to the Omnian government. Only Brutha is a true believer and follower of Om. Deacon Vorbis, so obsessed with the Quisition, was determined to influence the Ephebe people into this ideology. Vorbis was revered by the Omnians and was focused on pursuing the imperialistic goals of the church. Hitler (1889 –1945) was the Chancellor of Germany from 1933 to 1945 and a Nazi Germany from 1934-1945). Like Vorbis, Hitler invaded Poland in 1939 and holocaust was central to the attack. Holocaust was a religious ideology that saw some religions superior to others. Due to this belief, the Nazi-led by Hitler braved war against Poland which was a land mainly inhabited by the Jews (Dalin 13). The Omnian Quisition was similar to the Nazi Germany which was grounded on one-party dictatorship. Totalitarian, National Socialism and autocracy were the main ideologies employed in the attack and elimination of the Jews from Germany. Conversion of Jews to Christianity was not seen as a solution because the Nazi was not only opposed to Jews’ faith but also detested their race (Jackson 1605-1606). The reformation of the Nazi in 1933 under the leadership of Hitler saw the Germans as racially superior. The Holocaust was thus a systematic, state-sponsored, and bureaucratic persecution of the Jews by the Nazi administration in collaboration with the collaborators.

Vorbis’ life history is similar to that of Hitler. Vorbis’ life is an epic one. He was driven by the destiny to conquer Ephebe and bring himself the glory as the eighth prophet of Omnia. Vorbis is an intellectual citing the manner in which he planned his attack against Ephebe. The journey to Ephebe was supposedly a peace mission in which the Omnian delegation would sign a peace treaty. Vorbis deliberately contradicted the mission to Ephebe when he told Tyrant that “…But that is what we are here to discuss” (Pratchett 90). Vorbis' response gets Tyrant by surprise because according to him the Omnian delegation was invited to sign the treaty and not discuss the treaty. In his words, Tyrant argues that “…That is what you are here to sign” (Pratchett 90). Vorbis sentiments also reveal that Ephebe once defeated Omnia and thus Vorbis sought for revenge alongside territorial expansion. Vorbis declared to himself that there was not to be any treaty to be signed with the Ephebians because there could be no truce between those who believed deeply and those who held to a different belief in the deity (Pratchett 108). When Vorbis/Omnia failed to reach an agreement with Vorbis/Ephebe, he orders the burning down of Ephebe’s library (Pratchett 113). The successful defeat of Ephebes and the ensuing events of the deaths of Ephebe's and the majority of the Omnian delegates almost promoted Vorbis to power before he met the untimely death. Essentially, Vorbis' life is one that escalates quickly and comes crippling down as first as it rose. It is a life of fate similar to that of Hitler.

Hitler was dissatisfied and disillusioned by the Germany defeat in the World War 1. The Nazis saw the defeat of Germany in the First World War not as a result of the German’s army failure but as the failure of the Jews (Mühlberger 16). Hitler like the fictional Vorbis plotted an attack against Jews in the 1st September 1939. The invasion of Poland was conducted under a false pretext that the German was going to discuss and sign a peace treaty. This depicts a similar pretext used by Vorbis to attack Ephebe. Similarly, Hitler and the Nazis believed that the war against the Jews was a purification war (that is, purifying German from the purportedly racially inferior and degenerated groups of people) German race of all the allegedly „degenerate“and „racially inferior“population groups) that would pave way for the building of the German empire and a living place for the Germans (Strehle 315). Vorbis led the Omnians to war against Epees with the aim of introducing Quisition thereby expanding their leadership to the entire region. The Vorbis led events depict a similar turn of events in Germany. Hitler, other than attacking and killing millions of Jews, conspired to extend German's social and racial ideologies across entire Europe.

Vorbis, a villain, was an egocentric character whose interests came first. He was thirsty for power and for him to seize it and rise from the status of deacon to prophet, the end justified the means. He first uses Brutha, a novice who had eidetic memory to join other delegates to Ephebe (Pratchett 41). Vorbis deceived the obedient Brutha that they were on a mission to discuss political matters with Tyrant. He also warned Brutha against revealing the mission. He says, “You will forget this meeting. You have not been in this room. You have not seen us here"(Pratchett 41). Vorbis, due to his exemplary memory was to help the Omnian troop navigate the labyrinth in the Ephebe’s desert (Pratchett 109-110). While waiting to "sign" the peace pact Vorbis ordered Brutha to burn down the Ephebe’s library, "You will take a party of men, and you will take them to the Library... and then, Brutha, you will burn the Library" (Pratchett 113). Ephebe was a democratic land with tolerance to other religions and rich with knowledge following the presence of many philosophers. Despite executing the order, Brutha memorized various scrolls while others were hidden by philosopher Didactylos. Consumed by range, Vorbis pursued his adversaries but are stricken by the Sea Goddess. The injured Vobis is saved by Brutha but later turns against him and injures him with an intention of declaring himself the prophet of Omnia. His attempt to execute Brutha is thwarted by Om.

Hitler, on the other hand, is the World’s most known villain. He was severely hurt during the mustard gas attack and admitted to the field hospital. Upon recovery, Hitler declared himself as the savior of Germany hence his decision to establish an absolute hegemony across Europe (Dalin 46-47). Hitler engaged in various violent attacks including the killing of some seventeen million innocent civilians and the six million Jews and several other minorities. Hitler followed the footsteps of Vobis when he ordered the burning down of the Jews synagogues. The Jews' shops were looted and wretched. Hitler like Vorbis used his old guard to execute the orders. A more similar scene to setting the Ephebe’s library on fire was the tearing y destruction of the valuable books in the Jewish library (Mühlberger 36). As aforementioned, Vorbis pursued his enemies did Hitler. More than 10,000 Jews waited to be served with visas at Vienna outside the British Consulate but were all arrested before their departure. It is believed that the Jews were taken to a concentration camp. It is thus evident that the instances of burning down properties in Ephebe, the use of guards, and pursuance of the enemies in the novel reverberates in Hitler’s war against the Jews.

One fundamental question that defines the lives of Vorbis and Hitler is whether the two figures were able to reach the climax of their lives. Vorbis was just about to achieve self-realization goal. He was a visionary man who foresaw the coming of the eighth prophet of Omnia. Vorbis asserts to Brutha that “I see a great future for you in the Church eventually… the time of the eighth Prophet is coming. A time of expansion, and a great opportunity for those truly in the service of Om (Pratchett 108). It is evident that Vorbis’ attack of Ephebe was successful through tragic. He seized Ephebe and made it the diocese of Omnia. Vorbis prepares to execute Brutha the chosen one and when he is about to begin his greatest mission, Om descends of him with fury and kills him. It is thus evident that Vorbis designs and furnishes his own end and does not live his dreams. His legacy will fade quicker than he expected. His defiance follows him even after his death when his spirit hovers in the wilderness and refuses to cross over the desert.

Hitler who fought for Germany and German’s dominion over Europe also follows a similar path of self-destruction and like Vorbis fails to reach absolute self-realization. His like Vorbis was a leadership of destruction. There are two outcomes that help distinguish between good leadership and destructive leadership. A successful or good leadership results in the prosperity of other constituents. On the contrary, destructive leadership leads to the destruction of constituents including the weakening or organizations, loss of teams, the defeat of the army, and suffering of the societies (Thoroughgood et al. 1). According to Thoroughgood et al., leadership destruction is a primary aspect that defines Hitler's leadership. Thoroughgood et al lament the tragic events that befell Jonestown, Enron and Worldcom declaration of bankruptcy, the tragedies of the Catholic Church and the Penn State, and the abject poverty that hit Germany after the fall of Hitler (Thoroughgood et al. 1). Hitler, after conquering more than twenty European and African nation does not live to enjoy his victory because death befalls him like it did to Vorbis. He marries his life-long lover and both commit suicide barely a week after their marriage. In essence, Vorbis is a representation of Hitler since their rising to power and subsequent downfall is the most important and mystifying events in their respective lives.

Even more striking about the comparison of the fictional Vorbis and the real Hitler is not only their downfall but their spirits. Brutha dies and his spirit goes to the desert where a curved figure sat clutching to its knees (Pratchett 211). The figure was Vorbis'. Brutha's spirit is kind to reach to Vorbis' that they may close together to the land of judgment. However, the death speaks to Brutha that "he was a murderer… and a creator of murderers. A torturer. Without passion. Cruel. Callous. Compassionless (Pratchett 212). While these qualities about Vorbis are confirmed of Hitler by Friedman and Weiser (8) much is confirmed by Payne about the spirit of Hitler (Payne 2). Hitler's spirit still hovers abroad waiting to possess the spirit of the net president, prime minister or dictator (Payne 2). According to Payne, the Hitler's spirit will continue reigning in the world so as long as the absolute authority is continually exercised over the subjects. The modern technology and weapons of propaganda are extensively and persistently used to serve the interests of those in power. One aspect that cannot be ignored at this juncture is the aftermath of the fall of Vorbis in Omnia and its comparison to Hitler’s fall. The death of Vorbis and the taking over by Brutha saw the reformation of Omnia, Ephebe, and other surrounding nations. The hundred years meant for war became a hundred years of peace and were marked by the death of Brutha, a hundred years before the return of Om. Similarly, Hitler's death meant a new dawn for Germans and other nations across Europe. In particular, in 1960s there was a higher percentage in the social representations as shown by the West German’s official memos, academic assessments, and press reports (Fehrenbach 172). The post-war reconstruction depicted a stable and flourishing nation where the employers and bureaucracies were driven by the principles of social justice and economic stability (Ellwood 76).

In summary, a majority of literary works are an illumination of what happens in the society. Authors develop characters that are easy to associate with in the real life. Such is the case with Pritchett's Vorbis in the *Small Gods.* In this context, the character of Vorbis is compared to that of Hitler. Hitler is not an uncommon name among the mouths and minds of the historians, philosophers, scholars, and even the women, children, armies, and the Jews who faced untold suffering during his regime. Vorbis attack of Ephebe, the aftermath of the attack, his rising to power, to a greater extent, is symbolic to Hitler's attack on Poland and other European nations, his accession to power and descend, and the outcome of his fall.

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