

BY THE STRENGTH OF THEIR ENEMIES: THE VIRTUE OF THE  
STEREOTYPICAL ANTAGONIST IN TERRY PRATCHETT'S 'WITCHES' NOVELS

BY

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## Abstract

The comic fantasy Discworld novels of Terry Pratchett (1948-2015) are marked by their clear and insightful approaches to complex ethical issues. This has been noted in academic approaches from the beginning, with Farah Mendlesohn's chapter "Faith and Ethics" appearing in the early collection *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature* (2000) and many others since touching on the issues Pratchett raises. However, this thesis's investigation into the use of stereotypes in characterisation and development of the antagonist figures within the Discworld novels breaks new ground in mapping the course of Pratchett's approaches across six Discworld novels.

This argument will focus on the 'Witches' sequence of novels: *Equal Rites* (1987), *Wyrd Sisters* (1988), *Witches Abroad* (1991), *Lords and Ladies* (1992), *Maskerade* (1995), and *Carpe Jugulum* (1998). Unlike other sequences in the Discworld series, these novels have a strong metatextual focus on the structural components of narrative. In this context, stereotypes facilitate both the humour and the moral arguments of these novels. Signifiers of stereotypes invoke expectations which are as often thwarted as they are fulfilled and, while resulting in humour, this process also reflects on the place of the individual within the community, the nature of right and wrong, and how we as people control the narratives which define our lives and ourselves. In closely examining the role of antagonists in the development of an ethical thread through the sequence, I argue that the careful use of stereotypes in these texts serves as a key shorthand in engaging the reader in the philosophical bent of the novels.



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## **Dedication**

For my mother who taught me to create

For my father who taught me to wonder

And for my brothers who have taught me the value of both





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## Introduction

When Granny Weatherwax stands before the Count Magpyr and says, ““Only animals can’t help what they are”” (386), she gives voice to one of the fundamental underpinning concepts upon which the Discworld novels are based: we have the power to choose what we are. Michael Dirda claims in *Bound to Please* that, “Like earlier satirists, Pratchett is, at least in part, a moralist and, because of his vast readership, one with clout” (260). Terry Pratchett’s entertaining, parodic, and often satirical Discworld series tackles moral issues with deep gravitas that tightly juxtaposes with the lighter comedy of parodies and puns. The Discworld series’ referential humour and use of well-known stereotypes and tropes enhance the implied reader’s engagement with these issues, as the novels encourage critical thinking and questioning. His ‘Witches’ sequence of six novels published between 1987 and 1998 deals particularly with morality as it relates to narratives, and narratives as they relate to people. In focusing on the often confused morality evident in this sequence, *Equal Rites* (1987), *Wyrd Sisters* (1988), *Witches Abroad* (1991), *Lords and Ladies* (1992), *Maskerade* (1995), and *Carpe Jugulum* (1998), this thesis explores the connection between the polar extremes of good and evil, and in what terms these are defined or implied in the novels. Each of these novels engages with ethical issues through the interrogation of seemingly superficial stereotypes, while the fact that they span both Pratchett’s early apprentice work and his later, much more technically sophisticated writing means that the degree to which ethical concerns are explicit and implied in the texts can be compared across time.

Primarily, this thesis examines Pratchett’s use of stereotypes in the characterisation of the antagonists of the Witches sequence and the role they play in the development of the moral themes of each text. Exactly what is meant by ‘stereotype’, given that it serves as a key term for this thesis, requires some elaboration. Michael Pickering, in *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation* (2001), sets out to define the stereotype and takes forty-six pages to do so.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Pickering’s intensively

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<sup>1</sup> He explains: “In the first two chapters I want to ask what a stereotype is, what it consists of and in what ways it can be said, conceptually, to hang together in any coherent and consistent manner” (1). His in-depth study attempts to practically outline and engage with the issues of stereotyping and, in truth, the entire text is engaged in the task of definition.

specific delineation of stereotyping is deeply rooted in the sociocultural perspective, which focuses on social and cultural conditions in which stereotypes arise; their potential homogeneous application, which assumes stereotyping is applied without variation to a group; and the negative aspects of stereotyping, assuming that social harm must arise from stereotyping. This specificity of context renders it somewhat less useful to this thesis. In emphasising the divide between the concept of a category of thought and a stereotype, Pickering seeks to emphasise “stereotypes as elements of broad cultural practices and processes, carrying with them quite definite ideological views and values, [which] are not necessarily integral to our perceptual and cognitive organisation of the social worlds we live in” (3). The view of stereotypes as divorceable from the fundamental processes of cognition is unhelpful when discussing a text, as generalised consensus regarding meaning is integral to the worlds we create in fiction. Pickering and his peers who write about stereotypes as social/political scientists have distinctly different priorities to literary critics, and in dealing with characters within the boundaries of a text, the use of stereotypes to communicate should be recognised as both neutral and widely understood.

Lee J. Jussim, Clark R. McCauley, and Yueh-Ting Lee, in the introduction to *Stereotype Accuracy: Toward Appreciating Group Difference*, establish the difficulties in approaching stereotypes from a perspective which assumes their value. Rather than taking “the classic view of stereotypes as negative, inaccurate, and irrational” (Jussim et al. *Stereotype Accuracy* 19), this discussion will endeavour to take a more even-handed approach. A stereotype for the purposes of this thesis is a widely held assumption, expectation, or belief about a group of people, or type of person, or situation.

There are issues, of course, with proving in any definitive way which stereotypes are ‘widely held’ and such proof is, again, beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, the widespread knowledge of the stereotypes that appear is accepted when it is implied by the text itself. A rather straightforward example of this occurs in *Equal Rites* when Hilda Goatfounder’s stall is introduced and the narrator remarks, “It was quite amazing that a stall so many people didn’t know was there should be quite so popular” (75). The joke lies in the implied reader’s lack of amazement, and their recognition of the stereotypical behaviours of people visiting a sex shop. The joke is extended when, after a description of the stall’s velvet shadowed and perfumed interior, Hilda remarks, “‘Can’t stand the dark and fug myself [...] but the customers expect it. You know how it is’” (76). The expectations of the reader and the customer are conflated in the subtext here, as

stereotypes are imagined as generating a sort of false reality rather than resulting from reality. In this case, as in many others, the reader's understanding of a number of stereotypes is assumed by the text and this is evident in how the text generates its humour or meaning.

Novels assist in the dissemination of stereotypes insofar as they help to encode the reader's own "Theory of Mind", a term used "to describe our ability to explain people's behaviour in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires" (Liza Zunshine *Why We Read Fiction* 164; 6). While work on genre and wider literary theory has some applicable overlaps with the study of literary stereotypes, many of the texts specifically about stereotypes in fiction concentrate on the negative aspects of stereotypes and stereotyping. Critical approaches in the field are predominantly postcolonial and/or feminist and predominantly concentrate on disadvantaged groups harmed by stereotyping. For instance, Marjorie McCormick's *Mothers in the English Novel* (1991) is largely concerned with tracing the development and subsequent subversion of a sexist imagining of the Mother figure in English novels over time; Peter Edgerly Firchow's *The Death of a German Cousin* (1986) traces a shift in English literature towards a negative stereotypical depiction of Germans over a thirty year period; and J. A. Mangan's "Images for Confident Control: Stereotypes in Imperial Discourse" (2010) observes the establishment of native and imperial stereotypes within discourse during the second stage of British Imperialism and the negative impact these had on colonised cultures. Perhaps most telling is the Index entry for stereotypes in Lois Tyson's *Using Critical Theory* which is divided into the sub-categories "classist", "colonialist", "heterosexist", "racist", and "sexist" (347).

As this thesis undertakes an exploration of stereotype use in the context of the meaning-making relationship between text and reader, a different approach is necessary. Fiction, in a broad sense, has its own specific stereotypes, and each genre its own in turn. The term 'stock character' which is defined by M. H. Abrams as "character types that occur repeatedly in a particular literary genre, and so are recognisable as part of the conventions of the form" (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 200) can in certain cases be used interchangeably with stereotype. However, given the nature of Pratchett's intertextuality and the genre complications which take place in the texts this thesis focuses on, the broader term 'stereotype' is more versatile. Furthermore, where 'stock character' strongly focuses on the authorial understanding of genre, 'stereotype' has the advantage of suggesting a wider field of knowledge and experience on the part of the reader. Readers,

this thesis argues, bring to the text not only an understanding of a particular genre and its stock characters, but also knowledge of a wide variety of socio-cultural backgrounds which the text taps into. In regarding stereotypes as a key point of engagement between text and reader, particularly as a shorthand in characterisation, I explore the usefulness of such generalizations to a close set of comic-fantasy texts endeavouring to make a moral argument.

The wide range of allusions, references, and stereotypes that Pratchett uses form the basis of much of the humour in his novels. Most of these fall under the category of “white knowledge”, a term Pratchett used to refer to knowledge that accumulates unintentionally and works like white noise in the background (Breebart and Kew, sec. 52; par. 1). In this respect it is much like genre, which John Frow describes as “a universal dimension of textuality” (*Genre* 2) and argues that the generic framework “lies latent in a shadowy region from which we draw it as we need it; it is information that we may not know we know, and that is not directly available for scrutiny” (*Genre* 83). The comic-fantasy genre in which the Discworld novels are primarily written has a strong relationship with stereotypes as the comic categories (parody, satire, and many, many short form jokes in particular), depend on the shared cultural knowledge of their readers or audiences. Readers of these novels, then, are prepared by their expectations of genre to engage with stereotypes as indicators of meaning.

Genre, allusion, and stereotype all generate meaning by triggering the reader’s own knowledge and assumptions. Implication in a comic text, however, cannot be regarded in the same light as it would in a ‘straight’ text. In the reader’s efforts to expect the unexpected twist, they engage in a deeper negotiation with the depth and breadth of their knowledge sets. Facilitating and mediating the boundaries of meaning are textual cues that Frow describes as “metacommunications” (115) which are “*about* the text and how to read it” (115). In relation to this, I will be discussing what I term ‘narrative control’ or ‘control of the narrative’, by which I refer to the metacommunications which highlight a particular figure’s power over interpretive aspects of a text or implied text. In *Equal Rites*, for instance, the narrator refers back to an earlier point in their own narration, saying, “it has already been revealed that light on the Discworld travels slowly” (131) and this reminds the reader of the act of reading and the part the narrator plays in describing the story. While this clearly falls under the metacommunication Frow describes, in later novels particular characters discuss, enact, and take charge of these

cues. In *Witches Abroad* Lily Weatherwax's power comes from feeding fairy tale stories, and Granny Weatherwax explains:

“The stories collect round here because here's where they find a way out. She *feeds* 'em. Look, she don't want your Ella to marry that Duc man just because of politics or something. That's just an . . . explanation. 'S not a *reason*. She wants the girl to marry the prince because that's what the story demands.” (197)

Lily's manipulation of the world around her extends to the stereotypes the townsfolk must fit, and her diabolical rule is based on attaining the power to dictate the genre of the narratives around her. Her narrative control forms the metacommunication that tells the reader they are dealing with fairy tale retellings, but it also functions within the story as an aspect of her power. Likewise, when the witches act overtly as witches they exercise their control of narrative through conscious performance of stereotype.

Pratchett's tendency to draw attention to narrative structures and features in general, and to stereotypes specifically, supports John Morrel's claim in *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor* (2009) that “for all the enjoyment that humor brings, humor is typically not *about* enjoyment, but about problems” (51). Stereotypes are rarely humorous for all that they can function as a comic device; when a stereotype reaches the point of being funny in and of itself, it is a caricature. Instead, stereotypes are one of the building blocks of humour and are more versatile than caricatures. The fools in their guild are miserable but the sad clown stereotype is not simply played for laughs, and the Fool in *Wyrd Sisters* is a sympathetic figure. Using broad-brush stereotypes, alongside genre tropes and references to intertexts, allows these novels to quickly present situational humour and parodic gags. However, the same structures are also important for the development of satirical critiques of and reflections on socio-cultural realities. Gideon Haberkorn in “Debugging the Mind: The Rhetoric of Humor and the Poetics of Fantasy” argues that humour plays an important role in connecting the reader to the arguments of the text, and in “Seriously Relevant: Parody, Pastiche and Satire in Terry Pratchett's Discworld Novels” he connects this to the referential forms of humour, arguing that:

Instead of avoiding serious engagement with reality, the novels often encourage a playful and critical attitude towards texts and tropes. Instead of making light of subjects like prejudices and xenophobia, they often weigh in with effective satire, exposing and ridiculing human stupidity and dishonesty. (150)

Building on these ideas, this thesis engages particularly with the more serious themes underlying the humour in Pratchett's work. Jack Zipes, in his book *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*, states:

Let us not delude ourselves: every fairy tale and every work of fantasy written and published in our times is a metaphorical reflection about real conditions in our own societies, even when it pretends to be about a distant past or realm that has never existed.  
(137)

Pratchett's often humorous metaphoric reflections grapple with issues of fitting into a community, the nature of right and wrong, the concept of duty, and empowerment through narratives, all of which remain very persistent and real concerns.

Satire might have a sharper edge than parody, but both strategies are difficult to quantify. The prevalent use of humour and positivity in comic texts has influenced their reception throughout history, and as 'light' entertainment, humorous texts are often dismissed by critics in favour of 'weightier' texts which delve into violent emotions or estrange the reader from the human experience, but such dismissal ignores the nature of this 'lightness' which endeavours to connect the reader to the idea of a shared perspective. Morreal argues that humour's "emotional disengagement promotes rationality and mental flexibility" (140) and that "comedy fosters a more rational, critical, and creative attitude [than tragedy,] that serves us better in the modern world" (141). In using stereotypes within this context of mental flexibility, Pratchett complicates the relationship between the reader and the text through the manipulation of assumptions. He simultaneously relies on stereotypes and questions their unthinking use.

Stereotypes are often used in the presentation of antagonist figures, who generally have less space for character development in a wide variety of texts and media. Despite their recognisability, these stereotypes cannot be considered homogenous as they remain subject to social, political, and cultural pressures. In *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Nina Auerbach points out that, "The alacrity with which vampires shape themselves to personal and national moods is an adaptive trait their apparent uniformity masks" (5). The connection between terror and sociocultural or political shifts which are marked by the fluctuation of stereotypical antagonists is explored in *Terror and Text: Representing Political Violence in Literature and the Visual Arts*. The collection's "Introduction", written by the editors Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Mark Williams, proposes that:



Patterns of violence are not exclusive to abstract political structures but are deeply embedded in social behaviour. [...] Acknowledging this imbrication of violence in the social has serious implications for the work of artists and writers who are engaged in the difficult task of representing evil. In the cult of violence as we experience it today, the question of the responsibility of the writer and artist to social being is inescapable, yet there is no simple way to reintroduce the moral value systems of previous times. (23)

While this thesis focuses particularly on the usefulness of stereotypes in Pratchett's novels, this is not intended to erase or deny that stereotypes can and do damage social relationships between many groups or sets within society. However, Pratchett's antagonists rarely reflect marginalized groups and when they do, as is the case in *Maskerade*, the text's discussion of stereotyping and harm highlights the dangers of stereotypes. This is in keeping with the satirical endeavour of his humour and is an integral part of the discussion of ethics found within each novel.

Pratchett's antagonists generally conform to the structural expectations of the genre: they plot, and rant, and are spectacularly thwarted. However, they often also challenge complacency and ideological laziness. Often the antagonists of the Witches sequence are obsessed with appearance and controlling their sociocultural appearance through narrative control. In *Witches Abroad* Lily Weatherwax's desire to control the narrative surrounding herself and her position reflects modern relationships between political figures and the media. In *Carpe Jugulum*, the Count's New World Order contains echoes of lip-service reforms to harmful business practices made across the past two centuries. These novels outline the dangers that those in control of stereotyping and their own image/narrative can pose and the ethical confusion they can instil. That is not to say that this thesis will be able to find a clear answer to the ethical uncertainties Pratchett draws to the forefront of his novels; the novels do not attempt to provide a definitive ethical schema for the reader to unthinkingly embrace. Rather, the construction of Pratchett's antagonists provides an account of the subtleties of evil against which the nature of goodness can be speculatively defined.

Ethical arguments and difficult moralities emerge in Pratchett's novels through the challenge of the antagonists, as well as through the satirical and parodic humour. Farah Mendlesohn claims in "Faith and Ethics" (2000) that "[t]he crucial issue which underpins the moral schema of Pratchett's work is *choice* and thus the role of the

individual” (145). Her discussion of the relationship between choice and the individual are foundational in the investigation of ethics here, and I endeavour to build on them in two ways. Firstly, I endeavour to investigate the relationship of the individual with their community. Secondly, I expand the focus from the comic protagonists onto the antagonist and investigate the relationship between the choices of these two parties. Mendlesohn’s argument focuses on achieving a broad understanding of Pratchett’s ethics; other critics have since pointed towards specific philosophic and ethical concerns presented in the novels. Victoria Martin’s analyses, which I mention later, fit into this category, along with Sawyer’s and Croft’s, as they all seek to define certain ethical elements of Pratchett’s work. In attempting to create a rigid and clearly defined set of classifications for his characters, these critics seem to encounter similar pitfalls as those who in the study of genre attempt to draw boundaries between the mutable sets of genre. Avoiding some of these problems, a number of scholars have preferred to look into the more nuanced ethics of choice in the Discworld in the light of certain philosophies. Dietrich Schotte’s “Plato, the Witch, and the Cave: Granny Weatherwax and the Moral Problem of Paternalism”, and Jennifer Jill Fellows’s “Categorically not Cackling: The Will, Moral Fictions, and Witchcraft” figure most notably in the collection of essays *Philosophy and Terry Pratchett* (2014). Of these, Jennifer Jill Fellows, in “Categorically not Cackling: The Will, Moral Fictions, and Witchcraft”, purports that Pratchett’s witches depict an answer to problems in Kant and Nietzsche’s respective ethical philosophies: namely that Kant’s ethical framework relies on belief in God and an afterlife, while Nietzsche’s “new philosophers” struggle with nihilism in their isolation. Fellows claims that “Pratchett’s witches achieve the extraordinary feat of anchoring morality and affirming human dignity without recourse to the divine, and with a steady awareness that both morality and dignity are fictions” (224). While this argument in part relies on *Carpe Jugulum* – specifically Granny Weatherwax’s assertion that ““Sin, young man, is when you treat people as things. Including yourself”” (302) – the majority relies on the clearer depiction of the witch’s role in the community which appears in the Tiffany Aching novels.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Granny’s statement in *Carpe Jugulum* defines sin, but strongly suggests Kant’s philosophy, as explained by Carl Wellman in *Morals and Ethics*, that: “One ought always to treat people with respect, to treat them as ends-in-themselves and never as means only” (45). Wellman reflects that this means “the agent ought to respect his or her own humanity as well as that of other persons” (45). It is little wonder that Pratchett’s ethical stance is often considered Kantian.

The sequence of novels discussed in this thesis provided the basis for the later Tiffany Aching series which has been marketed towards younger readers: *The Wee Free Men* (2003), *A Hat Full of Sky* (2004), *Wintersmith* (2006), *I Shall Wear Midnight* (2010), and *The Shepherd's Crown* (2015). Thus far, the Tiffany Aching novels have been subject to a wider range of discussion than the older adult sequence, though in both cases much of the discussion of Pratchett's characterisation has focused almost exclusively on protagonists, with most engaging with an ongoing debate about the extent to which Pratchett may or may not be considered a feminist author. Rather than joining these debates directly, this thesis provides a supplementary and complementary discussion of the antagonists with a detailed investigation of how stereotypes are broadly used in these novels which might provide further fodder for the work on feminist theory.

Pratchett's antagonists include a mad duke, a fairy godmother, an opera ghost, elves, and vampires, all figures for which an image might swiftly spring to mind, but that are rather unlikely to be encountered in real life. While some of these figures are stereotypical villains, others are more commonly imagined as beneficent. For this reason, some distinction should be made between the antagonist and the villain. Both are figures who work against the protagonists, but here the distinction lies in the moral stance adopted by the text. An antagonist's morality might be questionable, but they are not necessarily bad, while a villain is distinctly evil (though they might have a 'redeeming' quality). The monster, on the other hand, is distinguished by its removal from human measures of morality. These simplistic distinctions can be applied to *Carpe Jugulum* in which we have a group of antagonists. Of these the Count is both a villain and the primary antagonist. His son Vlad operates in a liminal space, but the events of the novel condemn him as a villain (though not in the same degree as his father). However, the old Count, who overtly plays the role of both antagonist and monster in implied encounters outside the text, is not a villain. These rough categories are complicated within the novels themselves as Pratchett makes use of stereotypes to reflect on the ways in which evil can manifest.

The nature of evil itself, and of ethics and morality in general, requires some expansion before we embark on a search for it. Alain Badiou in *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* defines evil in relation to good, asserting: "Evil is only possible through an encounter with the Good" (91). Jan Sokol, in *Ethics, Life and Institutions* provides a general approach, stating "that for which we strive is good, that which we do not care for is bad, and that which we fear, or which is abhorrent or[sic] to us, is evil"

(138), and this is further developed to “show that genuinely moral evil is in fact human evil, evil committed by people. It is of no consequence whether it is violent and bloody or cold and calculating” (148-9). These two definitions taken in conjunction encompass the acts which constitute evil in Pratchett’s work (though some flexibility regarding ‘human’ is necessary). The statements from Granny Weatherwax in *Carpe Jugulum* that I used at the opening of this thesis combines these, as it accuses the Count of leveraging an idea of nature which ignores his ability to choose and makes a stark comparison between Granny Weatherwax the Borrower and the vampiric Count. And yet, while this confrontation and Granny’s claim about the nature of sin both serve as significant markers in the moral landscape of these texts, the context in which they are embedded and the cultural ephemera therein provide complication and nuance which blur the edges of these apparently stark divisions.

Research into Pratchett’s treatment of morality remains somewhat scarce, though the field of Pratchettian studies grows steadily. The field as a whole is comprised almost entirely of articles, collections of essays, theses, and less formal works such as *Folklore of Discworld* (2008). There is currently only one longer published academic work by a single author on Pratchett’s novels – Aleksander Rzyman’s *The Intertextuality of Terry Pratchett’s Discworld as a Major Challenge for the Translator* (2017), which considers the issue of translating novels which are so heavily referential. The broad range of topics tackled in shorter academic analyses of the Discworld novels reflects Pratchett’s intertextual approach in their interdisciplinary variety. However, the wide scope of Pratchett’s oeuvre and the relatively small pool of articles related to the Witches sequence mean that my thesis predominantly relies upon the close analysis of the texts I have chosen supplemented by research into the intertexts and genres that Pratchett draws upon.

I do not mean to understate the value of the analyses of Pratchett’s work by fans and academics alike. As Pratchett’s novels are immensely popular, there are numerous fan-made annotation databases and analyses available – especially on the internet – and these constitute a valuable resource. Furthermore, there are a number of excellent analyses of the novels online contributed to a multitude of projects and sites by members of the fan community. Two very influential and sophisticated analyses by Victoria Martin, published on the internet in 1997 and 1998 – “Analysis: In Defence of Niceness” and “Analysis: The Dangers of Goodness” – are of particular importance to the critical understanding of ethics in the Witches sequence. Martin draws a nuanced link between the moral schema in Discworld and that of the Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine

musical *Into the Woods* (1986), and suggests a number of ways in which we can read the ‘Nice, Good, Right’ distinction evident in Pratchett’s work. She does not appear to have published her third article which was planned to address issues of ‘Right’ in Discworld. Nonetheless, her work has been referred to by several prominent critics. Andy Sawyer builds on her ideas in “The Librarian and His Domain” (2000) to assert that there is a ‘Clever, Skilful, Knowledgeable’ distinction in characterisations functioning in parallel to Martin’s ‘Nice, Good, Right’. More recently, presumably in response to the missing third part of Martin’s work, Janet Brennan Croft published “Nice, Good, or Right: Faces of the Wise Women in Terry Pratchett’s ‘Witches’ Novels” (2008) which addresses and readdresses the issues raised by Martin.<sup>3</sup>

While a critic must take care with fan discussions of Pratchett’s work due to the often personal tone and lack of academic peer review, some scholarly publications also have issues. A major limitation of the field currently is the scholarly negligence apparent in many of the articles and chapters. Failure to recognise elements of the text across novels can be understandable – there are forty-seven novels and short stories – however, some academics, who attempt to trace specific trends across the series ignore evidence contradicting their hypotheses. Kevin Guilfooy, in “Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy on the Discworld” (2014), contends that since no one is shown to die penniless in the streets, Pratchett’s Anhk-Morpork is not attuned to the social costs of the ‘Libertarianism’ he ‘advocates’ (123). His assertion that the depiction of poverty in the Discworld novels is not ‘convincing’ enough ignores a substantial number of references to poverty – for instance, a poor girl dying in the snow in *Hogfather* (1996) (134-5; 138-9) – and brushes over several similar instances, dismissing them as unimportant. Kristin Noone’s article “Shakespeare in Discworld: Witches, Fantasy, and Desire” is also notable for its blunders in citing Pratchett, in conjunction with taking a great deal more care with the citation of Shakespeare’s texts. This is indicative of the general sloppiness apparent in a concerning amount of Pratchett criticism. By neglecting to adequately address key points, or take care with Pratchett’s texts, these scholars lead those who are familiar with the novels to

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<sup>3</sup> However, in doing so, Croft fails to respect her source. For instance, she misuses Martin’s definition of ‘Nice’ by ignoring the distinction the fan analysis draws between how ‘Nice’ might be defined in *Into the Woods* and how ‘Nice’ appears in Pratchett’s work. This results in Croft using a definition of ‘Nice’ which Martin had already demonstrated to be unsuitable for Pratchett’s work, which in turn results in an academic erasure of several nuances evident in the earlier fan publication.

doubt their conclusions, while the unfamiliar are given an inaccurate impression of Pratchett's work.

Fantasy as a literary genre is not always highly regarded by academic critics and there are suggestions of anxiety within the field regarding Pratchett's position as a genre writer. John Clute in "Coming of Age" (2000), in an attempt to reconcile the literary and genre elements of Pratchett's work, stresses his role as a comic author, rather than a fantasy author, and thereby his place within the prestigious history of comic literature. Gideon Haberkorn refuted Clute's argument in "Debugging the Mind: The Rhetoric of Humour and the Poetics of Fantasy" (2014), demonstrating the value of modern fantasy and its particular brand of realism, whilst still acknowledging the humour in Pratchett's writing.<sup>4</sup> In a similar vein comes Timothy Farr's article "The Subject of Ents, Entwines, and Huorns in the Old Forest" (1995), which points to Tolkien's influence on Discworld, as well as Pratchett's comic treatment of the fantasy genre. Other critics, such as Sylwia Dżereń-Głowacka, Andrew Butler, and William C. Spruiell focus on the particulars of Pratchett's humour and the language he uses to create humour within his novels.<sup>5</sup> Where these scholars trace Pratchett's comedy, others trace the roots of his fantasy to fairy tales and folk lore. Of the work regarding Pratchett and fairy tale, Kevin Paul Smith's chapter on Pratchett in his *The Postmodern Fairytale* (2007) is especially worthy of note as it investigates Pratchett's fairy tale inversions in terms of their concern with dystopias and their relationship to feminist revisions. Pratchett himself, in conjunction with Jacqueline Simpson published, *Folklore of Discworld* (2008), detailing the folkloric roots of his work. While genre intersects with stereotype at the level of the stock character, it is not my intention to define the limits of Pratchett's use of genre itself. My thesis will engage with this issue only insofar as it is necessary in order to discuss stereotypes.

Though the witches are closely linked to the ethical schema of the novels, discussions of their characterisation, more often than not, concentrate how these characters reflect and comment on women. Rebecca Robinson and Caroline Webb, for instance, both focus on how the witch characters explicitly interact with witch stereotypes and significant intertexts whilst passively functioning as revisions of earlier sources by

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<sup>4</sup> Haberkorn's article is also of note for the quality of his research and argumentation.

<sup>5</sup> In chapters titled "Imagery in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*" (2004), "Theories of Humour" (2000), and "Counting Dangerous Beans: Pratchett, Style, and the Utility of Premodified Bits" (2014) respectively.

Pratchett, and both note the ‘Maiden, Mother, Crone’ or ‘goddess’ structure of the central three witches in many of the books.<sup>6</sup> Other scholars argue that the positioning of the witches in traditionally feminine service roles is fundamentally sexist, as Karen Sayer does in “The Witches” (2000). Sayer is also concerned with elements of social performance, a concern which has been drawn out further in more recent articles. Lian Sinclair, in “Magical Genders: The Gender(s) of Witches in the Historical Imagination of Terry Pratchett’s Discworld” (2015), even goes so far as to suggest that an essential aspect of the witches’ power is their ability to consciously negotiate their performance of gender. More moderate negotiations of this idea can be found in Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario’s “The Charity of Witches: Watching the Edges in Terry Pratchett’s Tiffany Aching Novels” (2016), where it is argued that the gendered conception of women’s work and the ‘good angel of the house’ are undermined by the witches’ pragmatism and residual hints of wickedness. While this thesis does not undertake a feminist critique – partially due to there being a great deal of work already done on the matter – locating the witches from an ethical standpoint is a consequence of analysing their antagonist counterparts.

Despite the dependence of any protagonist on their antagonists, there has been very little research into the antagonists of Terry Pratchett’s Witches novels – likely due to the fact that they are less prominent figures across the novels than the witches. Sayer makes some mention of Black Aliss and the vampires of *Carpe Jugulum*, but the focus is on their illumination of Granny’s character, and the shape their antagonism takes in and of itself is not given much consideration. Other references to antagonists, or other characters, in current criticism generally follow along this vein – only referring to the antagonist in order to describe the ethical standpoint of the witches, but rarely to contrast with it. The only antagonist granted any particular significance by multiple scholars is Lily Weatherwax, and this attention is at least partially due to her being Granny Weatherwax’s sister. Moreover, Lily is a fairy godmother, and scholars chiefly interested in modern retellings of fairy tales find her positioning as an antagonist significant. Perhaps the best discussion of Lily comes in Jessica Tiffin’s chapter on *Witches Abroad*

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<sup>6</sup> In Robinson’s thesis “‘A Different Kind of Witch’: Rewriting the Witch in Terry Pratchett’s Discworld” (2016) and Webb’s article “‘Change the Story, Change the World’: Witches/Crones as Heroes in Novels by Terry Pratchett and Diana Wynne Jones” (2006) respectively.

in her book *Marvellous Geometry: Narrative and Metafiction in Modern Fairy Tale* (2009), where she discusses Lily's dehumanisation of others and the novel's overall critique of fairy tale. Veronica Schanoes, in discussing the place of mirror magic in fairy tale revisions, also investigates Lily's place at the centre of the fairy tales, and argues that Lily is an important reader/writer figure (2009). There are a few passing references to Lily, of particular note, in Martin's argument about goodness, in which she warns against taking Lily at her word that she is 'Good'. This is taken up by Croft in her article on the same matter, who argues that Lily demonstrates a negative 'Good' (though Croft fails to address the reliability issues that Martin points to).

The other antagonists have received even less direct attention. While Jacqueline Simpson, in "On the Ambiguity of Elves" (2011), has delved into the folklore background of elves and uses Pratchett as an example of a modern author employing their negative characteristics, and Graham Harvey, in "Discworld and Otherworld: The Imaginative use of Fantasy Literature Among Pagans" (2006), has alleged that the elves in Pratchett are not morally bad, just bad for humans, these discussions still leave much to be investigated. Perhaps the most perceptive article and the closest to my own area of interest is Andrew Rayment's "'Feigning to Feign': Pratchett and the Maskerade" (2014). His focus is on the elements of performance and disguise which he finds to be a major preoccupation in the Discworld novels. His chapter mentions the position of theatre at the edge of things, but only refers in passing to the opera ghost. He does move into a discussion of the Vampires, power, and presentation, but the majority of his focus is, again, on the protagonists of the stories, particularly Granny Weatherwax.

In engaging with the antagonists of these novels in more depth, I hope to demonstrate the practical benefits of stereotype use in Pratchett's novels and to provide useful insight, which can be applied to both the study of Pratchett's other characters and novels, and to the study of literary stereotypes in general. The first chapter discusses the early novel *Equal Rites* and focuses particularly on the metatextual aspects which, I argue, serve to mitigate the potential harm of reiterating a problematic form in order to provide a humorous commentary on it. Pervasive sexism, which has been a longstanding issue within the fantasy genre, is the closest the novel comes to a central antagonist, but Granny Weatherwax, Treatle, Cutangle, and others act out this sexism as minor antagonists and blocking characters over the course of the novel. I argue that the careless imposition of these sexist views, reinforced by cruel laughter, characterises evil within the novel as something pervasive and stagnant which must be acted against.



Chapter two moves to a discussion of *Wyrd Sisters*, a novel that draws its metatextual energy in to focus on Shakespearean tragedy. This text is the first in the sequence with a central cast of three witches and, unlike *Equal Rites* which makes an ambitious grasp towards social justice, the moral arguments here are overshadowed by the travesty, parody, and allusive humour. The balance of the comic and the gothically tragic creates a parodic undoing of usual measures of moral action, and Felmet's failure to commit to the narrative he began in killing King Verence I becomes a greater sin than his regicide itself. The reframing of the tragic hero as the antagonist works in conjunction with this shift in moral weight, and the redundancy this lends to the half-familiar speeches parodying *Macbeth* and *Titus Andronicus* makes for a doubtful appraisal of the cultural weight of these famous texts. This chapter further explores the use of destiny as a measure of narrative control of the future consciously used by the characters in conjunction with Felmet's use of the play as a means to control the narrative of history. As the witches themselves become uncertain figures in the delineation of ethics primarily through their questionable treatment of Tomjon, they threaten to tidy the ending of the novel to the point of returning the kingdom to the same state of crisis it reached under Felmet. Where the evil of this is somewhat muted due to the protagonists' status within the novel, the narrative does take pains to condemn the restriction of choice, and the next novel, *Witches Abroad*, takes this further.

Chapter three sees *Witches Abroad* as retreading with clearer steps the problematic framing of narrative control (or destiny). The antagonist Lily Weatherwax overtly plays the role of the fairy godmother of fairy tale as she feeds stories to give herself power. However, she behaves simultaneously as the wicked queen stereotype and her fairy tales are condemned as tyrannical by the protagonists. The stories the witches encounter on their journey to the kingdom of Genua exemplify the dangers of unreflective narratives while the witches reflect on the impossibility of 'happily ever after'. Lily's repeating mirror motif has three important foils in Granny Weatherwax, Magrat, and Mrs Gogol, and I argue these three figures provide an answer to the novel's central question of the morality of stories.

Unreflective narratives are further discussed in chapter four as the elves who are the antagonists in *Lords and Ladies* can deceive and disguise their amoral nature due to the way they have been depicted in stories. The dual stereotyping surrounding these elves stems from literary and folkloric sources that the reader is likely to recognise, while the continual use of the house cat as an analogy provides an alternate familiar amorality

which can be widely understood. Due to the amorality of the antagonists in this text, the majority of this chapter focuses on the ways in which the witch protagonists respond to the threat the elves pose. The three distinct storylines which unfold, each following a different witch, draw out distinct moral issues embedded in the relationship between an individual and their community, and in the ways in which we control the stories that we pass on.

Chapter five traces the development of the concern about the individual and community in *Maskerade*, the setting of which is distinctly different to those of the previous novels. This novel makes a strong return to the stages seen in *Wyrd Sisters* and *Lords and Ladies*, while its concern with narrative control returns to the depths explored in *Witches Abroad*. My analysis examines how the stereotypes of Salzella and Walter Plinge are reshaped over the course of the novel with particular concern for the context of the detective genre and the construction of moral choice. I also discuss the way that Christine works as a minor antagonist as Agnes's 'friend' and how her success at the end of the novel subverts an otherwise neat conclusion.

Finally, chapter six investigates the use of the shifting vampire stereotype in conjunction with class and commercial stereotypes to describe the evils of *Carpe Jugulum*'s vampire antagonists. I argue that the Count aligns himself with progress and science while simultaneously fitting the earliest stereotype of the vampire in English Literature. Furthermore, his re-branding of his family as 'civilized' and 'benevolent' exaggerates a metaphoric connection between the events of the novel and the false positivity of corporate re-branding and PR schemes. This results in a pitting of progress against tradition, reversing the value judgements made in *Equal Rites* to celebrate old truths over flashy lies. The relationship between Vlad and Agnes which employs tropes from the vampire love story, meanwhile, highlights the problematic and exploitative qualities of romanticised relationships. It is in reference to these antagonists that Granny confronts her choices and clearly defines sin. It is in confronting and defeating the Count that the Quite Reverend Mightily Oats has his epiphany.

The antagonists in these novels, drawn from and drawing on stereotypes, are crucial to the reader's engagement with the moral problems at the crux of each novel. In the resurrection of the old monster and the defeat of the villain in *Carpe Jugulum*, Pratchett reflects on the importance of overcoming the antagonists we imagine in fiction. The path that this thesis takes through these novels endeavours to enlighten the ways in which we imagine what we must overcome.



## Chapter One – Men Would Be an Island: *Equal Rites*

It is disputed whether *Equal Rites* (1987) should be considered a part of the Witches sequence: only Granny Weatherwax appears in it, and then only in a largely supporting role. *Wyrd Sisters* (1988), the focus of the next chapter, is the first novel in the sequence that takes a trio of witches as its protagonists and clearly sets the tone of the sequence as a whole. Yet *Equal Rites* remains relevant when critically engaging with the sequence because it does sketch out the social issues that Pratchett repeatedly explores. As an early Discworld novel, written before Pratchett became a full-time novelist, *Equal Rites* is a prototype novel for the sequence and explores the relationship between an individual and a community, the twinned concepts of responsibility and duty, and the insidious power of narrative, all of which are developed more fully in the later novels. At times, this exploration is awkward and unfocused, the parody blunt, and the narrative timeline blurry, but the evolution of these concerns over the course of the sequence makes this novel an apposite starting point for this thesis. As Tansy Rayner Roberts notes in the opening of her *Pratchett's Women: Unauthorised Essays*, “Terry Pratchett is one of those writers that you can see noticeably improving and honing his craft as he goes” (1). The craftsmanship here, while rougher, still illuminates how Pratchett establishes his witches and guides his readers.

Eskarina, the protagonist of *Equal Rites*, is a girl who was given a wizard's staff as a baby and who must learn how to be a wizard despite the gendered expectations which have ordered magic on the Discworld throughout its history. The titular pun ties this quest for equal access to learning to magical rites, and Unseen University, a renowned institution for the study of wizardry, conflates academia and wizardry to emphasise the satirical endeavour of the novel. For all the Bildungsroman-esque bent of the story and the youth of its protagonist, *Equal Rites* is not a story written for children or teenagers; *Equal Rites* is an exploration of gender roles in literature and a critique of deeply embedded misogyny and sexism within the fantasy genre and wider society. In part, it borrows from the initial trilogy of Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea novels (1968–1972) in its use of fantasy tropes, but the broad applicability of these tropes should not be overlooked. Both Le Guin and Pratchett draw from and work against a wide and varied backdrop of fantasy and fantastical literature, and the

critique in *Equal Rites* encompasses more of this backdrop than appears in *Earthsea*.<sup>7</sup> Rather, the novel is more focused on the stereotypes common within the fantasy genre which uphold and reinforce the flawed structures in wider society.

In primarily working to expose the underlying social structures which complicate Esk's approach to wizardry, the novel does not have just one character who acts as the primary antagonist. Even the creatures from the Dungeon Dimension fail to appear in a compelling manner, being, instead, largely metaphorical (their manifestation at the end of the novel reveals that they lack structure outside the minds of others). The novel leans heavily on the reader's understanding of social cues and arrangements, while its dependence on familiar structures of the *Bildungsroman*, a form of literature that conventionally takes young men as a subject, embeds the point the novel makes about the nature of empowerment and the exhaustion of combatting intangible social systems into the structure of the text. The increasing difficulty of the challenges Esk faces can be viewed as a consequence of the developmental and travel-focused narrative even as it makes the point that sexism is widespread and pervasive. Pratchett indulges in a similar progression in the later novel *Witches Abroad*, which features a major travel sequence, but this progression in *Equal Rites* lacks the central anchor of a physical antagonist who can be confronted and defeated. As a result, Esk pushes against ideas rather than people and, in a way, sexism itself is her primary antagonist.

Nevertheless, various characters represent sexism through their attitudes and actions over the course of the novel as they block Esk's progress. In inhibiting Esk's development, they outline the challenges facing young women attempting to enter a traditionally male profession. The stereotypical aspects of these characters facilitate the impression that the attitudes of the characters are representative of various social groups. Granny Weatherwax, Treatle, and Cutangle are the most prominent of these figures, and this chapter considers how they are constructed, taking them as something of a starting point for this thesis' investigation into the significance of the stereotypical antagonist.

Sexism as a thematic concern in Pratchett's novels, including *Equal Rites*, has been noted by a number of critics, many of whom tackle the question of whether or not Pratchett

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that Le Guin, in her later work, also critiques the sexist assumptions of the early novels in her series.

might be considered a feminist author. *Equal Rites*, however, has only rarely been more than noted in passing. Tansy Rayner Roberts remarks that it is “the least interesting book that Pratchett ever wrote about witches” (6). This dismissal might explain why, elsewhere, critics focused on the witches and their womanhood prefer to look to the other novels. Nonetheless, Lian Sinclair highlights the value of the novel’s premise:

By raising this question in a universe more patriarchal than our own, the very nature of gender as an imaginary historical construct is raised in ways that might not be possible or at least more complicated in our own world. (11)

Sinclair’s four paragraphs on *Equal Rites* in “Magical Genders: The Gender of Witches in the Historical Imagination of Terry Pratchett” refute the validity of an essentialist feminist reading of the novel but are limited in scope due to the ambition of the article as a whole. Croft, on the other hand, downplays in passing the significance of *Equal Rites* in “The Education of a Witch: Tiffany Aching, Hermione Granger, and Gendered Magic in Discworld and Potterworld”, giving a brief summary of the novel, and concluding: “[h]owever, at the time of this writing she has never appeared in any other Discworld book” (132).<sup>8</sup> When confronted with a range of other characters who appear in multiple novels, not to mention the tidier Tiffany Aching novels which also deal with magical education, it is little wonder that *Equal Rites* has received little attention.

Yet this text does repay attention in the context of this thesis. First and foremost, this novel establishes the close relationship between the narrator and the reader which depends on a sophisticated balance of metatextual and intertextual allusions. This relationship allows for the explicit highlighting of aspects of the narratives, and the expectations and assumptions of the fantasy and fairy tale genres. Secondly, the novel draws attention to the ways in which people think, or, at least, the ways in which we imagine other people think, and it encourages the reader to think critically about both the narrative actions and their own prejudices. Finally, in accordance with the punning title, this text engages with injustice and inequality as both a social reality and a trope apparent in the fantasy genre, drawing attention to the structures that uphold this status quo through parody and the complication of laughter.

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<sup>8</sup> Since this article’s publication, Esk has reappeared in both *I Shall Wear Midnight* and *The Shepherd’s Crown*.

## Metatextual and Intertextual Narration

Structures of narrative both form *Equal Rites* and are highlighted as contributing factors in the sexism that Esk faces. The metatextual preoccupation of the narrative, which includes several characters commenting on the traditional masculinity of the Bildungsroman, for example, draws attention to how stories pattern how people think about the world.

Metatextual asides on the part of the narrator, which ‘break the fourth wall’ to remind the reader that they are reading a novel, interrupt the story more than they facilitate it. As the wizard Drum Billet arrives in the village at the beginning of the novel, for instance, the atmospheric description is interrupted and undermined:

Mist curled between the houses as the wizard crossed a narrow bridge over the swollen stream and made his way to the village smithy, although the two facts had nothing to do with one another. The mist would have curled anyway (3)

The reader, who might have expected a paragraph of stock fantasy narration, must deal with a sudden shift of focus: from the wizard, to the mist, and thereby onto the descriptive passage’s conflation of the two. These sudden, unexpected shifts form a fundamental part of the novel’s comedy by drawing attention to aspects of narration which are taken for granted in other texts, enlivening the parodic tone. The reader must confront their own meaning-making practice, and the artificial construction of narrative descriptions generally. The two facts, the wizard’s progress through the village and the mist curling, *are* relevant to one another in that they share a location, but the metatextual aside highlights the fact that only the wizard’s movements are pertinent to the story. The reader’s simultaneous understanding that the mist is relevant to creating an atmosphere, and that it has nothing to do with the events taking place, creates a comedic dissonance when the narration interrupts itself to deny one and emphasise the other. The metatextual moment, crucially, ignores the generic relationship between mist and wizards in such a way as to draw attention to it even as it draws the reader’s attention to the storytelling itself.

While metatextual asides highlight the narrative structures shaping the reader’s experience of the story in a *self*-referential fashion, it is important to acknowledge that these narrative structures often spring from genre. Misty surroundings which echo the mystery of the fantasy wizard are stock imagery in the fantasy genre, and so when the narration emphasises how it is performing genre, it also connects the novel with other texts. Metatextual and intertextual references naturally intertwine in its critique of sexist structures.

The novel opens with wizardly allusions as the narrator claims that the novel may “help to explain why Gandalf never got married and why Merlin was a man” (1). Without question Gandalf and Merlin are English literature’s best-known wizards (though there has been significantly more competition on this front since the publication of the *Harry Potter* series) and, in drawing on these figures, *Equal Rites* sets out to not only tell a story of its own, but also to explain a peculiarity, the exclusively masculine depiction of wizards, which appears in other important cultural texts. This instance of intertextual allusion is simultaneously metatextual, and it places *Equal Rites* within, but at an angle to, the fantasy tradition.

The aim to understand and critique the fantasy genre’s sexist tropes, as the narrator indicates on the first page, is compounded by the difficulty of writing from within the same genre. In using a metatextual address to highlight both the intertextual links and the structure of the novel at the outset, Pratchett firmly establishes the narrator as a comic commentator. This is important because the novel’s capacity to comment on the tropes and stereotypes of the fantasy genre is dependent on comedy’s capacity for the recreation of tropes within a space where their relevance, ideals, and philosophies can be directly questioned. Haberkorn, in “Debugging the Mind”, claims: “Humor not only provides a context in which we can probe our meaningful patterns for flaws, it provides a context in which finding and correcting such flaws can be enjoyable” (164). This capacity, dependant on both metatextual and intertextual commentary, develops further nuance in Pratchett’s later work, where the balance between these elements shifts towards the intertextual. In *Equal Rites*, the framework of this approach is clearer, partly because the novel retains the occasional awkwardness of Pratchett’s early work and partly because the novel takes a conceptual reality (sexism) as the primary obstacle the heroine faces.

Recognising each joke, though, is less important than knowing that there is a connection between the novel and the real world. As *Equal Rites* focuses on its own structure in order to comment on the structure of other works, the unnamed narrator curates the reader’s approach to the text, and thereby their approach to the problems within the genre. At the outset of the novel, after the mention of Gandalf and Merlin, the narrator, in a continuation of their direct address to the reader, says, “However, it is primarily a story about a world. Here it comes now. Watch closely, the special effects are quite expensive” (1). From the outset the narrator pushes the reader to pay close attention to the Discworld itself as an observable world, which must, then, be considered in terms of what the reader regards as a world. Furthermore, the narrator recognises the act of reading as an act which can be performed inattentively and this appeal for the reader’s attention suggests that a degree of



close reading is required to understand the satirical nature of the text. In order for the novel to explain Merlin and Gandalf, the sexist tropes and structure of the fantasy genre are recreated. There is a danger that the text might be misread as endorsing the essentialist structure it mimics.<sup>9</sup> As the reader's attention cannot be guaranteed simply by the act of reading, the narrator repeatedly returns to the idea of the reader as a witness, building the impression of a mutual attentiveness through their asides and their acknowledgement of the reader's expectations.<sup>10</sup>

The narrator's involvement with reader expectation in *Equal Rites* is exemplary of the narrator's role in the sequence of novels as a whole. When the narrator introduces Drum Billet, the first wizard of the novel itself, they say, "He came walking through the thunderstorm and you could tell he was a wizard, partly because of the long cloak and carven staff but mainly because the raindrops were stopping several feet from his head and steaming" (2). The opening of the sentence is dramatic and very typical of the narration of a high fantasy novel, but the narrator's break from this dramatic tone, to observe that "you could tell he was a wizard", acknowledges the reader as an active participant in creating genre. The reader's contribution to the construction of story, their expectations, are brought to the fore before the narrator actually lists the qualities that might prompt the reader to expect the character to be a wizard, thereby circumventing the usual deductive reasoning, and instead creating the impression of the presence of genre markers before the markers appear. The apparent self-evidence of knowledge triggered by stereotype cues becomes the focus of the comedy – not the figure of the wizard himself – and this attention to expectation itself develops into a wry commentary on both the reader and the genre. This use of metatextual narration overcomes some of the difficulties of writing within the genre being critiqued, making it clear that these genre markers are part of the contrivance of texts and not, in fact, beyond justification.<sup>11</sup> Later, when Granny is rescued by some dwarfs and is taken back to their halls to have her (loaner) broomstick fixed, the narrator explains that "The dwarf halls rang to the sound of hammers, although mainly for effect" (116). The stereotypical expectation of fantasy – that dwarf halls are a place of constant hammering and industry – is

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<sup>9</sup> This has always been a danger in the realm of satire.

<sup>10</sup> They/them/their as gender neutral singular rather than plural.

<sup>11</sup> Often the jokes do claim that these genre markers are near to the laws of nature, but the humour lies in understanding that the opposite is the case.

not contradicted, but the stereotypical association is complicated as the hammering is revealed to be curated purposefully, often through employment of goblins to do the actual hammering, to aid in concentration (116-7). By both acknowledging and explaining the stereotype, the text simultaneously reproduces and subverts it. Similarly, the later comic analogue between the dwarf craftsman and a stereotypical car mechanic works by fulfilling expectations unexpectedly but faithfully.

Controlling the recreation of stereotypes in faithful yet unusual ways is common in comedy, as mentioned in the introduction, and in *Equal Rites* this helps to highlight the control that narratives have over expectation. The use of the stereotypical mechanic involves the reader with the text in an unorthodox way for a fantasy text by directly referencing the real and decidedly modern world. Fantasy, as a genre, has a general preoccupation with generating the impression of the real; to locate the action in a coherent alternate reality. Tolkien, one of the foundational authors of the modern fantasy, argued that “[i]t is at any rate essential to a genuine fairy-story, as distinct from the employment of this form for lesser or debased purposes, that it should be presented as ‘true’” (“On Fairy-Stories” 19).<sup>12</sup> The sense of truth, of a factual account, seems vulnerable to intrusive metaphors so strongly based in the real world as the car mechanic; however, this use of the mechanic stereotype does not break Tolkien’s rule. The broomstick mechanic is funny, but the magic is pure engineering which seems true. Texts which fall into Mendlesohn’s category of immersive fantasy usually engage in a high degree of internalised realism to obtain mimesis and therefore often limit overt references to other texts or to the real world (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 63-4). Her inclusion, then, of the Discworld novels in this category appears at odds with this understanding when considering the referential nature of the novels (90).<sup>13</sup> However, Mendlesohn later notes that immersive fantasy can “use the *knowing* of the reader to imprison the reader within her immersion, to use the sense of expectation to seal off the fantastic world and make it real” (99). The comic nature of the text maintains the contradictory expectation that the jokes will matter to the reader and reflect some sort of fundamental truth. *Equal Rites*, despite its range

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Fantasy’ had yet to become standard when referring to stories of this genre, and Tolkien instead refers to them as “fairy-stories”.

<sup>13</sup> Mendlesohn proposes the Witches novels are best categorised as intrusion fantasies, but later uses both *Wyrd Sisters* and *Carpe Jugulum* as examples of immersive fantasy. Due to her understanding of intrusion fantasy also relying on creating an immersive world which is then intruded upon, it is not inappropriate to use the category of Immersive fantasy here (119;133;148-9).

of allusions which maintain its connection to the real world, remains coherent. The connections made are not so much to the real as to what the reader imagines is real, using the weight of belief to make the events, places, and characters in the novel take on the impression of reality despite the juxtaposition.<sup>14</sup>

References which fall outside the genre or are explicitly at odds with the fantasy genre do not undermine the fantastical nature of the setting, nor do they necessarily reduce it through parody, but rather they serve to expand the bounds of the story. The narrator says of Esk at the fair:

According to the standard poetic instructions one should move through a fair like a white swan at evening moves o'er the bay, but because of certain practical difficulties Esk settled for moving through the crowds like a small dodgem car, bumping from body to body with the tip of the staff waving a yard above her head. (81)

The “standard poetic instructions” points the reader towards consideration of what they might think of as ‘standard’ in the context, as well as to the folksong “She Moved Through the Fair”. The tone of the passage then shifts, as the heroine fails to live up to the expectations of folklore or fantasy, and instead the narrator provides the image of the dodgem car: an image more suited to a child character like Esk, but also one that reminds the reader of the modern world outside the text even as it points towards how the text might be constructed in a more generic, poetic form. The text’s engagement with the reader only strengthens with the next pair of descriptions of Esk’s passage:

Esk, in fact, moved through the fair more like an arsonist moves through a hayfield or a neutron bounces through a reactor, poets notwithstanding, and the hypothetical watcher could have detected her passage by tracing the outbreaks of hysteria and violence. (82)

In this case, both of these descriptions, the arsonist and the neutron, are atypical of a fantasy text, a point noted by the text itself with the comment “poets notwithstanding”, and these descriptions are treated as more accessible to the “hypothetical watcher” who is, of course, the reader. This does not by any means enhance the impression of the text’s ‘truth’, for all

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<sup>14</sup> The *Science of Discworld* books present the most extreme form of this juxtaposition, with chapters alternating between a narrative about the wizards of Unseen University and explanations of real world (Roundworld) science.

that the metaphors are more accessible to a contemporary audience than faux-medieval poeticism. But both the clear acknowledgement of the metaphoric perspective and framework, alongside these unusual comparisons, help create an impression of relevance.

Relevance is crucial to the satiric and logical endeavour of the text, and Esk's equal right to be a neutron rather than a swan gains meaning through the reader's observation. The concept of the reader as a spectator only a step removed from the action develops the idea of the action within the novel as a spectacle and, through the act of witnessing, the action becomes 'real'. This rhetorical technique, as is evident in the earlier quotation from the start of the novel, repeats throughout the novel. Not only can the reader see as far as Esk can from her perch in the Ramtops ("In fact, from here you could see right to the edge of the world. That wasn't poetic imagery but plain fact" (13)), but the reader is also obstructed from seeing (as when Granny "looked around, and found a boulder of about the right size. She disappeared behind it for a few seconds, for the sake of respectability, and reappeared with a petticoat in her hand" (57)). In treating the reader as a witness, the text is not only able to comically obstruct the imaginary 'view' of the reader, and draw in and out from the action by creating an impression of the visual scope of the world, but the reader also becomes involved in the text as they are a part of the visible scaffolding of the story. The reader becomes engaged in a reciprocal relationship with the text, both sides giving and receiving attention, and through this involvement the reader's own inclination to stereotype and make assumptions becomes a target of the novel's satire.

The conspicuousness of the narrator's metatextual asides, in conjunction with the parodic comedy, works to involve the reader in the process of genre and stereotype recollection and manipulation within the text. In some instances, stereotypical aspects are emphasised and confirmed, such as when Granny and Esk disagree:

But Granny had spent a lifetime bending recalcitrant creatures to her bidding and, while Esk was a surprisingly strong opponent, it was obvious that she would give in before the end of the paragraph.

(71)

The relationship between these two is that of an elderly teacher and young student, a relationship that has been widely stereotyped, and this passage relies on the reader having some expectation of how conflicts within this relationship should play out in a text. The metatextual acknowledgement breaks expectations and creates humour primarily through direct acknowledgement that the reader has power over the interpretation of the text. In other

cases, stereotypes are questioned in the text. When Esk stows away on a Zoon barge and is discovered, we have this exchange:

“If you were a boy I’d say are you going to seek your fortune?”

“Can’t girls seek their fortune?”

“I think they’re supposed to seek a boy with a fortune,” said the man. (95)

The man, Amschat B’hal Zoon, recognises the stereotypical elements of a Bildungsroman or picaresque scenario which are nonetheless deemed inappropriate due to the gender of the protagonist. The comedy of the text, and the clear narrative control of its wry narrator, lead to a reversal of privilege in the usual relationship between text and reader. The reader’s expectations and prejudices are open to scrutiny by the text itself. Here is the narrator describing the slums in Ankh-Morpork:

The Shades, in brief, were an abode of discredited gods and unlicensed thieves, ladies of the night and pedlars in exotic goods, alchemists of the mind and strolling mummers; in short, all the grease on civilisation’s axle. (136)

Half the joke is the value placed on the people listed, as they, whilst dirty, help keep to civilisation rolling; the other half is recognising the old adage that ‘the squeaky wheel gets the grease’. Civilisation itself demands that these stereotypically ‘uncivilised’ and ‘undesirable’ people exist. In pointing out issues with stereotypes in a comedic fashion the novel does not minimize the seriousness of the issues, rather it confronts the reader with a critique of their probable expectations. The reader’s own part in perpetuating pre-established narratives becomes a target of the satire.

That is not to say that the novel entirely disapproves of taking stereotypes at face value. When it comes to antagonist figures, the obvious use of allusion and stereotypes in predictable ways increases tension beyond that which the text alone, devoid of associated materials, might be capable of. In the episode in which Esk enters the Fiddler’s Riddle and turns the barman’s beer into triple distilled white mountain peach brandy (86), allusion is used to indicate an important tonal shift. Mrs Skiller’s voice, when she asks Esk how she ended up in the tavern and if she would like to stay the night, is described as “a voice that suggested gingerbread cottages and the slamming of big stove doors” (86) and the narrator remarks that “it was going to be a tough night for all wandering in metaphorical forests” (86). The reference to fairy tales places Esk in the category of a stereotypical child wanderer, and, even more strongly, Mrs Skiller into the category of the wicked witch. There is some irony

here in that Esk has just become separated from an actual witch and falls into danger entering civilization – as the narrator notes, the woods are metaphorical. Mrs Skiller’s kind offer of a bed for the night is contextualized through the cultural touchstone of fairy tales and the reader’s apprehension is exacerbated when the passage closes with the narrator commenting: “You’re right. It’s going to take more than a passing wood-chopper to sort *this* out” (87). The exact fairy tale villain Mrs Skiller is being compared to shifts, and with this shift an evaluation of stereotypes is triggered. The Big Bad Wolf of the “Little Red Riding Hood” story, and the Wicked Witch of “Hansel and Gretel” run alongside one another, and the traits these types share, namely greed and an inclination to trap and deceive, are the ones explicating Mrs Skiller’s actions as an antagonist.<sup>15</sup>

While Mrs Skiller’s behaviour as an antagonist is both rooted in the fairy tale antagonist type and the ambitious wife type, it is noteworthy that the narrator leads the reader astray here. The fairy tale allusions place greater emphasis on the danger Mrs Skiller poses to Esk than is justified by the later conflict. A wandering wood-chopper is not needed, as Esk is protected by her staff and has no difficulty escaping into the night (90-1). The predatory implications of the association have little basis in the antagonist figure’s actual behaviour. Mrs Skiller’s demand that Esk give her the staff and her justification of “‘It’s not the right sort of thing for little girls’” (90) contain no teeth, but do connect her predatory behaviour to the sexism the novel opposes. Mrs Skiller believes she has a right to disenfranchise Esk in order to give power to her husband because of the framework of the patriarchal society of Ohulan and much of the Discworld. The overt threat the Skillers pose is not in itself the danger, the danger is the normalisation of sexism – a normalisation that soon leads Esk herself to say: “‘I thought I might seek my fortune,’ muttered Esk, ‘but I think perhaps girls don’t have fortunes to seek’” (124).

## **Minds and Morals**

The Skillers are minor villains whose plot to disendow Esk is doomed, not least because the episode takes place so early in the novel and so the reader can expect that any conflict stands

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<sup>15</sup> Other traditional ballads, fairy tales, and folklore, also produce the same hungry tone alluded to here.

a good chance of being quickly resolved. The introduction of Mr Skiller deserves some attention, however, because some pains are taken to describe the character's mind:

The landlord of the Fiddler's Riddle considered himself to be a man of the world, and this was right, because he was too stupid to be really cruel and too lazy to be really mean and although his body had been around quite a lot his mind had never gone further than the inside of his own head. (82)

The description makes no mention of good points, only that his bad qualities are mitigated by other bad qualities, and so when it is mentioned that "his mind had never gone further than the inside of his own head", this, too, is coloured as a negative quality. Pratchett, here, constructs an impression of a sort of everyday, unthinking evil, which is an idea he returns to often in later novels. In *Guards! Guards!* (1989), this concept negatively colours the restoration of order at the end of the novel as the Patrician tells Vimes:

"Down there [...] are people who will follow any dragon, worship any god, and ignore any iniquity. All out of a kind of humdrum, everyday badness. Not the really high, creative loathsomeness of the great sinners, but a sort of mass-produced darkness of the soul. Sin, you might say, without a trace of originality. They accept evil not because they say *yes*, but because they don't say *no*." (*Guards! Guards!* 302)

While the Patrician is not a reliable gauge in the moral compass of Pratchett's work, as he plays the part of cynical foil to the already somewhat cynical Vimes, his comment gives some insight into how good and evil are constructed in the novels. *Equal Rites* draws attention to thoughtless evil, unoriginal sin, and places this in contrast with active, intentional good through the use of a range of stereotypes.

This is noteworthy in respect to the construction of thought and ethics for two reasons: the novel takes an approach to evil that exemplifies the "humdrum, everyday badness" in not focusing on a particular antagonist; and the novel deals heavily with the idea of Borrowing and in doing so takes pains to consider thought processes of humans, animals, and even buildings. The idea that most people do not think critically about the world around them underlies both of these aspects of the novel, which draws attention to the ways in which people think, and the ways in which they can think, and, in doing so, the ways in which the reader can think. The comedic play on expectations places emphasis on the individual and the importance of rational and empathetic thought, an idea explored by Gideon Haberkorn in "Debugging the Mind: The Rhetoric of Humour and the Poetics of Fantasy". Most

importantly, Haberkorn points out that “Discworld is not just about recognizing stories and conventions, using them, playing with them. It is about resisting them” (183). The metatextual and intertextual allusions discussed in the first part of this chapter not only facilitate the recognition of structures and systems, but also allow space for the reader to make moral decisions.

Evil in *Equal Rites* is not “the really high, creative loathsomeness” referred to in *Guards! Guards!*, and displayed by Pratchett’s later antagonists, but, rather, evil in the form of injustice unresisted. Generally, this falls into two categories: the failure to think beyond expectations or pre-conceived notions, and the imposition of one person’s mind over another. Mr Skiller falls into the first category, in his failure to think beyond the inside of his own head, while Mrs Skiller branches into the second in her plan to forcibly impose her plan on Esk. Where Mr Skiller seems less harmful in the short passage in which he appears, his mindset is far more pervasive and most of the blocking characters are guiltier of his fault than of Mrs Skiller’s. Combatting this requires a degree of empathic thought that the novel paints as difficult.

The human mind, in the novel, is a complicated and expansive arrangement of thoughts and desires. When explaining the limits of Borrowing, the narrator describes it as fractional:

The average human, on the other hand, thinks about all sorts of things, around the clock, on all sorts of levels, with interruptions from dozens of biological calendars and timepieces. There’s thoughts about to be said, and private thoughts, and real thoughts, and thoughts about thoughts, and a whole gamut of subconscious thoughts. To a telepath the human head is a din. It is a railway terminus with all the Tannoys talking at once. It is a complete FM waveband – and some of those stations aren’t reputable, they’re outlawed pirates on forbidden seas who play late-night records with limbic lyrics. (87)

The mind is broken into parts and pieces, inviting the reader to think about their thoughts even as the list draws to an end with the idea of both thinking about thoughts and the hidden thoughts of the unreachable ‘subconscious’. These elements are held together by the word ‘thought’ itself as well as the physical space of the head which is compared to a railway terminal or the FM waveband, which are themselves creations stemming from human minds and human urges as well as constant movement. This construction of the mind, flattering as it



is to undo the perceived “slur” (87) of Borrowing being easier with animals, adds an expansiveness to mental processes which constructs unknowable depths.

In describing how complex the mind is, Pratchett acknowledges the difficulty of thinking; however, this clamour is not reflected in the characters when they act as the narrative focalizer. While Esk does have an unexplained connection to magic which allows her to simply know some things, which suggests something of the complexity the narrator describes, this is an exception to the rule. In most cases the thought processes, in the form that the reader encounters them, have depths well hidden, and the overlapping cacophony fails to materialize. That is not to say that the inconsistency reveals a lie. Tiffany Aching, protagonist of Pratchett’s later children’s/young adult series set on the Discworld, thinks on multiple levels and her overlapping cacophony of thoughts is usually presented in the form of direct address, though at times of high distress the exact thoughts ‘speaking’ is not clear:

How can I stop thinking? And thinking about thinking? And even thinking about thinking about thinking?

She saw the smile in the Queen’s eyes, and thought: Which one of all those people doing all that thinking is *me*?

Is there really any *me* at all? (*The Wee Free Men* 270)

Pratchett remains consistent in his theory of the human mind, across years of novels, and so, given his development as an author over the course of the Discworld, the limited complexity we see in the focalizers’ thoughts can be considered a consequence of inexperience rather than deliberate negligence. The fact remains, however, that *Equal Rites* contains this inconsistency. When complexity appears, it is either frightening, or magical, or both. The narrator remarks, with respect to Esk’s unearned magical knowledge, that “It was a horrible feeling to find things in your head and not know how they fitted” (19).

The experience of one’s own mind, then, is largely a comfortable one and, indeed, the mind is recognised as being capable of defending itself from disruption. When Esk finds Granny seemingly dead in her bed, she “stared at the patchwork quilt under the old woman, because there were times when a little detail could expand and fill the whole world” (21). This passive attentiveness fails, though, to protect her from fear when she stays to sit with Granny while her brothers fetch their father. Lack of thinking cannot guarantee security. Later, when she finds herself divorced from reality, trying to save Simon, and is tempted by passivity, she finds that “being angry, that was the thing. She knew it was most important to stay really angry” (193). This is at odd with the response usually expected from a heroine, but anger appears as a positive emotion and an appropriate response to injustice in much of

Pratchett's work, and the case of Esk is no exception to this. Tiffany Aching, too, draws on anger (and selfishness) to face the Queen and save her brother (*The Wee Free Men* 274). However, anger is more ambivalent in *Equal Rites*, as it is also evident on the part of the major blocking characters when they find their way of thinking about the world has been challenged. The difference is in where the right to be angry is drawn from.

Anger and a lack of thought anchor the antagonistic behaviours of the blocking characters. Where Esk is disturbed to find knowledge in her head and no idea where it came from, Granny and Cutangle, in particular, both struggle with not finding knowledge they thought they had and their anger at this is associated with their unjustified presumption of narrative control. Near the beginning of the novel Granny, whilst inhabiting the body of an owl, rails against the spirit of Drum Billet and the idea of Esk being a wizard:

*She's female!* hooted Granny, bouncing up and down on her branch.

*Well? Who says women can't be wizards?*

Granny hesitated. The tree might as well have asked why fish couldn't be birds. She drew a breath and started to speak. And stopped. She knew a cutting, incisive, withering and above all a *self-evident* answer existed. It was just that, to her extreme annoyance, she couldn't quite bring it to mind. (34)

There is no law or lore against female wizards. Granny's response to lacking a rational argument is annoyance, and the stress placed on the answer she cannot find builds this anger into a comic failure. The reader must recognise that there is no suitable answer in order to grasp the full humour of the passage, and this recognition of Granny's fallibility, something which is uncommon in later novels featuring the character, is partnered with the recognition of sexism as a systemic issue. When, nearer the end of the novel, Cutangle struggles with the same question, the reader is still more familiar with the systemic nature of the issue:

"I don't think there's ever been a lady wizard before," said Cutangle.

"I rather think it might be against the lore. Wouldn't you rather be a witch? I understand it's a fine career for girls."

A minor wizard behind him started to laugh. Esk gave him a look.

[...]

"I still want to be a wizard."

Words failed Cutangle. "Well you can't," he said. "The very idea!"

He drew himself up to his full width and turned away. Something tugged at his robe.

“Why not?” said a voice.

He turned.

“Because,” he said, slowly and deliberately, “because ... the whole idea is completely laughable, that’s why. And it’s absolutely against the lore!” (151)

Cutangle’s irritation and his inability to find a suitable answer are left for the reader to infer from the dialogue, while the pun on ‘lore’ and ‘law’ creates a humorous conflation between the mysteries of the wizard and the mysteries of the judge. In assuming both the nature and the inflexibility of the lore, Cutangle denies his power to change it even as his failure to articulate an argument for the narrative of male superiority emphasises the lack of logic in its existence. While I will go further into the harm of laughter shortly, both Cutangle and Granny quickly fall into a pattern of rejection when their knowledge sets are challenged and their control or lack of control is exposed, and this rejection harms Esk, both by delaying her training and by exposing her further to the view that she should not be what she is. Granny Weatherwax’s comment, “‘as you grow older you’ll find most people don’t set foot outside their own heads much. You too,’ she added gnomically” (46), accuses most people of being guilty of the same sort of erroneous thinking that she and Cutangle show in not thinking critically about why things are the way they are.

The idea of being obstinate and close-minded crops up repeatedly over the course of the novel, and just as repeatedly the reader has the potential harm pointed out, but the greater harm takes place when Esk risks being too keen to impose her way of thinking onto others. Borrowing, the witchy art of sharing the mind of an animal or, in some cases, a place, frames the fundamental difference between witches and wizards in the world of the story:

This was the sort of thing that wizards could never know. If it occurred to them to enter a creature’s mind they’d do it like a thief, not out of wickedness but because it simply wouldn’t occur to them to do it any other way, the daft buggers. And what good would it do to take over an owl’s body? You couldn’t fly, you needed to spend a lifetime learning. But the gentle way was to ride in its mind, steering it as gently as a breeze stirs a leaf. (32)

It is worth noting that the marked difference between witch and wizard magic in the novel reflects the differences typical in fantasy as a genre at the time that Pratchett was writing. These differences function as part of the parody taking place. Nevertheless, Granny’s criticism of the presumed wizardly approach to Borrowing (upheld when Esk steals the

eagle's body) introduces an interesting moral dimension. The word "thief" has negative moral connotations, but then the reader comes to the statement that it is "not out of wickedness" rather because an alternative to the theft wouldn't occur to the wizard. Negligence does not counteract the fact that the theoretical wizard harms the owl by stealing its body and dominating its mind, but the passage seems to position the crime as less morally objectionable because it is not intended as harm; it is not 'wickedness'.

The novel's repeated revisiting of the idea of intentionality, however, questions the moral relevance of intent. Treatle, who fails to step outside his own mind enough to reconsider his misogyny, is unthinking in his rejection of Esk and foolish in his understanding of women in general:

He was stupid, yes, in the particular way that very clever people can be stupid, and maybe he had all the tact of an avalanche and was as self-centred as a tornado, but it would never have occurred to him that children were important enough to be unkind to. (122)

Simply because it does not occur to him to be deliberately unkind to Esk does not mean that he is not unkind. Later, when Treatle invites Esk into the University so that the faculty can laugh at her, his failure to consider Esk important does not mitigate the reader's understanding of his cruelty. While the novel takes pains to indicate that the cruelty Esk is exposed to is often not malicious in nature, it also makes it clear that it is still harmful and unpleasant.

Thoughtless wrongs stand in contrast with intentional restitution, creating a peculiar moral dichotomy. Intended actions are usually presented as rational and therefore more likely to result in a good outcome, while most of the sexist comments and actions are presented as reflexive. Nonetheless, intentional 'wickedness' occurs at key points. To return to Borrowing, Esk's wizardly nature is indicated through her conforming to Granny's expectations and taking over the body of the first animal she Borrows, and this overtly harmful action is described in such a way as to grant a level of intent to Esk's behaviour. When Esk begins to consider taking over the eagle, Granny is still present and warns her not to, though she fails to elaborate on the reasons. Esk ignores her advice and waits for her to leave before seizing control:

Granny had been wrong. The eagle mind barely fought, and didn't have time to panic. Esk held it wrapped in her own mind. It writhed for an instant, and then melted into her. (51)

A strong argument can be made that Esk, in this instance, is guilty of the same thoughtless arrogance as Granny and Cutangle as she rejects Granny's advice just as Granny rejects the idea that she should be a wizard. Indeed, the point of this passage is not, of course, to frame Esk as an evil character; instead, the episode sketches a potentially tragic outcome only remedied through Granny resorting to wizard magic.<sup>16</sup> The short, decisive sentences of the above passage suggest that Esk was prepared for the eagle to fight back, which indicates Esk intentionally ignores the eagle's own desire for autonomy. Later, as she is losing herself to the eagle form, Esk thinks "I am Esk, and I have stolen the body of an eagle" (53). Esk, as well as the reader, recognises the theft that has taken place even as the consequences overcome her. This incident highlights Esk's immaturity, her connection to wizardry (with T. H. White and Ursula Le Guin in particular connecting shape-changing/bodysnatching with wizardry), and her fallibility, while it also increases the reader's sympathy for Granny Weatherwax and serves as an introduction of the threat of the creatures from the Dungeon Dimensions.

These creatures are the monsters in the story, shadowy, shambling, indescribable horrors who lurk at the edge of eyesight. For all their monstrosity, however, they can only be considered antagonists in a limited sense, partially because they spend much of the novel limited to a Dimension existing outside the universe, partially because they do not, in fact, stand between the protagonist and her long-term goals and desires, and partially because they act, to a degree, as metaphorical entities. Their introduction at the first incidence of possession in the novel, when Granny uses wizard magic to save Esk's mind, is echoed when one of them possesses Simon at the end. Just like Esk, their attempts at possession are both deliberate and thoughtless:

"They're pathetic, really," [Granny] said. "They've got no life or shape themselves but what they can steal. They could no more survive in this world than a fish could live in a fire, but that doesn't stop Them trying.

And they're just bright enough to hate us because we're alive." (185)

Esk's growth from a point of wrongdoing to a point of redemption as she fights to free Simon, emphasises the danger of assumptions and the importance of empathy. It is this

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<sup>16</sup> The inevitability of wizards stealing instead of Borrowing does not have a fixed moral weight; instead, it foreshadows Treatle and Cutangle's thoughtlessly cruel rejection of Esk later in the novel.

empathetic understanding of Borrowing which allows Esk entry into Simon's sickbay, as she can, by this point, Borrow the mind of the University to open the door, and it allows her to resist the temptation to Borrow the mind of Great A'Tuin (191-2;193-4). The monstrosity of the creatures from the Dungeon Dimensions resides in their lack of empathy coupled with their desire to take over the minds of others, which reflects Esk's arrogance earlier in the story. In their metaphorical capacity, though, they mostly represent the misogyny that Esk must confront – thoughtless harm turned into creatures of thoughtless intent.

The battle between Esk and the creatures highlights the difficulty of combatting pervasive issues like sexism. The space in which the battle takes place has no fixed location. It functions as a dreamscape at times, and at other times as a vision only Esk can see, and it is situated outside the universe, which is to say that it exists in a place disconnected from physical realities like places. As Esk goes to confront the creatures after they steal Simon's mind, she tries to think her way around the space:

You're not really here, Esk told herself. It's only a sort of dream, what Granny calls an annalogy. You can't really be hurt, it's all imagination. There's absolutely no harm that can come to you, it's all really inside your mind. (197)

The idea that the creatures are an analogy or a metaphor is introduced earlier in the novel, when they are called a “Metterfor” (129) by Granny. Esk's attempt to tell herself that she cannot be harmed by them, however, is undermined by the creature who tells her that they can harm her psychosomatically (201), as well as by the fact that Esk has been repeatedly harmed by ideas in a much less tangible form over the course of the novel. The danger posed by the monsters is summed up by Simon, who tells Esk that: “ideas have got a shape here. Ideas are real!” (202).

Ideas, at least as they are represented by the creatures, are also poorly constructed. Just as the flaws in Granny and Cutangle's arguments against female wizards are easy to identify, it does not take Esk much effort to realise that she can kick the creatures to pieces (198). The ideas that the creatures represent are not rationally constructed, but in stereotypical final battle fashion Esk finds that things are not so simple. The creature possessing Simon points out “you'll get tired, [...] We can wait. We're very good at waiting” (201). Constantly defending herself from even poorly constructed ideas is a recipe for defeat. The horror of the creatures resides not so much in their monstrous individual forms, but in their relentlessness and inevitability as a group. Rather than destroy the source

of their power directly in the typical fashion of fantasy, Esk must be given her own source of power and then *not* use it to defeat them.

### Power and Laughter

The limits of female power and agency, and the inequality of women, are key issues in *Equal Rites*, and it is largely up to the blocking characters of Granny and Cutangle, not Esk, to begin to enact change. Both characters initially stand as potential antagonists in the story, obstacles which Esk needs to overcome, but, at the end of the story, both have had their minds changed and their assistance is pivotal in the final battle.<sup>17</sup> In retrieving Esk's staff and officially giving her the title of 'wizard', they provide her with the power she needs to face down the creatures of the Dungeon Dimensions. While I have already discussed their failure to find rational arguments for gender exclusivity in magic, the shape their initial antagonism takes guides the reader's approach to the central concerns of the novel even as the lack of a singular and constant antagonist complicates the focus of the novel, as it makes it clear that the crux of the problem is not a single individual but instead systemic sexism.

*Equal Rites* establishes an approach to witches rooted in the generic construction of female magic in fantasy. Granny Weatherwax's power is rooted in the natural world, and in her approach to other people and the social interactions she has with them. Nonetheless, for all the novel's focus on magic, the very first introduction of Granny Weatherwax establishes her as a midwife – to the extent that she is a midwife before she is revealed to be a witch – and it becomes evident that she fulfils the role of primary medical caregiver in her village. The stereotype of the country midwife or district nurse is placed at the forefront and all the witch traits are from there linked back to this practical figure. As such, the antagonism Granny exhibits is firmly set within the bounds of benign literary child/caregiver or child/teacher antagonism rather than anything more sinister. In later novels, however, the witches are often introduced primarily as witches – especially in *Wyrd Sisters* where the witches are parodies of the witches in *Macbeth*. The reason for this shift towards the overtly negative stereotype can be found in the concerns of the novels themselves. *Equal Rites* is

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<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that this is one of very few Discworld novels in which an antagonist or blocking figure changes their mind.

primarily concerned with sexism, and by establishing Granny as a midwife – a role within the medical profession which is considered particularly feminine – a range of expectations about the place of women in society come to the fore. Granny must be shown to fulfil a role within society in order for her attitudes to comment on it and witches are stereotypical female outcasts. As Alice Nuttall notes in “Be a Witch, Be a Woman: Gendered Characterisation of Terry Pratchett’s Witches”: “These conflicting aspects of witchcraft mean that Pratchett’s witches can be viewed as highlighting tensions faced by women in the real world” (33). It is in the tension between the primary and secondary knowledge the reader is guided towards, the social and community service roles in association with the witchcraft, that the fantasy is made relevant.

The stress placed on service divorces Granny Weatherwax from the idea of the Wicked Witch, even as the novel makes broad reference to features of the stereotypical witch. When she thinks that witchcraft is “about herbs and curses and flying around of nights and generally keeping on the right side of tradition” (*Equal Rites* 34) and when she considers “crone credibility” (164), we have familiar images brought to the fore. The pun on ‘street credibility’ suitably frames the desire for what are otherwise considered undesirable qualities, whilst twisting the illicit connotations of the term: the witches are not only respected by other witches, but also by the wider community when they gain crone credibility. Indeed, the character can gain more credibility with the reader as a witch if they conform to the broad stereotype, which is probably why Granny’s hand is described as “warty” (9) early in the novel despite her later complaints about the difficulty of gaining facial warts. The text relies on the reader’s familiarity with stereotypes in the construction of Granny in order to create an antagonist-like figure who is ‘close to home’; Granny is not threatening to the protagonist because she is a mysterious outside force, rather she represents views of the community which Esk inhabits. Where fairy tales and the wicked witch of *Hansel and Gretel* are specifically referenced when it comes to framing Mrs Skiller as an antagonist, the fairy tale framework readers might recognise when it comes to Granny Weatherwax are those of “Little Red Riding Hood”, and Granny is positioned as the Grandmother, not the wolf. It is as a sympathetic figure, then, that Granny Weatherwax works against Esk’s interests, and, as such, the reader finds themselves aligned initially with the patriarchal and sexist systems that the novel condemns.

The conflict between Esk and Granny Weatherwax illustrates the struggle between women caused by internalised sexist thinking, and in being initially placed in a position of participation in the flawed system through sympathy with Granny’s perspective, the reader’s



own internalised values are called into question. Granny acts on her beliefs and tries to destroy the symbol of Esk's power, her staff, by burning it, and she only stops when Esk screams in pain (36). Her next plan is to teach Esk witch magic, which also nearly results in Esk's destruction when she acts as Granny already suspected a wizard might by taking over the body of the eagle (51). Her willingness to go to destructive lengths to prevent Esk gaining the power of a wizard reflects badly on her. However, in both cases, Granny works to undo the harm she causes when that harm becomes clear. Nevertheless, she remains stubbornly resistant to the idea of a female wizard. Even when she ultimately recognises the necessity of Esk learning wizard magic, Granny holds on to her gender essentialism, and the reader is confronted with the generic tropes of male and female magic as a justification:

"Am I or am I?"

"Women can't be wizards," said Granny bluntly. "It's in nature. You might as well have a female blacksmith."

"Actually I've watched dad at work and I don't see why—"

"Look," said Granny hurriedly, "you can't have a female wizard any more than you can have a male witch [...]"

"I mean there's no male witches, only silly men," said Granny hotly. "If men were witches, they'd be wizards. It's all down to—" she tapped her head "—headology. How your mind works. Men's minds work differently from ours, see. Their magic's all numbers and angles and edges and what the stars are doing, as if that really mattered. It's all power. It's all—" Granny paused and dredged up her favourite word to describe all she despised in wizardry, "—jommertry." (64-5)

This gender distinction involves a certain amount of hostility to and denigration of wizardry, and Granny avoids recognising the fact that she harnessed wizard magic in order to save Esk, an act which undermines the fundamentalist argument she makes. Nevertheless, she finishes the discussion with Esk by saying, "Never mind what I said, or common sense or anything. Sometimes you just have to go the way things take you, and I reckon you're going to wizard school one way or the other" (67). This grudging acceptance that Esk must be an exception to her internalised rules marks the end of Granny's time as a blocking character and the beginning of her alliance with Esk.

Granny's lack of a rational argument to uphold a gender distinction in magic mostly fails because she has in front of her a clear exception to the tradition, and the presence of Esk as an exception results in her arguments appearing self-contradictory and, therefore, comical.

Later in the novel, however, other characters who make similar arguments against Esk learning wizardry are not nearly as benign as Granny. Treatle, in particular, makes a series of arguments which sit uncomfortably in the comic setting. When Esk brings up witches, expecting disapproval based on the wicked witch stereotype, Treatle sidesteps her expectations:

“My dear good young lady, am I supposed to be shocked? I happen to have a great respect for witches.”

Esk frowned. He wasn’t supposed to say that.

“You have?”

“Yes indeed. I happen to believe that witchcraft is a fine career, for a woman. A very noble calling.”

“You do? I mean, it is?”

“Oh yes. Very useful in rural districts for, for people who are – having babies, and so forth. However, witches are not wizards. Witchcraft is Nature’s way of allowing women access to the magical fluxes, but you must remember it is not *high* magic.” (123)

Treatle’s male condescension is slimily obvious in his caveats. His professed respect for witches is unexpected, but quickly undermined, remaining satirically in line with fantasy tropes, reinforcing that, for all Granny Weatherwax’s sneering, wizards are considered superior (38; 69). Treatle’s reasoning, however, is not based in trope-ish gender divisions in magic itself, but in real world arguments which were used to keep women from becoming doctors or undertaking higher education. He tells Esk that women

“can be a little unsettling at times. A little too excitable. High magic requires great clarity of thought, you see, and women’s talents do not lie in that direction. Their brains tend to overheat. I am sorry to say there is only one door into wizardry and that is the main gate at Unseen University and no woman has ever passed through it.” (124)

In contrast to Granny, Treatle has an abundance of arguments against Esk becoming a wizard and he is unconcerned about the harm that he causes with them. His arguments, though, are irrational and the reader should recognise them as debunked and comically outdated. Even so, these arguments bring old-fashioned sexism alongside the fantasy tropes and illuminate the similarities between the two.

The conflation of the stereotypes of the wizard and the academic which occurs alongside the conflation of their arguments emphasises the connections between popular

literature and the real world. The text makes it abundantly clear that “From long white hair to curly boots, Treatle was a wizard’s wizard” (122), but the text also makes it clear that wizards control the University and their magic is associated with mathematics, or, as Granny puts it, with “jommertry” (65). These associations develop the impression of status, while the witch and district nurse stereotypes generate connotations of hard and humble work. Esk’s own awareness of the division between witches and wizards contains elements of these associations:

She thought about wizards. They didn’t often come to Bad Ass, but there were a fair number of stories about them. They were wise, she recalled, and usually very old and they did powerful, complex and mysterious magics and almost all of them had beards. They were also, without exception, men.

She was on firmer ground with witches because she’d trailed off with Granny to visit a couple of villages’ witches further along the hills, and anyway witches figured largely in Ramtop folklore. Witches were cunning, she recalled, and usually very old, and they did slightly suspicious, homely and organic magics and some of them had beards. They were also, without exception, women.

There was some fundamental problem in all that which she couldn’t quite resolve. Why wouldn’t . . . (69)

The wording of the passage emphasises the similarities between the occupations through the repeated phrases, while using synonyms with different connotations to elaborate on the different value placed on each. The perceived superiority of the wizards reduces Granny Weatherwax’s ability to help Esk to a place within Unseen University, while the wizards are incentivised to uphold the system which privileges them.

The main weapon that the wizards use against Esk and her bid to become a wizard is laughter, which is both an uncomfortably mundane tactic and an unusual choice in a comic text. Laughter in *Equal Rites* is not necessarily bad. Hilta, the witch Granny and Esk meet in Ohulan, “laughed like someone who had thought hard about Life and had seen the joke” (80), which equates wisdom and the ability to laugh. She laughs at Granny Weatherwax’s resolution to walk the five hundred miles to Ankh-Morpork, but, notably, she also offers Granny and Esk a place to stay, associating the laughter itself with kindness. The laughter of the wizards and monsters, on the other hand, is associated with the opposite: unkindness and denial. This association begins with Simon’s laughter at the idea that Esk could be a wizard,

which is interrupted by Treatle and his theories about female inferiority. Treatle's arguments are then associated with the shutting of doors:

[Esk] could sense doors being slammed before she had barely begun to open them. Treatle was right; they wouldn't let her inside the University. Having a staff wasn't enough to be a wizard, there had to be training too, and no one was going to train her. (125)

The interference of the creatures of the Dungeon Dimensions compounds the impact of these associations in a subsequent dream sequence as the creatures, in a fashion reminiscent of the French in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, slam shut the doors of a castle when she tries to enter and then snigger at her from the battlements:

Laughter wouldn't have been so bad, especially an impressive demonic laugh with lots of echo, but this was just – sniggering.

It went on for a long time. It was one of the most unpleasant sounds Esk had ever heard. (128)

The cruelty of the sniggering does not come across to the reader as amusing. Instead, it serves as an indication of the hidden cruelties of sexism and classism, and Granny's calm acknowledgement of the metaphoric weight of this vision reinforces its truth (129).

The sniggering of the creatures foreshadows the laughter of the wizards when Esk finally arrives at the University. Esk quickly notes that the wizards are not laughing at anything properly comical: "He laughed. The wizards around him laughed. Treatle laughed. Which Esk thought was rather funny, because there wasn't anything particularly amusing happening" (145). While on the one hand this captures the youth of Esk in the sense that the 'joke' has passed her by, even as her use of the word funny to mean odd highlights the fact that laughter in this context, also has a different meaning: it is not an indication of amusement but an indication of belonging. When Esk approaches with her wish, she, too, triggers laughter even though what she says is not actually funny:

"I want to be a wizard," said Esk.

The lesser wizards behind Cutangle stared at her as if she was a new and interesting kind of beetle. Cutangle's face went red and his eyes bulged. He looked down at Esk and seemed to be holding his breath.

Then he started to laugh. (149)

Cutangle's laughter and performative amusement reconfirm his status through the refusal to reconsider the "lore" (law). When Esk continues to question him, though, he resorts to anger and then to dismissal. Esk tells Granny:

“And then everyone laughed at me! Someone even gave me a sweet!”

“You got some profit out of the day, then,” said Granny.

“Granny!” said Esk accusingly.

“Well, what did you expect?” she asked. “At least they only laughed at you. Laughter don’t hurt. You walked up to the chief wizard and showed off in front of everyone and only got laughed at? You’re doing well, you are.” (161)

Granny’s practicality in the face of Esk’s misery reminds the reader that she, too, has accepted the way things are to a degree that Esk has not, but it also reminds Esk that the point of the laughter was to make her give up, a denial of her equality, and Granny prods her back into defiance (163).

Weaponised laughter in the novel invites the reader to consider carefully what they are laughing at, and what targets might be appropriate for laughter. The text shapes laughter into a moral question of power and agency. When Granny insists on Cutangle making Esk a wizard proper, he first resorts to claiming it is against the lore, resulting in the following passage:

“Where does it say it?” said Granny triumphantly. “Where does it say women can’t be wizards?”

The following thoughts sped through Cutangle’s mind:

. . . It doesn’t say it anywhere, it says it everywhere.

. . . But young Simon seemed to say that everywhere is so much like nowhere that you can’t really tell the difference.

. . . Do I want to be remembered as the first Archchancellor to allow women into the University? Still . . . I’d be remembered, that’s for sure.

. . . She really is a rather impressive woman when she stands in that sort of way.

. . . That staff has got ideas of its own.

. . . There’s a sort of sense to it.

. . . I would be laughed at.

. . . It might not work.

. . . It might work. (228-9)

The threat of laughter and the derision of his peers weighs heavily and is considered ahead of the possibility of failure and Cutangle must accept the possibility that he will be ostracised by the group before he can take what the reader considers to be the right action. Reconciliation

between the individual, Esk, and the community, Unseen University, is essential to save the world, but even so Cutangle recognises that he must act in an individual capacity rather than as a representative of communal values in order to accomplish this.

## Final Thoughts

Cutangle's decision to name Esk a wizard clearly comes with pressure from both sides and his 'redemption' is undercut by the suggestion that he was motivated by attraction to Granny Weatherwax rather than concern for Esk's safety. Once again, the reader is challenged by the relationship between motive, action, and outcome, and they are not given any clear answer as the novel closes with Cutangle inviting Granny to a dinner of cold meat and potatoes. As the only novel in the Witches sequence in which antagonist figures change their minds, *Equal Rites* is an early and, at times, flawed example of Pratchett's approach to tackling complex and pervasive issues from within the context of genre fiction. In recreating the tropes of the fantasy and fairy tale genres, the novel does risk endorsing the models it critiques, but the repeated connections made between the real world and the Discworld, as well as between the reader and the text, assist in establishing the terms on which to engage with the text.

Never again does Granny tread so close to doing the wrong thing. Indeed, the Granny Weatherwax we see in this novel does not reappear, though the events are occasionally referenced. The lucky charms that jingle in her pockets as she heads nervously out into the world are handed over to Magrat, while her friend Nanny Annaple morphs into Nanny Ogg. Her decisiveness becomes more heroic, and her head less easily turned by second-hand velvet. Never again is her dramatic entry ruined by a rebounding door (186-7). Still, she remains a character through whom Pratchett explores moral uncertainties, and her character traits are ones which are most commonly reflected in the antagonists she and her friends are set against. The possibility of mistakes and over-reaching in her duties are reframed with the shift to being a protagonist, but the concern about making the right choices empathically continues and increases over the course of the sequence.

The wizards, on the other hand, are much diminished in later novels. They retain the University, but after the events of *Sourcery*, when they appear, they do so as a much-reduced faculty prone to falling asleep over a long lunch. Wizards are thenceforth generally depicted tinkering about on the outskirts of the plot. While Pratchett does retain the gendered magic sketched out in *Equal Rites*, his wizards are rarely ever heroic, while his witches regularly

save the day. It is an uneasy balance, but the Discworld is by no means a utopia, and in order to address moral issues it must reflect them.

## Chapter Two – Picking Up the Crown: *Wyrd Sisters*

Where *Equal Rites* began with wizards, *Wyrd Sisters* opens with a travesty of the most famous witches in the English literary canon. On a wind-blasted moor a trio of hunched figures debate when to meet again though, unlike the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* who choose their meeting time dependent on current events ("When the hurlyburly's done, / When the battle's lost and won." (*Macbeth* 1.1.3-4)), one of Pratchett's witches suggests "next Tuesday" (*Wyrd Sisters* 1). This introduction of the unlikely protagonists establishes both the novel's strong ties to Shakespeare's tragedies and the central type of comedy the novel undertakes – the introduction of incongruous veracity to high tragedy. The magic of the fantasy setting of the Discworld is imagined as being "wound like silk out of the underlying structure of existence to suture the wounds of reality" (2), which is a description as easily applied to tragedy or comedy as it is to the imaginative unrealities of magic. The suturing of "the wounds of reality" undertaken in the novel depends on its balance between referential comedy, witty insight, and unexpected candour. The inevitable horror of tragedy might, at times, be arrested (and intensified) by comic surprises, but, crucially, *Wyrd Sisters* does not endeavour to undo or significantly revise the Shakespearean tragedy and the reader is not offered anything so shocking or unexpected that it might undo the power of the tragic fall. Key to the transformation of the Shakespearean stories is, instead, the novel's shift in perspective. The shady and monstrous weird sisters of *Macbeth* become the protagonists and, unable to justify himself through their prophecies, the tragic hero and his wife become the central antagonists.<sup>18</sup>

The reimagining of two of theatre's most famous tragic figures, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, as Duke Felmet and the duchess, excises a key element of character development – the premeditation of the murder of Duncan is not transposed into Pratchett's comedy. The story begins with rather than centres on the murder of a king and, even then, the novel focuses instead on a baby prince who is whisked away into the night and the arms of the witches, rather than on the murder prompting the action. The murder of King Duncan in Act

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<sup>18</sup> Pratchett makes the old meaning of 'weird' – which indicates the power over fate that the witches in *Macbeth* hold (OEDO "weird, adj." 1) – more explicit in his titular spelling 'wyrd' which captures the historical connection to fate in its archaic spelling (OEDO "weird, n." 1-3a).



Two of *Macbeth* means that a substantial portion of the play is concerned with how Macbeth is motivated to regicide. By beginning his parody shortly after the regicide has taken place, Pratchett removes any deep complexity in the analysis of the murderer's motives. Instead, the motive is clearly and simply laid out in the introduction of Duke Felmet. The reader is advised of both the duchess's ambition (20) and the material and political gains: "he had a kingdom. It wasn't much of one, apparently being mainly trees, but it was a kingdom and it had a crown" (21). Motive, then, is not a fundamental concern of this novel. There is no pre-murder Felmet who can be shaped as a tragic hero like Macbeth and Pratchett's novel is determinedly uninterested in who Felmet was before he killed King Verence. Instead Felmet is an exaggerated stereotype of the Shakespearean tragic hero: he is obsessive, rash, and manipulated by another character – his wife – but he has none of the substance of a fleshed-out tragic hero such as Macbeth. Devoid of any compelling reason why the forms of tragedy are presented, the reader is unlikely to engage emotionally with the character, and the stereotype thereby undermines its apparent purpose. Instead, using this stereotype of the tragic hero, the novel questions the importance of the crimes of an individual when weighed against the needs of a kingdom. Felmet's obsession with narrative control over the past and the witches overtly reflects on the role of literature in inflating the significance of individuals and stereotypes, even as it clashes against the witches' endeavours to control the ongoing narrative via destiny.

The shift of the tragic hero figure from protagonist to antagonist fundamentally changes how the text and, thereby, the reader approaches the figure. Mendlesohn claims:

That we assume we know which side we are on is entirely due to a set of cultural expectations which have become embedded in the action adventure genres: reverting back to the 'us' and 'them' divide. ("Faith and Ethics" 148)

Felmet's position within the text, as the 'them' standing against the witches' 'us', alongside the parody, dramatically affects how we interpret the indicators of his stereotype. The protagonist as a sympathetic figure aligns with the pathos of the typical tragic hero's story; the antagonist does not. Instead, the shift in perspective encourages the reader to engage with the tragic figure on a logical rather than emotional level. In the case of Felmet, the result is often humorous as he, in a parody of Macbeth, draws attention to the excesses of the dramatic mode. The stereotype of the monologuing villain coincides with that of the soliloquising tragic hero and the resulting bathos robs both of their power. Nevertheless, the novel does not downplay or seek to undermine the moral anxiety which characterises tragic texts. Felmet's

overt concern with the murder he committed, and his wife's lack of concern, provide a central focal point for the novel's broader themes of power, duty, and destiny.

These themes develop from those of *Equal Rites*, but there are some significant adjustments here. Firstly, power, as suggested earlier, partially encompasses magic which was the focal point in *Equal Rites* as well as social power which in the earlier novel was held by the wizards. However, *Wyrd Sisters* largely reduces the significance of magic (in ways detailed later in this chapter), and there is no possibility for a dramatic showdown as there was in *Equal Rites*. Furthermore, the socio-political power seized by Felmet is not as embedded and widely disseminated as patriarchal power in general. Rather, he has taken control of a specific role within the community and the majority of the novel is concerned with how he, as an individual, fails to fulfil his duties in ruling the kingdom. These duties are both abstract and magically tangible in very literary ways as the witches debate what people expect of a king and the kingdom of Lancre itself calls on them to do *their* duty to ensure an appropriate king rules the kingdom. Finally, what is called destiny in this novel is similar in many ways to the types of narrative control which appeared in *Equal Rites*. There is a crucial shift, however, as the characters, rather than the narrator, provide the metatextual plot as the witches try to use narrative inevitability to oust Felmet, while Felmet attempts to rewrite his past and alleviate his fear and guilt through the power of a play.

### **Duchess and Duke**

Waiting like a spider at the centre of this web we find not Felmet, but his wife, a character whose desire for power and incomprehension of guilt drives both antagonists. She also happens to be constructed almost exclusively from literary references and common stereotypes. The most obvious indication of her intertextuality is her lack of a name, a state that closely mimics Lady Macbeth's namelessness. She is introduced as Lady Felmet, but attention is further drawn to the duchess's namelessness by the rapidly increasing frequency with which the novel simply refers to her as "duchess".<sup>19</sup> The uncapitalized "duchess" is particularly used when attributing direct speech, strongly emphasising the character's peculiar lack of character. As a combination of the nagging wife and evil queen stereotypes in

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<sup>19</sup> Lady Macbeth is referred to as simply "Lady" in the Folio.

the same vein as Lady Macbeth, she, like her husband, appears to be an uncomplicated version of her Shakespearean counterpart. Unlike Lady Macbeth, however, the duchess does not show any signs of a guilty conscience, a simplification that curtails any development of character or a sympathetic response on the part of the reader which might otherwise undermine her as an antagonist. The duchess's lack of complexity is a crucial element in the logical game of 'what if's and the comedy of dichotomy that form the foundation of the narrative. Lacking hidden depths, the duchess proves to be everything she seems, and when, at the dramatic climax, Granny attempts to draw up buried guilt from the duchess's subconscious, she comes up empty (273-4). The duchess's terrible remorselessness is simultaneously expected and unexpected, as the trope of 'horrified realisation of what she has become', which Granny and the reader might expect, is countered by the duchess's own self-awareness: a self-awareness that, in turn, highlights her character's reliance on stereotypes. The duchess is a self-contained dichotomy, providing unexpected complexity through very simple contrasts: her willingness to take responsibility contrasts with her avoidance of culpability by working through her husband; her formidability contrasts with her lack of agency; and her stereotypical antagonism belies her philosophical clarity.

As a driving force in the narrative, the duchess is at once a formidable figure and a nonentity, and this reflects her lack of a moral compass. Mirroring Lady Macbeth, the duchess pushes her husband into committing regicide to satisfy their ambition, but this push happens off the page. Within the parameters of the action of the novel, the duchess is a constant voice, in line with the nagging wife stereotype, but she ultimately does not overshadow Felmet's agency. When she interrogates the Fool on the power of words, she appears to be 'the brains behind the operation', but Felmet, though mad, provides the key points which the duchess expands on. It is his pressing desire to be remembered fondly (155) and his absent musing about a play (156) that shape the developing plot. And for all that the duchess tells Felmet to "shut up" and "be quiet" (154, 155), Felmet's point, that if they continue to execute people as the duchess suggests, "[they] will run out of people"(153), provides the impetus for the duchess's effort to understand the power of words. While the stubble on the duchess' chin (156) works with her overall dominance in the conversation to suggest that she 'wears the pants in the relationship' (a rather crude joke), the duchess's initial stance that "strong men change the world" (153) emphasises her reliance on her husband. She is as reliant on him as he is on her. Earlier, during the torture scene, the duchess is first to surface from her terror and calls the guards, but it is Felmet who faces down Granny

Weatherwax and, unprompted by his wife, says: ““Get back to your cauldrons, wyrd sisters”” (137).

The duchess’s strength of character is heavily curtailed by the stereotypes she is rooted in, all of which result in her ultimate reliance on her husband. This dependence goes both ways, however, and as a pair, these antagonists frequently appear as opposites, with Felmet providing the voice of reason when the duchess is irrational, and she providing clarity of thought when he is at a loss, in a seesaw of sanity. The pair are also strikingly at odds when it comes to their moral stance on the regicide, representing two moral extremes. The duchess appears to be a highly critical presentation of ethics reliant on the self as the root of right, or of any ‘ends justify means’ approach. Paul W. Taylor, in his *Principles of Ethics*, argues that an individual may blindly accept the moral code of his society, in a form of “‘conventional’ or ‘customary’” (9) morality, but:

Should he suddenly be confronted by others who have moral beliefs contradictory to his own and who hold them with as much certainty as he holds his own, he will feel lost and bewildered. His state of confusion might then turn into a deep disillusionment about morality. Unable to give an objective, reasoned justification for his own convictions, he may turn from dogmatic certainty to total scepticism.

From total scepticism it is but a short step to an “amoral” life (9-10)

Where Taylor explores how a figure may move from one extreme to another, in *Wyrd Sisters* Felmet and the duchess explore the relationship between these two extremes. The duchess is the quintessential “total sceptic”, unable to understand moral actions, while Felmet is plagued by guilt born of dogmatic certainty that the regicide was deeply wrong, though he was equally unable to justify inaction at the time of the murder. The space between these two standpoints seems wide but, as Taylor states, they are functionally two sides of the same coin. Neither character is capable of making a moral argument for, or justification of, their actions.

As with the duchess, Duke Felmet’s ‘dogmatic certainty’ regarding his guilt has its roots in the stereotypes he is constructed from. A reader can expect moral debate and internal dilemmas from a tragic hero, however, and so, unlike his wife, Felmet consistently acts as a focal point for the ethical lens of the text. As a central character in a parodic text, however, he also functions as a source of genre-based humour. His constant tottering at the brink of *anagnorisis* or dramatic realisation in the form of his ongoing guilt comprises the basis of the novel’s interrogation of internalised morality, but the quintessential high drama of *anagnorisis* is at odds with the novel’s setting. Lancre is, at best, a comedic minimisation of

Scotland, a tiny mountainous kingdom mostly comprised of trees (62).<sup>20</sup> The people of Lancre largely ignore their ruler, and Felmet is confounded by how they seem to think “what kings did wasn’t really very important” (63). Felmet’s episodes of high tragic drama against the backdrop of Lancre are comedic for the most part, because his anxiety simply does not seem proportionate. However, matters are not entirely straightforward, as the novel balances itself between parody and travesty. The dark forests and haunted castle are not undone by the comedy, and remain capable of generating the atmosphere of the Shakespearean tragedy. Felmet’s hyper-focus on a singular aspect of the tragic hero stereotype – his guilt – likewise remains a pertinent issue irrespective of its use as a joke. The novel’s play with expectation through the juxtaposition of tragic exaggeration and bathos, instead, undermines the possibility of a stereotypical response to Felmet as a character.

Felmet’s ongoing guilt, so at odds with the comic candour of the text, represents a simplification of the passage of guilt in *Macbeth*, which moves from Macbeth himself to his wife. This simplification, as mentioned earlier, helps establish the morality of the antagonists as both static and extreme. However, the simplification is at odds with the novel’s general tendency to humorously increase the sense of the everyday through the introduction of detail. Felmet’s guilt demands an exaggeration of ‘normal’ morality supported by the genres and context of the narrative, and this is further complicated by the approach the protagonists take to the regicide Felmet is obsessed with. While guilt might seem a reasonable response to having committed murder, the protagonists discount Felmet’s guilt and his attempts to conceal his crime. Granny Weatherwax establishes the basis of the witches’ approach to Felmet when she points out that

“One, kings go round killing each other because it’s all part of destiny and such and doesn’t count as murder, and two, they killed for the kingdom. That’s the important bit. But this new man just wants the power. He hates the kingdom.” (106)

The witches’ confrontational and unusual morality provides the reader a different lens with which to look at the novel’s premise: while comedic exaggeration is a factor in discounting murder as unimportant to their evaluation of Felmet, the reprioritisation of motive and ongoing actions denies relevance to Felmet’s customary morality.

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<sup>20</sup> Felmet’s obsession with and hatred of trees is a clear nod to Macbeth’s demise.

The argument put forth by Granny Weatherwax, which might seem humorously illogical in the way it de-emphasises the act of murder as relevant to the worth of a king, has support in the structure of the narrative. Where the incident of regicide occurs in Act Two shaping *Macbeth* around the issue of murder itself, the decentralisation of murder in *Wyrdsisters* disrupts the gravitational pull of the story – the reader is familiar with the rubber sheet of the story, but the weights have been shifted. Instead, the novel is centred on Granny Weatherwax’s decision to break the rules and meddle in politics, and Felmet and the duchess’s decision to have a play written to obfuscate the regicide (150-6).<sup>21</sup> The weight of the novel rests on these two decisions, even as Felmet’s obsession with his own guilty conscience continually points the reader towards the murder, where the weight of the story seems as though it should rest but does not. This shift of focus highlights the fantasy genre’s obsession with simplistic ethical constructions in order to make a joke out of it. Felmet is not automatically evil because he killed his kin, but rather because he acts as if it matters that he did so. As the Fool chillingly points out, good and bad actions can be only a matter of words apart. That said, the text does not support a reading wherein Felmet is good; the complication comes in how he is bad.

The central flaw in Felmet’s morality is the lack of any mechanism for atonement. The handwashing and hand obsession that represents Felmet’s guilt not only indicates the novel’s connection to *Macbeth*, it also serves to show the relationship between actions and responsibility in the absolute framework Felmet himself is helpless to navigate. Felmet’s initial discomfort when contemplating his regicide, which we see on page 21, rapidly escalates to an obsession by page 38 where he is told by his wife to put matters in hand:

Matters in hand. He’d put matters in hand all right. If he closed his eyes he could still see the body tumbling down the steps. Had there been a hiss of shocked breath, down in the darkness of the hall? He’d been certain they were alone. Matters in hand! He’d tried to wash the blood off his hand. If he could wash the blood off, he told himself, it wouldn’t have happened. He’d scrubbed and scrubbed. Scrubbed till he screamed. (38)

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<sup>21</sup> The play, written about a murder occurring just before the opening of the story, bears more resemblance to *Hamlet* than *Macbeth*.

His obsession with handwashing is an obvious reference to *Macbeth* in which, immediately after the murder, Macbeth cries in a famous speech:

What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes.  
 Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
 Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather  
 The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
 Making the green one red. (2.2.59-63)

The handwashing in both cases is an expression of regret and the desire to escape personal accountability for their murders. Macbeth's fear about washing his hands has, by Act Five Scene One, been passed on to his wife who despairs in her sleep of ever cleaning her hands. However, in *Wyrd Sisters*, Felmet remains obsessed with cleaning his hands after the murder, while his wife never feels remorse for the deed she endorsed. The amoral duchess has no qualms about taking responsibility for any of her actions, but Felmet, who is intensely distressed by his actions, cannot take responsibility for what he has done and thereby move past it and become a good king by the measure of the witches. This results in Felmet's obsession with controlling the narrative of the regicide by changing how the past is remembered, even as the protagonists try to seize control of the future via destiny.

However, while the antagonist character is obsessed with concealing the past, the text's focus on handwashing repeatedly reminds the reader of his substantial loss of control. Within the cultural framework of the theatre, particularly with reference to Shakespeare, both hands and madness have a great deal of weight. Where narrative weight does not rest on the murder, it does fall naturally on Felmet's hand. In a manner reminiscent of *Titus Andronicus*, Felmet proves endlessly capable of bringing his thoughts back to the matter of his handwashing. For instance, when confronted with issues of rule – getting the witches to pay taxes – his mind wanders to his guilt:

The way to progress, he'd found, was to find weak spots. He tried to shut away the thought that these included such things as a king's kidneys at the top of a dark stairway, and concentrated on the matter in hand.

... hand. He'd scrubbed and scrubbed, but it seemed to have no effect. Eventually he'd gone down to the dungeons and borrowed one of the torturer's wire brushes, and scrubbed and scrubbed with that, too. That had no effect, either. It made it worse. The harder he scrubbed, the more blood there was. He was afraid he might go mad ... (50-1)

The escalation of these hand-washing scenes and the gradual deterioration of his hand cue the reader to the simultaneous deterioration of his mind and control over circumstances. His desire to escape accountability has him literally erase an important symbol of his self-control and agency. Felmet's failure to confront and accept his past actions ultimately renders him incapable of further informed ethical action.

Felmet's struggle with guilt and culpability hinges on the simultaneous reality and unreality of the murder within the bounds of the narrative: the effects of it are present and remembered by the characters, but the reader is divorced a step from the action of it. The reader is further distanced by the humorous appearance of King Verence's ghost, by the witches' discounting of its importance, and by Felmet's own determination to forget the act. The regicide hangs in an uneasy balance between significance and insignificance, and it is Felmet's own obsession with refuting the personal relevance of the regicide, his inability to take responsibility for an act which only he frames as truly heinous, which draws that red thread through the narrative. The justification preceding the regicide that creates in *Macbeth* a 'snowball effect', as the tragedy develops, is curtailed in *Wyrd Sisters*, and this curtailment of expectations brings into question the role of the individual conscience in the development of a moral system as well as the relationship popular texts have with ethical systems in general.

### **Duty and Dominion**

Felmet's refusal or inability to care for the kingdom, rather than the regicide, becomes his central moral failing; killing the king is not murder in the eyes of the protagonists, while Felmet's failure to fulfil the role of a king is thoroughly condemned by them. Circumstances led him to possession of a kingdom he does not want and, at the opening of the novel, Felmet finds himself in a position that he is wholly unsuited to. Here Pratchett is closest to the moral position of *Macbeth* – that happiness is impossible when the gains are ill-gotten – but he sidesteps such simplicity with the insistence that the murder was insignificant in the grand scheme of things. The only character who points towards the murder as the cause of the duke's downfall is Felmet himself. The novel humorously complicates fantasy's traditionally simplistic approach to morality by presenting competing moral certainties and no strong resolution to the problems raised. The approach of the witches (that, by virtue of its alignment with the protagonists, appears to be the right approach) concentrates the novel's



weight on the matter of the kingdom which only further emphasises the pointlessness of Felmet's obsessive guilt.

In shifting attention to the kingdom and the duties of a king, the kingdom and the crown become pseudo-characters through key tropes drawn from Shakespeare and the fantasy genre, and their importance is heightened through the reversal of the novel's usual approach to humour. When Granny Weatherwax is left alone with the crown and puts it on, she has a moment of playful pantomime which is interrupted by a different sort of tone:

It seemed to fit. Granny drew herself up proudly, and waved a hand imperiously in the general direction of the hearth.

“Jolly well do this,” she said. She beckoned arrogantly at the grandfather clock. “Chop his head off, what ho,” she commanded. She smiled grimly.

And froze as she heard the screams, and the thunder of horses, and the deadly whisper of arrows and the damp solid sound of spears in flesh. Charge after charge echoed across her skull. Sword met shield, or sword, or bone – relentlessly. Years streamed across her mind in the space of a second. There were times when she lay among the dead, or hanging from the branch of a tree; but always there were hands that would pick her up again, and place her on a velvet cushion. ...

Granny very carefully lifted the crown off her head – it was an effort, it didn't like it much – and laid it on the table.

“So that's being a king for you, is it?” she said softly. “I wonder why they all want the job?” (27)

This episode recalls the scene in *Henry IV Part Two*, where Prince Harry ponders on the crown and takes it from his father's pillow believing him dead. On discovering that this is not the case, he explains:

Coming to look on you, thinking you dead,  
And dead almost my liege, to think you were,  
I spake unto this crown as having sense,  
And thus upbraided it: ‘The care on thee depending  
Hath fed upon the body of my father;  
Therefore thou best of gold art worst of gold.  
Other, less fine in carat, is more precious,  
Preserving life in medicine potable;

But thou, most fine, most honoured, most renowned,  
 Hast eat thy bearer up.' Thus, my royal liege,  
 Accusing it, I put it on my head,  
 To try with it, as with an enemy  
 That had before my face murdered my father,  
 The quarrel of a true inheritor.

(2HIV 4.3.283-296)

His father's response reminds the audience of the "bypaths and indirect crook'd ways" (4.3.312) by which the crown was gained, and then of the "quarrel" and "bloodshed" (4.3.322) which has haunted his reign. Pratchett alludes to both these contentions in having granted his crown a metaphysical memory, as well as to the grand battles which mark most of Shakespeare's history plays, and the famous 'hollow crown' speech of *Richard II* in which we find the lines: "within the hollow crown / That rounds the mortal temples of a king / Keeps Death his court" (3.2.156-8). These allusions introduce the reader to a familiar and dramatic concept of rule which stands in contrast to the novel's humorous tone but fits closely with the Shakespearean elements that anchor the story. From the opening of the novel, the grander Shakespearean elements have been deflated as a consequence of the overarching comic mode of the prose, but there is no deflation regarding the crown here. Instead, there is a reversal of form with Granny shifting from her earlier comic manner behaviour into a surprising level of solemnity. The reliance of the episode on the sounds of battle, with the whispering arrows and the alliteration of "damp solid sound of spears in flesh", further divorces the serious from the comic, as the physical comedy preceding focused on gesture and direct speech. The crown, then, achieves a heightened level of symbolic significance, as the passage which introduces it contrasts so sharply and violently with the general tone of the prose. The symbolism in the novel follows the complications Shakespeare uses as the circular shape of the crown as an object suggests unity, while the vision Granny experiences is a grim picture of conflict. Underlying this contrast is an insistence on an amoral existence which stresses inevitability and the concept of destiny devoid of ethical choice. Granny's resistance, as she removes the crown, is a crucial denial of this stance which pointedly takes place before the witches consider using destiny to achieve their own goals.

The crown's cold and uncaring perspective appears to significantly contrast with the kingdom's stance, but neither have any interest in whether the king is good or not. If we regard Shakespeare's plays as Pratchett's primary source for his parody, it is little wonder

firstly that Lancre is imagined as an entity in and of itself. In *Macbeth*, for instance, Malcom says of Scotland:

I think our country sinks beneath the yoke.  
It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash  
Is added to her wounds. (4.3.40-2)

And Macbeth wishes his doctor could:

cast

The water of my land, find her disease,  
And purge it to a sound and pristine health. (5.3.52-4)

However, it would be an error to attribute Pratchett's conception of a body politic wholly to his Shakespearean source. Kingdoms have long been imagined as groaning, mourning, and rejoicing in literature, and Pratchett has taken this to a logical and imaginative end.

Nonetheless, the connection between the king and the land in *Wyrd Sisters* appears heavily influenced by Shakespeare's presentation of kings and kingdoms. At his introduction into the novel, Felmet considers his rise to power and the kingdom he is to inherit: "he was now just a step away from the throne, and might soon be monarch of all he surveyed. Provided that all he surveyed was trees" (20). The Biblical allusion to the temptation of Christ in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 is further coloured by William Cowper's poem "Verses Supposed to be Written by Alexander Selkirk, During his Solitary Abode in the Island of Juan Fernandez" which opens with the phrase "I am monarch of all I survey" (1) and the first stanza ends with "Better dwell in the midst of alarms, / Than reign in this horrible place" (7-8), a sentiment which Felmet closely mirrors. The reduction of the kingdom of Lancre to trees in Felmet's mind further, as mentioned in the footnote earlier, stands as an obvious devaluation of the kingdom and a reference to *Macbeth* wherein "Macbeth shall never vanquished be until / Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him" (4.1.96-8). The trees, in this case, are not the subject of a prophecy. Instead they become a symbol of Felmet's dissatisfaction with the kingdom, and his hatred for it. Early in the novel, after the tax gatherer has failed to collect from the witches, Felmet considers his kingdom's shortcomings:

Gods, he hated this kingdom.

It was so small, only forty miles long and maybe ten miles wide, and nearly all of it was cruel mountains with ice-green slopes and knife-edge crests, or dense huddled forests. A kingdom like that shouldn't be any trouble.

What he couldn't quite fathom was this feeling that it had *depth*. It seemed to contain far too much geography.

He rose and paced the floor to the balcony, with its unrivalled view of trees. It struck him that the trees were also looking back at him.

He could feel the resentment. But that was odd, because the people themselves hadn't objected. They didn't seem to object to anything very much. Verence had been popular enough, in his way. There'd been quite a turnout for the funeral; he recalled the lines of solemn faces. Not stupid faces. By no means stupid. Just preoccupied, as though what kings did wasn't really very important.

He found that almost as annoying as trees. (62-3)

Felmet constructs a false mutual antagonism between himself and the trees, which is representative of his attitude towards the kingdom as a whole. His frustration at the lack of response, from the people he rules and from the trees, also serves to bring to the forefront the question of power. Felmet is effectively powerless against the trees, against the kingdom, and against the witches, until the Fool points out the power which can be found in words. Initially this power is directed at the witches (75-6), but it is later directed at the trees and thereby towards the kingdom itself (153-4). The exercise of this power is complicated by the construction of the kingdom as a sentient being; while Felmet may think of the kingdom in terms of trees, the reader is given a much broader and more complex perspective.

The kingdom itself, like the crown, is introduced with a shift in expectations. Granny wakes and senses something is wrong:

Everything was as it should be, with the exception that nothing was right. There was something – yes, there was something *alive* out there, something young and ancient and ...

Granny turned over the feeling in her mind. Yes. That was it. Something forlorn. Something lost. And ...

Feelings were never simple, Granny knew. Strip them away and there were others underneath ...

Something that, if it didn't stop feeling lost and forlorn very soon, was going to get *angry*. (70)

She searches with her mind for the "something", going down "to the smallest creature in the kingdom" (71). She is unable to find it, initially, but is able to tell that "[t]here was something out there, something drinking in magic, something growing, something that seemed so alive it

was all around the house”; she decides to have “one last try. Perhaps she was looking the wrong way ... A moment later she was lying on the floor with the pillow clasped around her head. And to think she had expected it to be *small* ...” (71). The use of ellipses in this passage obstructs the reader, who follows Granny’s thought processes down to consideration of the smallest of creatures but does not follow her Borrowing up in an equivalent way. The moment of discovery is only partially rendered with the fragmentary nature of the prose implying the magnitude of what Granny encounters by its apparent incapacity to describe it. The episode ends with the revelation that the “something” is not small, and the implication that it is extremely large, but not with an indication of *what* the thing is. Revelation is withheld in favour of building expectations, and these expectations are not without an intertextual foundation: the reader may suspect, given the continued use of conceptualised kingdoms in both fiction and non-fiction, the nature of the entity Granny Weatherwax has encountered.

When the kingdom is revealed, it does take on a slightly different form than the intertextual nature of Pratchett’s work might lead a reader to expect. Woodland creatures turn up to confront Granny at her cottage in a scene reminiscent of Noah’s ark or *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. It is the animal kingdom of Lancre. The exclusion of humans from this gathering of the kingdom both allows for the joke (that it is an animal kingdom), and refuses to make humanity intrinsic to the concept of a kingdom. The result is a kingdom that can act independently of the characters, and thereby is in a position to force the characters into action. That is not to say that humanity is consistently excluded from the kingdom. Granny Weatherwax’s explanation of the nature of the kingdom as an entity draws heavily on literary and cultural notions:

“That’s just about land,” said Granny. “It’s not the same as a kingdom. A kingdom is made up of all sorts of things. Ideas. Loyalties. Memories. It all sort of exists together. And then all these things create some kind of life. Not a body kind of life, more like a living idea. Made up of everything that’s alive and what they’re thinking. And what the people before them thought.” (105)

The overt reference to the traditional body politic idea, for all the accompanying caveats, brings to the forefront the traditional accompanying idea that the connection between king and kingdom is both a mystical and very real bond. As the ghost of King Verence points out, in the world of the novel ““the land and the king are one”” (148).

The ethical relevance of imagining the nation or kingdom as a single entity is maintained from the intertextual source material despite the slight shifts in how it is imagined.<sup>22</sup> Where the body politic has been used as a model for a functioning society and as a means of understanding and condemning dysfunction within said societies, the central principle of the model itself is social duty. In medieval and early modern imaginings, this duty is directed up the social ladder and towards the king, whose health *is* the health of the kingdom. Later, concerns developed about the king's duty to the people, and it is safe to consider this as pivotal in a wider shift in understanding the king's right to rule. As the right to rule was imagined as stemming from the people, so the king was given a duty to the people rather than a duty to the divine. While this constituted an important ethical step forward in conceptions of the nation, the right to rule which appears in *Wyrd Sisters* differs in that it removes the people from much of the picture and largely imagines the kingdom as made up of the land, plants, and animals of Lancre. In doing so, the ethical burden, the duty of care, shifts wholly onto the king figure.

Passive guilt, then, is an insufficient response to having killed a king, as in this case it entails a cessation of motive, a finality to the act, rather than an undertaking of a new set of duties. Despite Felmet screaming at the kingdom “‘I am the King!’” (73) and his insistence that he is “‘king by right of conquest’” (136) when Granny advises him to abdicate, he continues to be called a duke in the text until his death. The novel ends with discussion of the Fool’s coronation, wherein he is given more credence as a king than Felmet manages to muster across the entire novel. On the one hand, there is the matter of the lost crown. Felmet does not have a coronation, and does not take up the crown in a literal sense, and so cannot be a king. He does not control the ongoing narrative of kingship and instead dedicates his energy to controlling the past, and his failure to take up the duty of care entailed in kingship is ultimately presented as more wrong than the act of regicide.

By animating the kingdom, by comparing the kingdom to a dog which “‘doesn’t care if its master’s good or bad, just so long as it likes the dog’” (106), Pratchett reframes

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<sup>22</sup> Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, defines the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellows-members” (6). This modern definition emphasises the artificial nature of the nation, which resembles the way that, in *Hogfather*, Death describes “JUSTICE. MERCY. DUTY. THAT SORT OF THING” (270) and how Om is diminished in *Small Gods* by people believing in his inquisition more than in him. Here in *Wyrd Sisters*, however, the Early Modern model holds greater sway as Pratchett emphasises the natural manifestation of belief over the act of belief itself.

traditional fantasy narrative concerns about good and evil into something which appears simpler – but, in fact, is much more complex – by using deep-seated cultural narratives around kingship. While ‘like’ and ‘care’ are not considered particularly strong words, Pratchett avoids the more dramatic ‘love’. Even in the romance between Magrat and the Fool, the word is avoided. In simply requiring a liking for the kingdom as a prerequisite for kingship, Pratchett lowers the bar, and still manages to demonstrate the difficulty of attaining the minimum.

Felmet’s failure to like the kingdom places the witches in a moral conundrum which harks back to the roots of witch stereotypes. Witches, during Shakespeare’s era, were believed to routinely attempt to meddle in politics. King James I/VI himself feared that witches would undermine his monarchy with their magical plots and his *Daemonologie, in Forme of a Dialogue, Diuided into Three Bookes* (1597) constitutes one of the best-known sources on witchcraft from the early modern period. King James’s determined hunt for witchcraft established some of the most long-lasting witch stereotypes that remain in our cultural consciousness today. However, the belief that witches have an interest in politics has faded from current understandings of the general witch stereotype. Political witches do remain in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, though, and the continual allusions to this source shape the stereotypes the reader is working with. While an unprompted reader might not identify meddling with politics as an attitude associated with witches, the influence of the witches’ prophecies on the politics of *Macbeth* is one of the most memorable aspects of the play. Allusions to *Macbeth* remind the reader of this old stereotype and it is from this basis of the witch stereotype that *Wyrd Sisters* launches into its discussion of ‘meddling’.

When the witches find themselves in possession of both the crown and the baby prince the conundrum begins. Granny opens the passage in which the witches discuss what to do with the crown and the prince with the line “‘It’s meddling, that’s what it is’” (24), but despite her reluctance to deal with the situation it is rapidly established that something must be done. There is no question regarding the rightness of the protagonists giving the baby to the Vitollers to be raised, nor even regarding their hiding the crown. The story is still largely following the black and white morality which is often employed in fantasy at this early point, but the simplicity of this outlook is soon challenged. When the kingdom wakes and contacts Granny, she protests:

“What can I do about it? It’s no good you coming to me. He’s the new lord. This is his kingdom. I can’t go meddling. It’s not *right* to go meddling, on account of I can’t interfere with people ruling. It has to

sort itself out, good or bad. Fundamental rule of magic, is that. You can't go round ruling people with spells, because you'd have to use more and more spells all the time." She sat back, grateful that long-standing tradition didn't allow the Crafty and the Wise to rule. (90)

Her protests continue and Granny questions where it might end, if she did act, and the scene ends with her stating: "'I can't go around meddling. That's the whole point'" (91). In making this a one-sided argument between a single person and a kingdom, Pratchett draws attention to the concept of communal obligation, creating a parallel between Felmet and Granny as both shy away from what the kingdom demands. While Granny, during the wider passage, argues that the old king hurt the kingdom by hunting, and that Felmet has not harmed her, the lack of response to her arguments leaves the burden of constructing counterarguments to the reader. Granny's protestations are largely based upon her status as a witch, and serve to both prevent her characterisation from slipping into the negative meddling witch stereotype (or meddling old woman type), and also to point towards the fantasy trope wherein wise wizards and witches, despite their great power, are almost never presented as beneficent rulers. Of particular interest is the choice of the words "Crafty" and "Wise" to indicate these figures – not only do they serve as a recognisable short-hand for magic users, but they are also attributes which a reader might have presumed would be good in a ruler. It must be noted, however, that "crafty", often associated with witches, has a set of negative connotations relating to a sort of feminine intelligence. Neither Granny's reluctance nor her cunning sway the kingdom, with the reader likely favouring the kingdom's silent insistence on action due to either their own arguments or the simple gravitas of the kingdom's prompting.<sup>23</sup>

King Verence's qualities contrast with those of Felmet, who dwells on the past, and is crafty enough to realise that the witches are not in a position to directly challenge his rule. When Granny confronts him in the torture scene, Felmet gloats:

"If you defeat me by magic, magic will rule," said the duke. "And you can't do it. Any king raised with your help would be under your power. Hagridden, I might say. That which magic rules, magic destroys. It would destroy you, too. You know it. Ha. Ha." (136-7)

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<sup>23</sup> The lack of an argument here reverses the speechlessness in *Equal Rites*, as the silence here becomes compelling, whereas in the previous novel it was supremely unconvincing.



Aware that the witches cannot directly take action against him, Felmet unwittingly drives them to explore what other options remain open. Both the protagonists and antagonists agree that magic cannot be used to unseat him. If we view magic as a power external to the state, using it to gain control of the kingdom would render the kingdom a puppet state. This passage also reinforces fantasy tropes which commonly dictate that only evil rulers use magic, and will inevitably be destroyed by heroes. Granny Weatherwax cannot, then, take over the kingdom directly without fulfilling this trope *because now the reader is aware of the trope*. Likewise, when the question is raised about the witches asking for help, an adjacent trope is explained:

It was probably some wonderful organisation on the part of Nature to protect itself. It saw to it that everyone with any magical talent was about as ready to co-operate as a she-bear with a toothache, so all that dangerous power was safely dissipated as random bickering and rivalry. There were differences in style, of course. Wizards assassinated each other in draughty corridors, witches just cut one another dead in the street. And they were all as self-centred as a spinning top. (145)

Not only does this reinforce the trope of magic users being poor rulers, but it also explains the protagonists' reluctance to involve anyone else in the plans, and why they eventually break the moral imperative not to meddle in politics.

After confronting Felmet, in the same passage in which Magrat raises the question of whether or not to ask for help, the witches decide to meddle in politics after all. Nanny Ogg has brought King Verence's ghost from the castle, and he implores the witches to help his son to the throne (147). Despite the ghost's insistence that it is his son's destiny, "Granny looked wretched. "'It's meddling, you see,' she said. 'It always goes wrong if you meddle in politics. Like, once you start, you can't stop. Fundamental rule of magic, is that. You can't go around messing with fundamental rules'" (147). After her refusal to act – at least not until Tomjon is older – the ghost reminds the witches that "'the land and the king are one'" (148), pointing out that the land will grow "shoddy and mean" (148) with Felmet in power. While this prompts Magrat to want to break the fundamental rules, Granny continues to think about things. Pratchett has carefully established a scenario which encourages action for selfless reasons. But a sense of duty to the kingdom, it seems, is insufficient reason to act and, instead, Granny is finally driven to action by a show of disrespect, when she is nearly run down by a cart (148-51). Disrespect towards the witches builds from the moment when Felmet is told by the Fool that it is possible to use words to harm the witches. While we are

not privy to the dissemination of negative propaganda based on witch stereotypes, there are a number of indications that it is occurring in the lead up to this point in the novel. In one sense the fact that the reduction in respect caused by the propaganda prompts the witches to act against the state which disseminated said propaganda is a moment of dramatic irony. On the other hand, the motive which finally prompts action in this case is essentially selfish, and so taken alone does not seem ethically sound. Rather than making full use of the trope of selfless calls to action, which are a fantasy staple at the basis of the stark morality of the genre, self-interest becomes the primary motivation for the protagonists, complicating how the reader might approach their interference, but (importantly) not undermining the significance of what they do accomplish.

Having decided to act, the witches must determine the extent to which they may interfere with politics. The novel has clearly established that there are ethical boundaries which should not be crossed, and while the witches take the first step to crossing these lines, there are a number of restrictions they still adhere to. The coven avoids direct action, Magrat pointing out that “cursing people is morally unsound and extremely bad for your karma” (160), an assertion only slightly undermined by Nanny’s determination to curse Felmet under her breath. At this point the meaning of the word “curse” has shifted from a harmful magical spell to an expletive. Granny Weatherwax is determined not to curse Felmet, but to replace him with the old king’s son (160-1). None of the witches suggest taking power themselves, which reframes their selfishness – they are not deposing Felmet to gain status, but rather to retain respect. Their plot, however, is based on the actions of “Black Aliss”, the stereotypical fairy tale antagonist. Rather than take the throne by force, the witches resolve to shift the entire kingdom of Lancre fifteen years into the future (161-3). Deliberately alluding to the story line of “Sleeping Beauty”, with Black Aliss as the evil fairy, the novel takes great pains to remind the reader that the spell the witches are about to attempt has been used for evil. But it should be noted in this quick refashioning of the fairy tale that the curse placed on the princess and her castle is not a lengthy curse *per se*, but a spell which has the instantaneous effect of shifting the sleeping castle to a point in the future. This passing revision of the story fundamentally changes how it is interpreted – “Very romantic, Black Aliss was. There was always a bit of romance in her spells. She liked nothing better than Girl meets Frog” (163) –

but the evil of the antagonist remains implied.<sup>24</sup> The witches, then, are taking actions explicitly outlined as characteristic of an antagonistic figure.

Both the motive and the central action the witches take stem from what are usually interpreted as negative roots – selfishness and antagonism. Nevertheless, it would be a stretch to claim the novel censures their actions. The depiction of the antagonists up to this point, as stereotypical, power-hungry overlords who do not care for the kingdom, results in the witches' questionable motives appearing to be the right approach. Any action against antagonists in a fantasy novel is likely to be seen as good, and while the novel complicates this simplistic genre convention by introducing a selfish motive and a questionable spell, it does so in a manner that continues to rely upon a tropeish approach to morality. That being said, the protagonists are comically rendered as antagonists from Tomjon's perspective, a reversal that is used to draw attention to the problematic concept of destiny.

### **Destiny and How Things Ought to Be**

Destiny appears as a major concern in a number of Pratchett's *Witches* novels, and usually the texts focus on who has control over the narrative. In *Equal Rites* the concept of destiny is used as a means to justify the challenge Esk poses to the status quo. Her destiny to become a wizard has the inevitability of birthright to it, and there is no question about whether or not it will happen (especially not after Granny Weatherwax herself found she had to admit defeat); the question is how it will happen, and the attempts others make to control her destiny are doomed to failure. *Wyrd Sisters* uses destiny in a more flexible manner, a fact particularly evident in the quick substitution of the Fool for Tomjon at the conclusion of the story. Where Granny Weatherwax was beaten by destiny in the earlier novel, here she uses it to accomplish her more selfish ends, as it becomes reframed as a controllable narrative force. The connection between the witches and destiny, especially with their ability to manipulate it, is unsurprising given the text's connection to *Macbeth* and the multiple meanings of 'weird/wyrd'. What is somewhat surprising is the lack of a prophecy. Rather than employ a prophecy directly, Pratchett alludes to well-known narratives and uses them to shape destiny, and the closest the novel comes to prophecy are the blessings each of the witches bestow

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<sup>24</sup> "Girl meets Frog" is, in fact, one of the stories that Lily tries to play out in *Witches Abroad*.

upon Tomjon.<sup>25</sup> With the *Macbeth* prophecy present only in its absence, the novel balances a discussion of free will versus destiny in a manner typical of a tragedy but distinct from *Macbeth* specifically. Tomjon is as ignorant of his destiny as Oedipus when he unwittingly travels back to the kingdom of his birth, and the implications of this, though less dire, do heighten the importance of the witches as Fates. An undeniable conflict between tragedy and comedy is being worked out in the text, as the expectations of the witches come into conflict with the comic mode in which they appear.

The tension between free will and destiny heightens the conflict between individual desires and communal good, as the witches struggle to facilitate the concept of inevitable destiny towards simultaneously selfish and societal ends. In a metatextual sense, their manipulation of the circumstances in order to attain what can only be described as a high level of tropishness is made comic only by means of the reader's understanding of the general structure of fantasy and tragic narratives. As a sophisticated form of dramatic irony, this results in the reader being placed into a position where they can see the artificial nature of destiny within narrative worlds as we can see the author, as much as the witches, contorting the narrative to achieve the 'inevitable'. In terms of the ethics of the novel, awareness of these contortions affects how destiny can be approached. There are characters making conscious choices to bring about a pre-meditated end rather than an obtuse and insubstantial fate resolving the novel's conflict. The witches work to limit Tomjon's choices even as they constrain Felmet's potential to become a king.<sup>26</sup> Their actions are an expression of free will which must draw into question the degree to which the other characters are bound by the destiny of narrative probability.

Once the witches decide to meddle in Lancre's politics by overtly depending on and assisting destiny, the very inevitability of tragedy is drawn into question. In beginning their plan to emancipate the kingdom from Felmet's rule, the witches begin to seize control of the narrative they inhabit. Granny Weatherwax initially moves the kingdom in time to prompt destiny:

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<sup>25</sup> Pratchett employs this technique in a number of his novels, using tropes and common adages to define not just the possible, but also the probable. The Discworld is established as a place where million to one chances work out nine times out of ten, or as Colon puts it in *Guards! Guards!* "'Last hopeless chances have got to work. Nothing makes sense otherwise. You might as well not be alive'" (263).

<sup>26</sup> At the climax of the novel, after Felmet has departed from sanity and the stage, Nanny remarks: "'You've got to admit he was real royalty [...] It only goes to show, royalty goes eccentric far better than the likes of you and me.'"

“I reckon fifteen’d be a nice round number,” said Granny. “That means the lad will be eighteen at the finish. We just do the spell, go and fetch him, he can manifest his destiny, and everything will be nice and neat.”

Magrat didn’t comment on this, because it had occurred to her that destinies sounded easy enough when you talked about them but were never very bankable where real human beings were concerned. (163)

Magrat’s reservations encourage the reader to view destiny with suspicion, which also serves to obliquely bring into play both the concept of free will and the fictional nature of the text. In the world of the story “real human beings” may refer to Magrat’s fellow characters, but it also reminds the reader that there is a difference between characters in fiction and real people. Breaking the fourth wall here illustrates the fragility and ultimate intangibility of destiny in the real world, and raises the question of why it is such an important concept. James B. South notes, with reference to Pratchett’s *Hogfather*, that “as with justice and mercy, there is no molecule or atom of destiny in the universe” (39).<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, it is in using destiny, which does appear to function in this fictional setting, that the witches are closest to taking overtly unethical action. The metaphysical nature of destiny means that in using it to depose Felmet, or even consciously assisting it they are in danger of overstepping the clear rule against using magic to gain political control. Meanwhile, in consciously working towards a fulfilment of perceived destined end, they are complicit in the undermining of free will. To Tomjon, the witches are antagonists.

Tomjon is, on paper, a stereotypical protagonist drawn from Arthurian roots. Pratchett subverts this type passively with Tomjon to bring into question the fantasy genre’s use of such stereotypical protagonists and the genre’s reliance on destiny. Tomjon is heir to a throne, stolen away as a baby to be raised in a lowly setting, and has been gifted with certain magical enhancements by multiple godmothers. He knows nothing of all this of course, and Pratchett’s main subversion of this stereotype is to present Tomjon as perfectly happy as an actor. All the attributes which make the stereotype of the returning heir appealing are directed towards theatre, which in turn makes a mockery of our expectation that Tomjon should have such qualities. His ability to walk amongst the common people, a quality of Shakespeare’s Prince Hal in *Henry IV Part One* and *Henry IV Part Two*, and King Henry in *Henry V*, is

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<sup>27</sup> Though he makes no argument for the necessity of destiny on this basis.

framed as performance rather than a genuine connection. The play has been taken out of itself and so, rather than creating a genuine connection between people, the speeches Tomjon uses to evoke emotions in the listeners highlight the disconnection between him and the people around him. When Tomjon declaims a speech from “*The King of Ankh*” (197), which bears an uncanny resemblance to *Henry V*, the playwright Hwel thinks:

He’d been a bit ashamed of that play at the time. The famous battle of Morpork, he strongly suspected, had consisted of about two thousand men lost in a swamp on a cold, wet day, hacking one another into oblivion with rusty swords. What would the last King of Ankh have said to a pack of ragged men who knew they were outnumbered, out-flanked, and out-generalled? Something with bite, something with edge, something like a drink of brandy to a dying man; no logic, no explanation, just words that would reach right down through a tired man’s brain and pull him to his feet by the testicles.

Now he was seeing its effect.

[...] And he’d written the words, they were *his*, no half-crazed king had ever really spoken like this. And he’d written all this to fill in a gap so that a castle made of painted sacking could be shoved behind a curtain, and this voice was taking the coal dust of his words and filling the room with diamonds.

I *made* these words, Hwel thought. But they don’t belong to me. They belong to him.

Look at those people. Not a patriotic thought among them, but if Tomjon asked them, this bunch of drunkards would storm the Patrician’s palace tonight. And they’d probably succeed.

I just hope his mouth never falls into the wrong hands ...

As the last syllables died away, their white-hot echoes searing across every mind in the room, Hwel shook himself and crawled out of hiding and jabbed Tomjon on the knee.

“Come away now, you fool,” he hissed. “Before it wears off.”

(197-8)

While the audience is overcome by Tomjon’s speech, he is unaffected. The disconnection between the characters is all the more apparent due to the comparison between a probable historical reality and the staging of a play. There is a disconnection between reality and a

play, but Tomjon is able to bring the play's reality to bear on everyday life. Hwel's motive – to allow for a change in set – and his design – to write something at once largely meaningless and yet still emotionally gripping – are another incongruous combination between practicality and emotion of theatre, which is in turn divorced from the historical theatre of battle, that furthers the sense of a divide between real issues and the temporary escape Tomjon provides. While in this novel there is a confluence of literary forms influencing the presentation of Tomjon as a stereotypical character, Pratchett places general likeability high on the list of attributes for a stereotypical long-lost heir. In his Watch novels the lost king of Ankh-Morpork, Captain Carrot, is presented as universally liked by the people of city.<sup>28</sup> Neither Tomjon, nor Carrot exploit this in order to gain political power nor are they protagonists in their stories. In the case of Carrot, he is too lawful and good to be an effective policeman and must learn how the city works from Samuel Vimes. In the case of Tomjon, the novel is concerned with how the witches manipulate him in order to solve their problems.

When viewing Tomjon as a stereotypical protagonist, it soon becomes apparent that the witches have a largely negative impact on him through the second half of the story and fall into the negative, antagonistic, side of their stereotype. He has nightmares about the witches looking in on him, which he describes as “terrible” and “horrible” (190-1, 213-6). In attempting to manipulate destiny, the witches appear in these dreams in a parody of the major witch scenes in *Macbeth*. In the first they hail Tomjon as king hereafter, and in the second they make a potion similar to that which appears in the Shakespeare play, but with substitutions. A clued-in reader may recognise the disparity between the use of the witches in the two texts: Felmet is in the position of Macbeth, having murdered the king and now doing everything in his power to secure his reign, while the witches are attempting to bring forth a second Macbeth to kill Felmet, and in the process are restricting Tomjon's choices. This comes to a head when the witches declare him the true king after Felmet tries to kill himself (271). Tomjon, though, makes it clear that he does not want his choices taken away and in doing so makes it clear that he neither wants nor cares for the kingdom which seriously brings into question the witches' actions. He protests to Hwel that: ““You can't leave me here! There's nothing but forests!”” (284), his distaste for the kingdom echoing Felmet's. As he tries to find a way out of becoming king, Tomjon thinks:

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<sup>28</sup> He does not desire the throne and remains a watchman throughout the series.

Everyone wanted him to be king. No-one thought twice about what he wanted. His views didn't count.

Yes, that was it. No-one wanted *him* to be king, not precisely *him*. He just happened to be convenient.

Gold does not tarnish, at least physically, but Tomjon felt that the thin band of metal in his hands had an unpleasant lustre. It had sat on too many troubled heads. If you held it to your ear, you could hear the screams. (280)

He recognises that he fits the stereotype of the returning heir in this passage, but the reader is also given insight into the issue with stereotypical characters. By breaking from the type enough to protest that he is only being put into this position because he fits the role, Tomjon highlights the ethical issue with the witches' actions. They have assumed that because he fits the type, he will be satisfied with the destiny they arrange. When the older witches refuse to acknowledge the ethical issue here, the reader is likely to be uncomfortable with this arrangement, as the main issue of the novel – that the king does not care for the kingdom – is not being resolved. The happy ending of the novel is dependent on the acknowledgement that both destiny and identity are malleable rather than inevitable. Magrat pushes the other witches into acknowledging the Fool may also fit the stereotype of the returning heir. He appears to be Tomjon's brother, has been raised outside the castle, trained in a lowly profession outside the kingdom, and has played a role in the downfall of Felmet. As soon as it becomes apparent that there are choices when it comes to destiny, however, the strength of destiny as a concept is weakened.

While the notion of destiny is not undone as South argues (36, 39), in the end the ethical dilemma is one of choice rather than destiny. If it is *necessary* to strive in order to accomplish a destiny, then destiny is in part a matter of choice. In *Macbeth* the inevitable nature of destiny is questioned by Macbeth when he is deciding whether to kill Duncan on the basis of the witches' prophecies. *Wyrd Sisters* makes an argument for choice and self-determination by demonstrating the ethical problems posed by reliance on, and narrative control of, destiny. South argues that we find Tomjon and Granny "at an impasse. [...] For all of her meddling, which she has done for the sake of the kingdom and its form of life, destiny refuses to cooperate. Of course it does, because there is no such thing" (39). To label the controversy between the two an impasse understates Tomjon's powerlessness in the situation. He can only dismiss Granny's active meddling by acting as a king (282-3), and he is not able to decline the crown in any meaningful way. Hwel remarks: "the only chance you'd have is



if there was another heir''' (284). To regard destiny as unreal undermines the extent to which the witches have taken away Tomjon's ability to choose. Destiny might only have the reality granted by the belief of the townspeople and the witches, but it is an established trope of the Discworld that belief makes things real.

Belief affects not only Tomjon's destiny, but also the Fool's. The Fool is aligned with the antagonists throughout most of the play both because he firmly believes that doing so is his duty, and because he does not believe he has had any choice in becoming a fool in the first place. When asked by Magrat why he became a fool rather than something else, "'What else is there?' said the Fool. 'I haven't seen anything else I could be'" (176). The shift from the implied speech concerning the Fool's history in the surrounding passage, to the present tense direct speech in these lines highlights the fact that the Fool still considers himself trapped in his role. It is heavily implied that the Fool has been destined to take on the role, due to familial precedent which mimics the royal precedent of kingship. However, the Fool has, at the same time, had to work hard to become a fool, as he recalls having been no good at it. As an outside observer, further distanced from the Fool's miserable past by the manner in which it is recounted and the humorous elements therein, the reader is in the position to view the Fool as having created his own destiny by passively accepting that he does not have a choice. When he recognises that he can choose to help the witches rather than Felmet, he is able to not only move to the side of good in the story, but also change his destiny and become king. The novel does not so much undermine destiny as investigate, and perhaps rewrite, its nature. Destiny is comprised of both belief and choice.

## **Final Thoughts**

The acknowledgement of choice is at the heart of the ethical discussion in this novel. Felmet's guilt is partially the result of his refusal to recognise that he made a choice of his own free will to murder his cousin. When he is confronted with his crime in the form of the play, he protests: "'No! I did not do it! It was not like that! You cannot say it was like that! You were not there!'" (267). His denial that the event even occurred stresses his inability to confront his actions despite his obsession with them. Earlier in the novel Granny points out that "'kings go round killing each other because it's all part of destiny and such and doesn't count as murder'" (106), but Felmet at no point mentions destiny as a justification for regicide. The magically manipulated play suggests that, unlike Macbeth, Felmet has received

no prophecy prompting him to murder, only the urgings of his wife and the promise of a kingdom. He makes the choice to kill Verence I but has no basic belief in his own justification for his actions; his desperation to escape perceived blame leads him to go completely mad, and, as he is doing so, he finally blames his wife for the murder (270). The reader, having their attention drawn to her, must consider her as complicit, but while she persuaded her husband to commit the murder, it is clear she is not to be considered responsible for his actions. Felmet's mad desperation to escape blame is such that anyone he accuses might be acquitted of blame by the reader. The result is a vision of ethics in which each individual is responsible for their own actions insofar as they influence others, but are not responsible for the actions then taken by those who have been influenced. However, the final confrontation between the duchess and Granny clarifies that taking responsibility for one's choices does not automatically constitute a moral existence. The duchess's utter lack of remorse renders her monstrous, despite her acceptance of responsibility. A personal awareness of our impact on others is necessary, then, in order to live ethically in a world like ours, but is insufficient in and of itself to constitute a satisfactory ethical schema. Guilt alone cannot be relied on to force individuals to correct actions antithetical to the wellbeing of society.



### Chapter Three – A Lady All in White: *Witches Abroad*

*Witches Abroad* further develops the concepts of narrative control and narrative impetus and locates the use of both in the realm of the antagonist. The concept of narrative control is, however, complicated in this novel. Where in *Wyrd Sisters* the protagonists control the unfolding narrative by facilitating destiny in order to depose Felmet, in *Witches Abroad* Lily Weatherwax facilitates narratives to control destinies and the kingdom of Genua. Stories are alive in *Witches Abroad* and threaten both the choice and agency of characters caught up in them. They are “a parasitical life form, warping lives in the service only of the story itself” (3). Essentially, they shape both choices and outcomes of choices to fit to their narratives: narratives which are highly recognisable. The novel draws primarily on fairy tales, but also refers to other well-known narratives, such as those of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Wizard of Oz*. In all cases the reader is expected to recognise the story but not become immersed in its tone and ideas as they are encouraged to in *Wyrd Sisters*. Instead the reader is placed in the position of an outsider, forced to re-examine familiar narratives from an unfamiliar standpoint constructed by the novel.

The primary endeavour of *Witches Abroad* is clearly signposted to the reader from the very beginning. At the opening of the novel we are told:

This is a story about stories.

Or what it really means to be a fairy godmother.

But it’s also, particularly, about reflections and mirrors. (4)

This concise summation of the concerns of the novel, with its somewhat cryptic proposals, is not so much telling the reader what the story is about as describing how the central themes are going to be discussed. A reader who comes to this novel soon after reading *Wyrd Sisters* may be put in mind of Death’s musing on the nature of the theatre:

There was something here, he thought, that nearly belonged to the gods.

Humans had built a world inside the world, which reflected it in pretty much the same way as a drop of water reflects the landscape. And yet .... And yet ...

Inside this little world they had taken pains to put all the things you might think they would want to escape from – hatred, fear, tyranny, and so forth. Death was intrigued. They thought they wanted to be

taken out of themselves, and every art humans dreamt up took them  
further *in*. (265-6)

Reflection is in the nature of stories, and what stories invariably reflect is human nature. *Witches Abroad* questions what sort of human nature some of our best-known stories present and whether it deserves the reiteration.

Fairy tale retellings are perennial in their popularity. As a literary form they remain strongly linked to the oral traditions that birthed them, and, having been deemed a staple of childhood literacy, they have become a significant thread in the cultural fabric of the English-speaking world. The practice of retelling, in this context, always involves an implicit acknowledgement of the most widely distributed versions of the fairy tale. Cristina Bacchilega, in *Fairy Tales Transformed?*, proposes that the popularisation of fairy tale retellings and critiques (feminist and otherwise) since the 1970s has “affected power dynamics within and among fairy-tale texts” (27). The poetics and politics of wonder she discusses are prominent in Pratchett’s work, which creates humour and satire through the aggressive deconstruction and reconstruction of wonder. Bacchilega quotes Marina Warner’s definition of wonder as follows:

Wonder has no opposite; it springs already doubled in itself, compounded of dread and desire at once, attraction and recoil, producing a thrill, the shudder of pleasure and of fear. It names the marvel, the prodigy, the surprise as well as the responses they excite, of fascination and inquiry; it conveys the active motion towards experience and the passive stance of enrapturement. (qtd. in *Fairy Tales Transformed* 5)

In *Witches Abroad* the wonder of the fairy tale – its magic and sense of discovery – is shifted into wondering: wondering whether fairy tales are dangerous, wondering if there is a ‘happily ever after’, and wondering about who controls the distribution of wonder itself. The montage of genre conventions and fairy tale encounters that make up the travel sequence to Genua question the premises and the placement of value in a number of fairy tales before the novel’s focus turns to the stories of “Cinderella” and of “The Princess and the Frog”. This repeated questioning, which focuses on the archetypes of fairy tales, develops a model of deconstruction characteristic of Pratchett’s Discworld wherein a variety of expectations are explored. Wonder becomes suspicious as the narrative progresses, and Lily’s role as fairy godmother places her at the centre of wonder for much of the novel while her role as antagonist perverts that very same wonder.

The reader's expectations of wonder spring not only from the "once upon a time. . ."

(3). The fantasy and travel story genres, too, invite readers to experience wonder, and while the novel casts into doubt the wonder of the fairy tale, the protagonists maintain its relevance within the story. This wonder stems from realist and moral concerns which build upon the arguments in *Wyrd Sisters*, and celebrates self-determination within the bounds of communal wellbeing.

### **Fairy Tales and The Old Lie**

At the outset of the novel the protagonists are tasked with an unusual quest – to keep Ella from marrying the prince. Readers familiar with the shape of fairy tales will come to recognise that this is the "Cinderella" fairy tale and that trying to prevent the wedding will mean taking on the role of the villains of the piece. Good is traditionally recognised as the side striving towards the happy ending, and marriage is recognised as a quintessential happy ending. As Jessica Tiffin notes, however, in her chapter "Structured Sword and Sorcery: The Popular Fairy Tales of Lee, Pratchett, and Tepper", "[t]he novel sets up stories, particularly fairy-tale, as a potentially totalitarian discourse with a strongly self-justifying ideological framework" (164-5). The placement of the protagonists in a genre-savvy position outside these stories allows for a pointed commentary on the concept of a 'happy' ending. The witches are not initially a part of the stories and their debates about the narrative structures they encounter clearly establish for the reader that the fairy tales themselves, and the woman using them, are the antagonistic forces in this story. The montage of narrative episodes which take place on the journey to Genua, with their obscure antagonists, serve to reinforce and highlight the potential evils of a narrative form and expectation itself.

The journey to Genua is episodic in nature, with each episode shaped as a particular story or trope. Within these smaller stories, there is generally a complication or an absence of the usual antagonist figure, which shifts the focus of the reader onto the structures of the story itself. The first episode plays with the fantasy genre and a reader's expectations of fantasy stereotypes. When the witches find themselves in need of shelter high in the mountains, Granny begins to look for a secret door to a dwarfish fortress. Many readers are likely to recognise the allusion to the mines of Moria in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and Gandalf's entry into them with the fellowship of the ring, especially given the reference to "invisible runes" (45). The approach the witches take to entering the dwarf halls deliberately

avoids the epic fantasy tone of Tolkien's work. From the introduction of the idea of dwarfs with "'Little devils get everywhere. Had one come up in my kitchen once,' said Granny. 'Following a seam', he said'" (44), to the revelation that "there are a thousand Kings of the Dwarfs. The term means something like 'senior engineer'" (46)<sup>29</sup>, the novel largely denies any overly serious approach to this fantasy staple.

Rather than stressing the fantastical, Pratchett takes the fantasy dwarf and makes mundane their culture and concerns. Though unusual in their perspective, their industry and concerns about emigration reflect the concerns of actual mining villages. Pratchett addresses the imbalance in the gender ratio of dwarfs in fantasy by explaining that there are no female pronouns and sex is not considered "very important compared to things like metallurgy and hydraulics" (46). In a similar vein it is pointed out that "You didn't often see proper dwarf halls these days. Most dwarfs were off earning big money in the cities down in the lowlands" (47). The practical rather than the epic is used as an explanation, and Tolkien's anti-industrial stance is gently mocked with the presentation of the dwarfs as a people of industry. The deserted mines of Moria – laid to ruin by war and the appearance of the Balrog – have no place in Pratchett's Discworld; there is no epic drama leading to the desertion of dwarf halls, only economic imperative. In undermining the epic tone of his source material, Pratchett both establishes his own tone of fantasy all the more clearly, and confronts his readers with their own narrative expectations.

The dwarfish episode also serves to confront the reader with the idea that the ethics stories put forward may not be straightforward. Those readers familiar with Tolkien might expect a conflict within the dwarf halls, and, where Gandalf faced the Balrog in the mines of Moria, the dwarves are asked to deal with a cave-in. It is in dealing with this cave-in that Pratchett defines the otherness of his dwarfs. Initially the otherness is developed through reference to a fundamental difference in language:

It's often said that eskimos have fifty words for snow[...]

This is not true.

It's also said that dwarfs have two hundred words for rock.

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<sup>29</sup> These comments invoke the tone of *The Hobbit* and Bilbo Baggins's troubles a little more than *The Lord of the Rings*.

They don't. They have no words for rock, in the same way that fish have no words for water. They *do* have words for igneous rock, sedimentary rock, metamorphic rock, rock underfoot, rock dropping on your helmet from above, and rock which looked interesting and which they could have sworn they left here yesterday. But what they don't have is a word meaning 'rock'. Show a dwarf a rock and he sees, for example, an inferior piece of crystalline sulphate of barytes. (47-8)

The passage firmly establishes that dwarfs view the world differently, and the novel goes on to elaborate that the division is not simply linguistic, but also ethical. The cave-in does not distress the dwarfs because of the potential suffering and death of their fellows, but because they may have lost the gold-bearing quartz vein they had been mining. When Magrat overhears the primary reason for the dwarfs' distress is the loss of the vein, she asks:

"there *are* dwarfs behind all that stuff, are there?"

"Oh, yes," said the King. His tone suggested that this was merely a regrettable side-effect of the disaster, because getting fresh dwarfs was only a matter of time whereas decent gold-bearing rock was a finite resource. (48)

The revelation that the King's own son is one of the trapped dwarfs, and that the son shares his father's concerns rather than resenting the fact that his father views him as replaceable, reinforces the otherness of dwarfish priorities. Their ethical standpoint is demonstrably different from our human ethical standpoint which dictates that life should be prioritised over lifeless matter. Nonetheless, the ethical standpoint of the dwarfs is sufficiently logical for a reader to understand it as a potentially cohesive system in which good and evil may vary from what is expected by the reader. The strict morality of traditional fantasy is brought into question and complicated by the reframing of Tolkien's fantasy classic.

The final apparent rejection of high fantasy's black and white morality comes as the witches are leaving the dwarf hall. The witches meet "a small grey creature, vaguely froglike", who tells them it is its birthday (56). The creature is an obvious allusion to Tolkien's Gollum, who first appears in *The Hobbit* with a similar description, and to the One



Ring which Gollum ‘found’ on his birthday.<sup>30</sup> Rather than engage with the creature Granny hits it over the head with an oar (56), thereby avoiding the implied high fantasy story. Tiffin suggests that this is symbolic, “neatly encapsulating Pratchett’s attitude to the pretentious unreality of much pulp fantasy” (160), but she discounts not only Pratchett’s love of Tolkien and the fantasy genre, but also the ethical question this act raises. The treatment of Gollum in *Lord of the Rings* is used to point towards the good or evil of the actor at hand.<sup>31</sup> Granny’s quick attack on the loathsome creature she meets would, by such standards, render her at least morally grey. While Granny’s violence is not entirely justified, based as it is on the presumption that the creature was a “troublemaker” (56), it is comical as a deflation or circumvention of the epic quest narrative. In the comedy of the moment the reader is disinclined to consider the action in ethical terms, countering the ethical stresses placed upon characters’ actions in Tolkien’s work. However, while the high stakes of Tolkien’s fantasy tradition appear to be rejected, this episode serves more to redefine the protagonists as observers rather than actors in the situations they encounter on the way to Genua. The high moral stakes do reappear once they reach their destination, but, like Gulliver, these comic travellers stand somewhat apart from the narrative landscapes they travel through.

Working in tandem with the protagonists’ roles as comic travellers, the novel’s overt use of genre tropes expose to the reader their own expectations. As the witches find themselves in a forest which is described at the opening sentence of the episode as “dark and ferociously coniferous” (63), the genre markers are particularly explicit. Both the gothic nature of this episode and the parody are immediately apparent as Pratchett make a pun of the similarity between ‘carnivorous’ and ‘coniferous’. Both words are effective at creating a gothic atmosphere and the implication of a carnivorous forest is not at odds with the mood. The word play is amusing because it is so apt, and in being amusing the joke undermines the familiar dread gothic imagery typically inspires. Pratchett overtly draws on readers’ expectations of the gothic genre to lay bare exactly how these expectations function in a gothic narrative. The narrator observes:

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<sup>30</sup> Really, Deagol found it and Smeagol/Gollum murdered him for it. With this intertextual context, “‘It’sss my birthday’” (56) has a more threatening edge.

<sup>31</sup> Legolas confirms the goodness of the elves in admitting that Gollum escaped due to their “over-kindliness” (*The Fellowship* 268), while Sam’s overt distaste and desire to kill Gollum is an exception used to make clear Frodo’s goodness (*The Two Towers* 221-223).

It was the kind of landscape that had a particular type of story attached to it, featuring wolves and garlic and frightened women. A dark and thirsty story, a story that flapped wings against the moon ... (64)

The reference to garlic, thirst, wings, and, shortly after this passage, bats, all put the reader in mind of one sort of stereotypical villain – the vampire – even as the verbal sleight of hand identifies the story itself as the underlying evil. In keeping with the best practice of horror and gothic fiction, this also implies but does not immediately reveal the monster. And yet, this adherence to tropes fails to heighten the anxiety of the reader as the comic protagonists repeatedly undermine the tone of the expected story. Just as the witches failed to conform to the expectations of high fantasy, they likewise here fail to behave in a stereotypically gothic manner. To gain entry to the inn, Nanny attempts some foreign lingo: “‘Openny vous, gunga din, chop-chop, pretty damn quick’” (65), and the broken and irreverent nature of this attempt at communication disrupts the oppressive mood generated by the rest of the prose.<sup>32</sup> Nanny Ogg’s cheerful disruption of the expected order, however, does not break the gothic tone. Instead, the comedy only serves to draw the reader’s attention to the unrelenting and unrealistic gloominess of the inn and the people.

Mystery and wonder balance uneasily alongside genre expectations. Unlike the dwarfs earlier, the background characters in this scenario act as a reader might expect of characters in a gothic novel. Their silence in the text, emphasised by Nanny Ogg’s attempts to communicate, highlights how little needs to be said for a gothic story’s plot to be guessed:

Outside, deep in the trees, a wolf howled.

The assembled villagers shivered in unison, as though they had been practising. The landlord muttered something to them. They got up, reluctantly, and filed out the door, trying to keep together. An old lady laid her hand on Magrat’s shoulder for a moment, shook her head sadly, sighed, and then scuttled away. (68)

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<sup>32</sup> Nanny Ogg’s “gunga din” refers to a Rudyard Kipling poem of the same name about the heroic death of a Hindu water carrier for the British army in India. The bravery and death of Gunga Din which is central to the poem is ignored in this reference, in favour of transferring the careless, abusive, and imperialist attitudes of the poem’s soldiers comically onto Nanny with none of the Narrator’s regret. The mock-Chinese of “chop-chop” furthers the racist imperial clichés. This is in keeping with the Queen Victoria allusions which occasionally crop up in reference to Nanny Ogg and her extended family.

Where the dwarfs are complicated to subvert genre expectations, the gothic villagers behave more or less exactly as expected by the reader and the genre-blindness of the witches is humorous in its naivety. Magrat's reasoning that their behaviour has to do with Granny and Nanny's presence is obviously not to be taken seriously by the reader. Her denials only add to the plot being built around her. The penny, however, never drops. Instead of thwarting the monster in any dramatic fashion or, indeed, any direct confrontation at all, the monster is confounded by happenstance, erasing the last of the mystery and wonder the gothic elements suggested. However, the unwitting attacks on the vampire by the witches, whilst comic, do engage with gothic tropes. Magrat behaves as a stereotypical gothic heroine: defying the landlord's urgings to keep the shutters closed, flinging them open dramatically to let in the light of the full moon (69). The fact that the shutters hit the vampire and knock him to the ground breaks expectations by introducing sudden slapstick to the gothic atmosphere. The gothic tropes and imagery are left intact— even Nanny's sausage is pointedly made of garlic — but a degree of mundanity is employed when imagining the traditional antagonist as a fallible creature, which results in both comedy and attention being drawn to the artificial nature of the tropes and imagery.

Pratchett largely uses foreshadowing to manufacture his gothic tone. Placed in the foreground of the narration, the foreshadowing builds expectations which are never quite fulfilled as the mysterious danger fails to appear. Rather, the final confrontation is not between witch and vampire, but, demeaningly, between the vampire in bat form and Greebo, Nanny's cat. Cats and bats are both common gothic motifs, and the confrontation is framed as between equals. Both have had unsatisfactory nights. The vampire has been stunned twice and "wasn't feeling very well at all" (70), and "Greebo [has] not had a very good night" (71) due to boredom. Having had their concerns placed on an equal footing, the two are made equally monstrous. The reader is rapidly thereafter made aware that Greebo is in a superior position as the narrative shows the confrontation from his point of view:

The bat squirmed under his claw. It seemed to Greebo's small cat brain that it was trying to change its shape, and he wasn't having any of that from a mouse with wings on.

Especially now, when he had someone to play with. (71)

Any reader at all familiar with cats will note the sinister tone of the final line here. The cat trumps the vampire as an amoral and cruel villain, and the narrative shifts the gothic build-up of the episode to make Greebo ominous and threatening rather than the vampire. Wonder is

transferred from the vampire, whose mishaps have made him human enough to pity, to Greebo and the mysteries of why cats play with their food.

These early episodes of travel illuminate the power of narration and the part a text plays in directing the reader in a manner reminiscent of the narration of *Equal Rites*. However, as these episodes begin to take on the shape of fairy tales, this power begins to be attributed to the antagonist, Lily Weatherwax.

The issue of narrative form and free will comes clearly to the fore as these fairy tale encounters are complicated by the observant remarks of the protagonists. While the previous short adventures have been presented as natural to the Discworld, and the witches have been treated with varying degrees of genre blindness, the encounters the witches have from the sleeping castle onwards are presented as unnatural. Importantly, the witches are not genre-blind when it comes to fairy tales. Instead, these narratives are recognised as a direct consequence of Lily's interference by the reader and by Granny, but Black Aliss is again brought up as the stereotypical fairy tale witch figure:

Even Magrat knew about Black Aliss. She was said to have been the greatest witch who ever lived – not exactly *bad*, but so powerful it was sometimes hard to tell the difference. When it came to sending palaces to sleep for a hundred years or getting princesses to spin straw into Glod, no-one did it better than Black Aliss. (113)

Instead of directing attention to Lily as the antagonist responsible for the sleeping castle, attention is given to the chronologically distant Black Aliss, a stereotype comprised of references to nearly any fairy tale villain likely to be readily recognised. The stress on Black Aliss being “not exactly *bad*” further removes the impression that the sleeping castle story has a distinct antagonist. That being said, the sleeping castle is identified as the result of “fairy godmothering”, as it is deliberately impressive (114), and the inhabitants react negatively to Granny due to her resemblance to Lily. The cause of the castle's slumber, however, is less the focus of the episode than the intended effect, an effect of which the witches are critical. Granny muses, ““All this for one prick. As if that was the end of the world”” (114) with a triple entendre on “prick” drawing to the fore the traditional ending of the tale, while at the same time referring to the cause of the princess's sleep. Later, as the witches are leaving, Magrat doubts whether they did the right thing in disrupting the story and Granny asks her pointedly: ““Cutting your way through a bit of bramble is how you can tell he's going to be a good husband, is it? That's fairy godmotherly thinking, that is!”” (117). The ending of the story is stripped of its romance and wonder, and the reader encouraged to

view it through a more pessimistic lens and see it fall short of satisfaction. The absence of the antagonist provides the reader with the space necessary to doubt the ‘happily ever after’, and in seeing that the ends are not good, to doubt the ethical structure of the story itself.

Having introduced the idea of the fairy tale narrative as an imposed form without necessarily good ends, the novel moves on to the next story, “Little Red Riding Hood”, which has a very clear villain: the Big Bad Wolf.<sup>33</sup> The nature of the actors and the overall shape of “Little Red Riding Hood” are drawn into question as the ethics of both traditional children’s stories and the main antagonist, Lily Weatherwax, are explored. Rather than move away from the distinct stereotypes of the fairy tale, Pratchett delves deeper into each stereotype in order to interrogate the structure of the story itself. The girl who, in other stories, is often called ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ is simply referred to as a child in Pratchett’s retelling – making her an even more general figure, as well as refusing sexualisation. The argument that the tale has to do with sexual awakening is not ignored entirely, as Nanny Ogg refers to her own red cloak she had when she was fifteen and having to deal with Sumpkins the lodger when visiting her granny (121). This aside closes off discussion of the girl with her red cloak, even as it engages with the “sexual initiation, violence, and intergenerational knowledge [that] are core thematic elements of ‘Little Red Riding Hood’” (Bacchilega 41). There is little more to be said, especially as Nanny’s experience is considered to be divorced from the essence of the Riding Hood tale. Instead, the focal characters in this retelling are the Grandmother and the Wolf.

In drawing the reader’s attention to figures who are important to the structure of the story, but very rarely given much characterisation, the novel points out a lack of compassion inherent to the form of the fairy tale. Nanny remarks “‘No-one ever cares what happens to poor defenceless old women’” (121), and indeed, the structure of the tale is usually such that the reader is not drawn to care for the stereotypical Grandmother. The Grandmother Pratchett imagines is stereotypical in a manner which Granny and Nanny are not. She is frail, gullible, and powerless, defenceless in a way that Granny and Nanny refuse to be. It is in the contrast between these old ladies that the reader is drawn to pity the stereotype, but also to doubt it. Her voice is “small and quavering” (122), her frailty is conveyed through the dirty state of her house, and Nanny commenting: “‘Funny, really, [...] She’s younger’n me. Mind you, I

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<sup>33</sup> I will be capitalising the stereotype figures involved in this story as they have no proper names.

take exercise’’ (125). This alternative old age directly contrasts with Nanny in particular, who is at the centre of a community and can ensure her own care. The Grandmother, in contrast, has been relegated to the outskirts – she is a victim waiting to happen – and the lack of care is, in part, the responsibility of the reader. The story demands the vulnerability of the elderly figure, and we are complicit in this depiction of the elderly in our consumption and reproduction of the narrative.

The Grandmother is not the only unthought-of victim in this retelling, however. The traditional antagonist, the Wolf, is also a victim, relegated to the outskirts of society by its very nature. While it undoubtedly intends to eat the Grandmother, its attack is motivated by desperation. It is not a werewolf in any traditional sense – and so it is not innately monstrous. It is, instead, “a normal-looking wolf, except that it was a lot thinner than most. Ribs showed plainly under the skin and the fur was matted” (127), and yet it tries to talk. When Granny enters the mind of the Wolf, we are given a speculative explanation of minds, in which Pratchett describes animal minds as focused while human minds are floods with multiple streams.<sup>34</sup> This description culminates in the description of the Wolf’s mind itself:

Just occasionally when the hunter was about to make a kill, the random streams of thought came together. But this was different. This was the opposite – this was cracked and crippled attempts at cogitation peeling away from the sleek arrowhead of predatory intent. This was a predatory mind trying to *think*.

No wonder it was going mad. (128)

Carnivore minds are by necessity of their existence focused, and the fact that even the human minds of hunters mimic this state when making a kill reinforces the necessity of the shape of the Wolf’s mind to its survival. Instead of being focused on its next meal, the Wolf has begun to consider the ethics of its next meal. The Wolf, in the words of Granny, is “‘stuck between species. In its head’’ and “‘it’s starving. It can’t go one way, it can’t go t’other. It can’t act like a wolf, and it can’t manage being a human’’” (129). Human self-awareness has been imposed on the Wolf to match the human actions it takes as the antagonist of “Little Red Riding Hood”, an additional cruelty which invites the reader to reconsider the traditional

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<sup>34</sup> This structure which appeared in *Equal Rites* and *Wyrd Sisters* persists, and is used towards similar moral ends, in *Lords and Ladies*.

actions of the Big Bad Wolf in a different light. As Tiffin states: “Far more than in the case of humans warped to the purposes of the tale, the warping of animals to fit human narrative patterns is presented as an unforgivable cruelty” (168). Generations have been brought up with the stereotypical Wolf figure of fairy tales but common sense is brought to bear on the assumption:

A normal wolf wouldn't enter a cottage, even if it could open the door. Wolves didn't come near humans at all, except if there were a lot of them and it was the end of a very hard winter. And they didn't do it because they were big and bad and wicked, but because they were wolves. (129)

Wolves in general are incapable of being bad or wicked because they lack the sort of self-awareness which is essential for understanding ethics. This passage speaks to the fear of the wolf at a time when wolf conservation was a global talking point. But beyond conservation, what Pratchett has done here is take a negative stereotype, and – rather than change the stereotype – alienated it from the group it represents and associated it with the group which has created it. In order to refute the Big Bad Wolf stereotype, Pratchett invites the reader to consider familiar, though alternative, conceptualisations of wolves. Essentially, to undermine the negative stereotype another, more zoological, and easily accepted generalisation is given. However, the reader has not moved beyond the realm of the stereotype in terms of the positive image, as we are still dealing in the general as a guide to how to react to the individual.

The tension between the positive and negative potential of stereotypes is further driven home by the treatment of the Grandmother. She has been living alone in the woods for some time, and when Granny asks the Woodcutter why he, or any of the other woodcutters, never visited her, he responds that they are afraid that she is a witch (131). His assumption that the Grandmother is a witch falls down under Granny's scrutiny, and it is plain to the reader that the primary signifiers of the witch stereotype referenced are also indicators of a negligent community (131). The contrast between the capability of the witches and the feebleness of the Grandmother makes the thought of the Grandmother as a witch laughable. Pratchett's witches may sometimes have ailments, but none would believe that fairies do housework for saucers of milk. Even the “wet hen”, Magrat, takes a critical approach to elves in *Lords and Ladies*. The Wolf and the Witch are allowed only the barest access to the outskirts of the community, as scapegoats to become antagonists in communal narratives. Interrogation of the treatment of these individuals invites pity and reassessment. Pratchett

does not present any escape from stereotypes, but rather invites consideration of alternative stereotypes and reasons as to why an individual might fit certain types.

The inclination of communities to use stereotypes in order to create scapegoats continues as a concern throughout many Discworld novels. Of particular interest is the use of a very similar example in *The Wee Free Men*, where Pratchett once more uses the fairy tale motif to illustrate the potential injustice of communities. Tiffany Aching, the protagonist of the novel, wants to become a witch because of fairy tales and because she witnessed her own community shun – in effect, passively kill – an old woman. Tiffany’s “The Goode Childe’s Booke of Faerie Tales” (29) is essentially a stereotype in and of itself, and in reading it she finds that:

all the stories had, somewhere, the witch. The *wicked old witch*.

And Tiffany had thought: Where’s the *evidence*?

The stories never said *why* she was wicked. It was enough to be an old woman, enough to be all alone, enough to look strange because you had no teeth. It was enough to be *called* a witch. (29)

Evidence and reasoning are stressed as vital before action can be taken throughout the Witches sequence, and they are even more a priority in the Tiffany Aching series. Tiffany is not only motivated by the injustice she sees in her book, but also by how she witnesses the harm caused by the poorly founded stereotype applied in her community. When the baron’s son goes missing, the people of the community:

“went to her cottage and they looked in the oven and they dug up her garden and they threw stones at her old cat until it died and they turned her out of her cottage and piled up all her old books in the middle of the room and set fire to them and burned the place to the ground and everyone said she was an old witch.” (38)

The repeating “and” of this list renders the actions as frantic, rather than measured and thoughtful. There is a lack of evidence – Tiffany herself returned to the cottage and found the oven too small to cook a child in – and a lack of reasoning – her books are suspect simply because they have old “writing” and “pictures of stars” (38). Without either evidence or adequate reasoning, the actions of the people are not only unethical, they are unjust. *The Wee Free Men* is a novel written for children, and as such the moral of the story is told quite plainly in two instances. Tiffany thinks to herself that, if Granny Aching had been alive, “She’d have spoken up, and people would have listened ... They always listened when Granny spoke up. *Speak up for those who don’t have voices*, she always said” (35), and, after



telling Miss Tick the story, she explains that she wants to be a witch “[s]o that sort of thing doesn’t happen again” (40). Both of these necessary ethical actions are undertaken by Granny Weatherwax in *Witches Abroad*, and while she is unable to help the Wolf, except in assisting its suicide, she is able to convince the woodcutters to include the Grandmother in the community.

In both instances of inaccurate stereotyping, a fairy tale narrative stands at the fore. Pratchett points out that these narratives create victims and antagonists out of innocents and, especially in *Witches Abroad*, the fairy tale narratives themselves may be seen as antagonists against which the novel is opposed. In confronting the Red Riding Hood fairy tale in *Witches Abroad*, the necessity and ethics of Granny’s actions to counter the story are complicated. While the Wolf is revealed as a victim of Lily’s ‘practice’, being subsumed into the trailing stories, it is killed at the orders of Granny. It is Granny’s assessment that matters have gone on too long, but it is made clear to the reader that Granny is distressed by the Wolf’s predicament. Her act is not devoid of compassion, nor is it contrary to the Wolf’s own desires. They are linked in an ethical understanding that the negligent Woodcutter is unable to grasp:

The woodcutter never understood why the wolf laid its head on the stump so readily. Or why the old woman, the one in whom anger roiled like pearl barley in a bubbling stew, insisted afterwards that it be buried properly instead of skinned and thrown in the bushes. (130)

Granny’s insistence on a burial for the Wolf, as if it were human, is indicative of her care and symbolic of inclusion into a community of sorts. Her care is consistently contrasted with the Woodcutter’s disregard, and so when she subtly threatens him under the guise of putting a spell on him to protect him in exchange for him taking care of the Grandmother, the reader is prepared to accept her threats as necessary. The novel further reinforces the necessity of these threats when Magrat unwittingly claims that the Woodcutters’ help was due to her setting an example rather than due to any bullying, immediately after the narrator has made it clear they are helping because “news like Granny Weatherwax travels fast” (133-4). The final piece of evidence given to justify Granny’s threats to the Woodcutter is when Magrat tells the other witches that the story of “The Three Little Pigs” had taken place in the area, and that one of the woodcutters moved into one of the pig’s houses after the Wolf ate it (134-5). The implication here is that while the woodcutters excluded the humanised animals from their community, they were still willing to benefit from their suffering. Not only can the fairy tale

not simply be stopped in the same way that the “Sleeping Beauty” narrative was, the complicity of the community in the production of the harmful narrative is highlighted.

Where Pratchett’s use of genre in the earlier episodes to comic ends had the reader drawn to consider their expectations, the use of the fairy tale narrative as an antagonistic force to be opposed on ethical grounds places the reader in an evaluative position. The evidence the reader is working with seems one-sided, and fairy tales are found to be untrustworthy, and dangerous. The stories do not serve everyone, despite their popular appeal, and the ones hurt are often the ones least able to defend themselves. The stereotype of the Woodcutter does not harm the Woodcutter characters and so they are not motivated to prevent the fairy tales until Granny presents them with a story in which they are the victims. An inattentive reader might surmise that the novel utterly condemns the reproduction of the fairy tale, but in conveying this condemnation it has reproduced the fairy tales in their most traditional forms – it has reminded its reader of the traditional tales even as it circumvents the tales’ expected endings. The fairy tale is used as an exemplar of a wider issue of unjustified wonder. Just as, in *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen warns against unwary readers applying expectations born of fiction to real life, so Pratchett warns against misapplying fairy tale structures and stereotypes to the same. To seek to reproduce the fairy tale in reality, or in a semblance of reality, is to create harm, and the fairy godmother is the central perpetrator of that harm in the novel.

### **Lily Weatherwax and the Ethics of Fairy Godmothering**

The inversion of the fairy godmother figure relies in part on the reader recognising that Lily Weatherwax acts out stereotypical behaviours strongly associated with female villains. She repeatedly demonstrates attitudes and performs actions reminiscent of both the evil queen and wicked witch stereotypes. Though Croft argues that “Lily Weatherwax embodies the darker side of Good” (“Nice, Good, or Right: Faces of the Wise Women in Terry Pratchett’s “Witches” Novels” 157), Lily’s behaviour is that of a clear and stereotypical villain. Martin warns: “Lily’s assessment of herself as the good one is undermined by the fact that she seeks to control not just the external environment but people’s very identities” (“The Dangers of Goodness” 1). Lily’s prioritization of fairy tale narratives over the wants and needs of the people demonstrates that she is not good, despite her claims. As Jessica Tiffin argues:

Pratchett [...] never resorts to unambiguous melodrama, and his depiction of the various shadings and temptations of the “good” in this novel, in itself functions as a powerful subversion of fairy-tale narrative’s classically unambiguous polarities – and of the *deus ex machina* figure of the godmother, the ultimate totalitarian despot to the heroine’s destiny. (165)

Tiffin’s claim that the novel presents a powerful subversion of classically unambiguous polarities skirts the issue of Lily’s stereotypically melodramatic moments which support a reading of her as a villain. Crucially, Lily treats people as things, and her creation of a model Genua re-emerges as a model of applied evil in *Carpe Jugulum* in the form of the Count’s Escrow. In *Witches Abroad*, the recognition of Lily’s evil is supported by stereotypically villainous behaviour contrasting starkly against the superficial image of the stereotypically good fairy godmother she pretends to be. From the outset, Lily is ruthless and derisive both about Desiderata and about morality itself:

So . . . Desiderata was dying. Interfering old baggage. She deserved death. She’d never understood the kind of power she’d had. She was one of those people afraid to do good for fear of doing harm, who took it all so seriously that they’d constipate themselves with moral anguish before granting the wish of a single ant. (12)

Good becomes problematic through the connection drawn between it and action. Lily sneers at Desiderata’s lack of action, but in tying it to “moral anguish” she suggests that there is some moral argument against her choice to facilitate the fairy tales that empower her. Lily is clearly established as the antagonist through her cruel tone in the above passage (and a villainous one at that), and yet she also continually insists that she is the good one. Likewise, Granny also insists that after Lily left home she had to be the good one. There is no clear clarification of what exactly ‘good’ means, and the word has no fixed meaning beyond that which is granted by context. By undermining the reader’s ability to rely on ‘good’, the novel turns them towards right and wrong as an alternative dichotomy.

Lily Weatherwax should not be mistaken for a heroic figure as she continuously acts in accordance with stereotypes of the villain figure. For that reason, the reader is unlikely to favour her viewpoint in answering any ethical questions raised by the novel. The travel episodes are interspersed with a number of scenes in which Lily is positioned as an evil queen figure as in *Snow White*, as Lily uses mirror magic to spy on the travellers from the security of her castle. The act of spying on the heroes is highly stereotypical of an evil ruler in both

fantasy and fairy tale. In *Lord of the Rings*, for instance, birds and other animals are used by Sauron and Saruman as spies alongside the crystal ball-like Palantír; in *Snow White*, as I have said, mirror magic is used; and in *Wizard of Oz* the Wicked Witch of the West has powerful (magical) eyesight which allows her to see all that occurs from her castle windows. Pratchett's adjustment of this stereotype is primarily in Lily's use of multiple mirrors, which are designed to reflect her. As the narrator explains:

You can use two mirrors like this, if you know the way of it: you set them so that they reflect each other. For if images *can* steal a bit of you, then images of images can amplify you, feeding you back on yourself, giving you power ...

And your image extends forever, in reflections of reflections of reflections, and every image is the same, all the way around the curve of light.

Except that it isn't.

Mirrors contain infinity.

Infinity contains more things than you think.

Everything, for a start.

Including hunger.

Because there's a million billion images and only one soul to go around.

Mirrors give plenty, but they take away lots. (43)

The decline of the complexity of the language in this passage mirrors the increasing complexity of the reasoning. We begin with the observable phenomenon of reflected mirrors and move into infinity theory. Infinity is contextual and in this case the infinity is made up of Lily herself alongside the more disturbing "everything". The move from everything to hunger complicates matters further because it implies life. The next line attributes the hunger to the images, with the implication that these images hunger after Lily's soul. The childish "million billion" is echoed later in the novel when the child of the Red Riding Hood episode bets Magrat a "trillion dollars" (121), "a million trillion zillion dollars" (123) and ends up owing "a million trillion zillion squillion dollars" (124). The final line countering "plenty" with "lots" demonstrates a decline in complexity across its own limited breadth, and a very simple summation of the concepts of the passage. If nothing else the reader is to grasp the idea that mirror magic is a zero-sum game.

Lily uses more than just two mirrors to extend herself; she has a complicated array of them. Moreover, her mirrors do not simply show her what is happening elsewhere; they show her, primarily, herself. Because Lily herself hungers for power, it makes sense to a reader that her reflections can, too, especially given the suggestions in the earlier passage. While mirrors are an important motif around Lily, so too are stories. Veronica L. Schanoes, in “Book as Mirror, Mirror as Book”, places Lily as an authorial figure in her use of mirrors, saying: “to Lilith, stories and mirrors are the very same thing” (17), as “like mirrors, stories need to reflect in order to communicate” (18). When Lily makes Genua into a fairy tale kingdom, she “held a mirror up to Life, and chopped all the bits off Life that didn’t fit” (72).<sup>35</sup> Stories and mirrors go hand in hand. It is evident that Lily is highly aware that she is in a story and, as such, she prompts the reader’s narrative expectations. She herself thinks that “You derived status by the strength of your enemies” (59), a statement which emphasises both her disregard for the witches who are journeying to challenge her and the necessity for scenes like the one the reader is engaged with which serves to emphasise Lily’s power. There is a self-consciousness, not particularly on the part of Lily, but certainly on the part of the novel as a whole which emphasises the ways in which a narrative guides readers.

Reflections are an essential part of Lily’s power and, as *Witches Abroad* dwells on the relationship between protagonist and antagonist, between hero and villain, the most significant connections between the two are reflective.<sup>36</sup> Lily claims that she is the protagonist and superficially the novel conflates her and Granny, especially through their family resemblance and their similar dress when they meet. The similarity between Granny and Lily is that of reflection, but one which is just slightly askew:

And her ...

... that’s Lily Weatherwax?

The woman wasn’t masked.

Give or take the odd laughter line and wrinkle, it was Granny

Weatherwax to the life.

Almost ... (236)

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<sup>35</sup> Perhaps a reference to Procrustes, a villain in Greek myth who forced travellers to sleep on an iron bed and would cut off parts that would not fit.

<sup>36</sup> In the case of Lily’s action in the novel, it is fitting to consider Granny Weatherwax the primary protagonist.

Pratchett has already established the idea of an infinity of reflections in mirrors, and now he has his protagonist confronted by a reflection. There is no attempt to conceal the similarity, no masks to delay the confrontation as there are in *Maskerade*; instead, a visual similarity is stressed to echo other similarities between the women. Adding to the visual similarity is the fact that Granny has been forced into a position where she is wearing white rather than her customary black. Instead of a contrast between the characters, we have similarity which stresses Lily's superficial superiority:

Lily Weatherwax wore white. Until that point it had never occurred to Nanny Ogg that there could be different colours of white. Now she knew better. The white of Lily Weatherwax's dress seemed to radiate; if all the lights went out, she felt, Lily's dress would glow. It had style. It gleamed, and had puffed sleeves and was edged with lace.

And Lily Weatherwax looked – Nanny Ogg had to admit it – younger. There was the same bone structure and fine Weatherwax complexion, but it looked ... less worn.

If that's what bein' bad does to you, Nanny thought, I could of done with some of that years ago. The wages of sin is death but so is the salary of virtue, and at least the evil get to go home early on Fridays.

The eyes were the same, though. Somewhere in the genetics of the Weatherwaxes was a piece of sapphire. Maybe generations of them.  
(237)

Nanny's consideration of evil is an important one. She touches on a fundamental question of ethics: why strive to be good? To do right? There is no direct answer to the question, and Nanny does not spend more time on it, rather the weight of the argument falls to the reader. Beyond the obvious humour of the statements, the foregrounding of these concerns at the key moment when the visual differences and similarities between Granny and Lily are being analysed heightens the ethical tension of the confrontation.

The similarity between Granny and Lily threatens to erase any distinction between good and evil. The only marked differences Nanny notes above are in the dress Lily wears and her apparent youth. White has long been associated with innocence and purity in the English literary tradition, and Lily's dress is a radiant white. However, Pratchett's love of Tolkien is worth mentioning here: Saruman's change from "the White" to "of Many Colours" (*The Fellowship of the Ring* 271-2) is marked by a shimmering which bewilders the eye. In Pratchett's description of Lily the combination of the words "radiate" and "glow" in the same

sentence hints at the white of atomic detonation, and the subsequent use of the descriptors “style” and “gleamed” draw the reader further from a traditional interpretation of Lily’s white and towards the sinister catalytic and deceptive white of Saruman. Her comparative youth is likewise something which the reader might have been inclined to view in a positive light except for the following lines in which Nanny links it directly to sin and evil. The return to similarity afterwards locates itself in the eyes of the women. The well-known adage “the eyes are the windows of the soul” perhaps may spring to the mind of the reader, especially given the novel’s ongoing concern with reflections, images, and the theft of the soul. Having the same eyes implies sharing a soul, which implies a similarity between the two women that goes far beyond looks.

Lily is ultimately a reflection of Granny, and her demise along with the destruction of the mirrors – a demise which leaves behind no physical body – suggests that the novel has been, at some level, about Granny confronting her own desires. *Wyrd Sisters* saw Granny in the position of Lily as a facilitator of narrative in the form of destiny, but the unethical nature of her actions is obscured by her position as a protagonist and the happy resolution of the novel. *Witches Abroad* takes the particular concern about freedom of choice that appeared in the earlier novel and creates an evil Granny Weatherwax to drive home the point that forcing people to play out stereotypical roles is wrong. Lily’s insistence that Embers marry the Duc mimics Granny’s insistence that Tomjon take the throne. However, Lily never recognises that she is breaking any rules, whereas Granny knows she is breaking them “good and hard” (151). The dual potential of the individual has been projected outwards in this conflict, as Granny’s potential for evil, subdued in the earlier work, is now fully realised in the figure of Lily. Granny’s difficulty telling the simple story of her alligator sandwich joke exemplifies her difference in this novel. Instead of a wyrd sister twisting fate, her stereotypical elderly forgetfulness serves as a reminder that she is an old woman – and one incapable of creating a clear narrative. When Lily considers what the opposite of a fairy godmother might be, she thinks it “would be someone who was poison to stories and, thought Lilith, quite the most evil creature in the world” (147). What Lily fails to realise is that everything is story-shaped, but stories can change in the retelling.

## The Stories That Ought to Matter

The recurring concerns about narrative, happiness, and wishes, which form the main conflict between Lily and Granny, also have a significant reflection in the relationship between Magrat and Granny. For a considerable part of the novel, Magrat is an advocate for the fairy tale and thereby, unwittingly, for antagonists. As a reader surrogate of sorts, she gives voice to the expectations of the reader, and repeatedly reminds the reader that the novel challenges these expectations. For instance, it is made clear on the journey to Genua that happiness as an ending is suspect. When the witches encounter the “Sleeping Beauty” story, Magrat questions their disruption of events, to which Granny responds:

“And what good would that be? Cutting your way through a bit of  
bramble is how you can tell he’s going to be a good husband, is it?  
That’s fairy godmotherly thinking, that is! Goin’ around inflicting  
happy endings on people whether they wants them or not, eh?” (117)

Granny’s accusatory tone implies that there is a great deal wrong with fairy godmotherly thinking. The duality of the godmother figure remains unacknowledged and the reinstatement of the stereotypical fairy godmother conflates Magrat and Lily. Indeed, Magrat’s response to Granny, saying “‘There’s nothing wrong with happy endings’” (117), is only a short step away from Lily’s insistence that they are good. While she is by no means as impressive a figure as Lily, Magrat’s identification as a fairy godmother leads her to become a representative of the antagonist’s idealised viewpoint for a large portion of the novel, providing a kinder reading of the figure, but equally one who problematically sidesteps the moral anguish necessary to actually act ethically. The argument that Granny, and the novel as a whole, makes is that happiness is not something which should be imposed upon people:

“Listen, happy endings is fine if they *turn out* happy,” said Granny,  
glaring at the sky. “But you can’t make ‘em for other people. Like the  
only way you could make a happy marriage is by cuttin’ their heads off  
as soon as they say ‘I do’, yes? You can’t make happiness ...”

Granny Weatherwax stared at the distant city.

“All you can do,” she said, “is make an ending.” (117-8)

Granny demonstrates this when she soon thereafter arranges the decapitation of the Big Bad Wolf ending the “Little Red Riding Hood” story.



Why does the fairy godmother interfere in order to create a happy ending? At the outset of the novel, the role of the fairy godmother is very quickly problematized by Desiderata's musings. She points out that granting wishes has a limited benefit:

“It’s a big responsibility, fairy godmothering. Knowing when to stop, I mean. People whose wishes get granted often don’t turn out to be very nice people. So should you give them what they want – or what they *need?*” (9)<sup>37</sup>

Not only does Desiderata present the fairy godmother as a figure with self-determination, rather than its more usual appearance as a contrivance of the plot, but she also concerns herself with how people “turn out”, a phrase which implies time beyond the “happily ever after”. Her name, Desiderata Hollow, too, implies that wishes (desires) are empty, while the reference to the prose poem “Desiderata” (1927) by Max Ehrmann immediately establishes her instantly as a stereotypically virtuous person. The complication of the fairy godmother continues with the revelation that they come in twos:

“There were two of us. Godmothers go in twos, you know. Me and Lady Lilith? There’s a lot of power in godmothering. It’s like being part of history. Anyway, the girl was born, out of wedlock but none the worse for that, it wasn’t as if they couldn’t have married, they just never got around to it ... and Lilith wished for her to have beauty and power and marry a prince. Hah! And she’s been working on that ever since. What could I do? You can’t argue with wishes like that. Lilith knows the power of a story. I’ve done the best I could, but Lilith’s got the power. I hear she runs the city now. Changing a whole country just to make a story work!” (9)

No well-known fairy tale has two fairy godmothers, and this contrivance instead draws on another trope of the fairy tale. When two similar figures appear in a fairy tale setting one is almost invariably good and the other evil. Desiderata already has the reader’s confidence, reinforced by her apparent concern with responsibility, and the name “Lilith” has negative

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<sup>37</sup> There is a pop-culture reference here to “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” by the Rolling Stones particularly to the lines of the chorus:

You can’t always get what you want,  
But if you try sometimes, well, you might find  
You get what you need. (16-8)

implications drawn from Judaeo-Christian myth wherein Lilith is Adam's first wife. Lilith (Lily Weatherwax) is simultaneously set up as the bad one, even as she behaves in a manner expected of a fairy godmother by granting wishes. However, these wishes do not conform to expectations. To begin with, the wishes are not simply granted by the fairy godmother; rather Lilith has wished them herself. These three wishes do not conform to the traditional ones: health, wealth, and happiness; instead being: "beauty and power and marry a prince". While the first of Lilith's wishes fits within the tradition of a child receiving magical blessings, the second two are traditionally gained at the end of a story, not granted or promised at the beginning. In this framing the reader is encouraged to view wishes as highly problematic, an idea Pratchett returns to in his later novel *A Hat Full of Sky*.

The bestowing of gifts upon a child, though not explicitly the granting of wishes, does appear in *Wyrd Sisters*. I briefly discussed the consequences of the particular gifts the witches bestowed in the last chapter, however, the introduction of the concept is noteworthy when discussing wishes in *Witches Abroad*. *Wyrd Sisters* has the three protagonist figures bestow gifts on Tomjon in accordance with tradition. Magrat raises the issue with Granny saying:

"Three good witches are supposed to give the baby three gifts. You know, like good looks, wisdom and happiness." Magrat pressed on defiantly. "That's how it used to be done in the old days."

"Oh, you mean gingerbread cottages and all that," said Granny dismissively. "Spinning wheels and pumpkins and pricking your finger on rose thorns and similar. I could never be having with all that."

She polished the ball reflectively.

"Yes, but —" Magrat said. Granny glanced up at her. That was Magrat for you. Head full of pumpkins. Everyone's fairy godmother, for two pence. But a good soul, underneath it all. (43)

Granny soon relents and the three witches give Tomjon one gift each. Not only does this passage heavily foreshadow *Witches Abroad*, it also shows a more ambivalent presentation of narrative traditions. The gifts Magrat suggests are distinctly different from those Lily wishes on Emberella, with the granting of wisdom rather than a wish for power, and happiness not tied to marriage. Granny still connects the gifts with fairy tales and fairy godmothers, but she does not scold Magrat outright for her sentimentality. In *Witches Abroad*, we have a clear shift in Granny's character. Where in *Wyrd Sisters* she gives Tomjon a gift and then actively tries to manipulate his destiny, in *Witches Abroad* the novel tells us, "She hated everything that predestined people, that fooled them, that made them slightly less than human" (245).

Granny is now explicitly against stories and thereby against destiny. As argued in my previous chapter, *Wyrd Sisters* encourages the reader to consider destiny in a negative light despite Granny's use of it. In *Witches Abroad* the protagonists no longer have a problematic engagement directly with the stories which form the main point of contention in the novel, thereby making the negative nature of destiny far more apparent to readers.

Where in the Tiffany Aching novel *A Hat Full of Sky* the wishes are granted by a magical being, the Hiver, taking over Tiffany's body, in *Witches Abroad* the fairy godmother's wand is the ultimate symbol of wish granting. The wand is talked around for much of the introduction, both mystifying the object and highlighting the reluctance of the witches to engage with or dispose of it. Granny says to Nanny: "I wouldn't want to be buried with it. Thing like that, it's a bit of a responsibility. Anyway, it wouldn't stay buried. A thing like that wants to be used. It'd be rattling around your coffin the whole time" (25). This treatment of the wand is reminiscent of the treatment of the crown in *Wyrd Sisters*, implying the object is capable of both thought and action as a means of highlighting the object's importance. Where the crown was placed within the familiar narratives of kingship and ascension, the wand is an object of narrative causality itself. The wand is the symbol of narrative resolution – granting wishes to enable a satisfying ending to stories. Magrat's wand, though stuck on pumpkins, is still essential to resolving the cave-in at the dwarf caverns. Later, when the witches attempt to keep Emberella from attending the ball, the now despised wand is used to turn the coach into a pumpkin (204). The miraculous transformations the wand is capable of are fundamentally related to the narratives at work, with Magrat's attempt to foil the narrative simply making the events fit more closely with the traditional tale and heightening the sinister undercurrent of the tale itself.

The transformations undertaken with Magrat's wand are largely harmless. Though Granny suggests that Magrat turn the horses to pumpkins, Magrat refuses on the grounds it would be cruel (204). Her moral reluctance to harm dumb animals is soon after directly contrasted with Lily's actions. Lily, watching from her mirrors, mockingly remarks "No coach, no dress, no horses. What is a poor old godmother to do?" (206), reminding the reader that this is the traditional position for the Cinderella figure to be in before the ball. Furthermore, Lily is reinforcing her own adherence to the fairy godmother stereotype. Her preparations to fulfil the godmother role in the story are both threatening and centred on her wand:

She opened a small leather case, such as a musician might use to carry his very best piccolo.

There was a wand in there, the twin of the one carried by Magrat. She took it out and gave it a couple of twists, moving the gold and silver rings into a new position.

The clicking sounded like the nastiest pump-action mechanism.  
(206)

Pratchett implies the ‘gun in an instrument case’ trope to suggest that the wand is dangerous, and it is here the reader gains the first glimpse into how the wand is meant to be used. After the final battle Nanny recounts in her letter home that when Granny woke:

*She arsked Magrat for a look at the wand and then she kind of twiddled and twisted them rings on it and turned the po into a bunch of flowers and Magrat said she could never make the wand do that and Esme said no because, she wasted time wishing for thinges instead of working out how to make them happen.* (290)

Magrat’s belief in the power of wishing and in the sentimental fairy tale is revealed to have hampered her significantly. Lily’s wishing on the other hand is an excuse to exert power and dominance over others. When she appears in the kitchen to restore the dress and coach, she not only demands the traditional mice, rats, and pumpkin, but also ““those *naughty* men who let themselves get so drunk”” (209). She goes beyond the usual bounds of the “Cinderella” narrative in order to display her power and punish the coachmen for a small mistake which nonetheless allows her to harm them without besmirching her good name. Ultimately, the only wishes Lily truly concerns herself with are her own, and those of the narratives she feeds. Having come to this realisation it is not difficult for the reader to conclude that Lily is morally deplorable.

Magrat’s eventual recognition that she cannot fit into a fairy tale coincides with her resolve to help Ella and she symbolically cuts her connection with Lilith through the destruction of the ball gown:

Magrat had dreamed of dresses like this. In the pit of her soul, in the small hour of the night, she’d danced with princes. Not shy, hardworking princes like Verence back home, but real ones, with crystal blue eyes and white teeth. And she’d *worn* dresses like this. And they had *fitted*.

She stared at the ruched sleeves, the embroidered bodice, the fine white lace. It was all a world away from her . . . well . . . Nanny Ogg kept calling them ‘Magrats’, but they were trousers and very practical.

As if being practical mattered at all.

She stared for a long time.

Then with tears streaking her face and changing colour as they caught the light of the fireworks, she took the knife and began to cut the dress into very small pieces. (202-3)

Magrat's 'real' princes are storybook princes rendered all the more unreal through their comparison to the real Verence. This confusion of reality with fairy tale is continued in Magrat's doubts over practicality. Her final decision to be practical and destroy the dress marks her abandonment of fairy tales and their 'happily ever after', and a denial of their attempts to control her wishes. Magrat's alignment with the antagonist fairy tales only lasts as long as she can believe that she has a connection to them. When she is confronted with Ella's plight, she can no longer afford to believe in the happy ending, as she recognises that her desires are not as important as another person.

Lily, on the other hand, never stops believing in happy endings. By the time the story opens she has made Genua into a fairytale city where "people smiled and were joyful the livelong day. Especially if they wanted to see *another* livelong day" (71). There is a heavy implication that deadly force is used to ensure this happiness, but the reader's glimpse into Lily's viewpoint reveals that she believes her enforcement of happiness should be welcomed:

People had probably thought they were happy in the days before she'd seen to it that the Duc replaced the old Baron, but it was a random, untidy happiness, which was why it was so easy for her to move in.

But it wasn't a way of life. There was no pattern to it.

One day they'd thank her.

Of course, there were always a few difficult ones. Sometimes, people just didn't know how to act. You did your best for them, you ruled their city properly, you ensured that their lives were worthwhile and full of happiness every hour of the day and then, for no reason at all, they turned on you. (72)

Initially readers are likely to think that Lily refers to an outright rebellion when reading this passage, but it is revealed that she is in the process of passing judgement on the case of a toymaker who cannot whistle and is therefore in defiance of narrative expectation. Nonetheless, Lily appears, throughout the novel, to believe that her actions bring about the greatest happiness and are therefore ultimately good. Her moral system is one of utilitarianism which Jan Sokol claims, "posits that human action should be evaluated

according to its consequences, and that these consequences can be objectivised, delimited along the same parameters for everyone, and even quantified, summarised and measured” (117). Lily justifies her actions by concluding that she is maximising and ensuring happiness as she imposes a tyranny of contentment. To work against her is seen as working against a happy ending and therefore acting in an evil manner.

Lily’s assessment of the old Baron’s rule is not, however, wrong. Pratchett refuses to make use of the golden age trope to justify the overthrow of Lily, and Mrs Gogol herself, when temporarily bringing back the old Baron, recognises that he was a flawed figure:

With the power flowing inside him he had, she thought, the fire he’d had when he was alive. He had not been a particularly good man, she knew. Genua had not been a model of civic virtue. But at least he had never told people that they wanted him to oppress them, and that everything he did was for their own good.

[...]

He hadn’t been a kind ruler. But he’d fitted. And when he’d been arbitrary or arrogant or just plain wrong, he’d never suggested that this was justified by anything other than the fact that he was bigger and stronger and occasionally nastier than other people. He’d never suggested that it was because he was *better*. And he’d never told people they ought to be happy, and imposed a kind of happiness on them. The invisible people knew that happiness is not the natural state of mankind, and is never achieved from the outside in. (246)

The recognition that happiness is not natural is a reassuring one in this context. The insistence that people have the right to be miserable is especially relevant to readers today who are bombarded with expectations and insinuations from advertising that happiness is a necessity. This rebellion against enforced happiness is also a rebellion against the fairy tale stories Lily uses to remain in power. It is a rebellion against the happy ending, and as such it is impossible that Mrs Gogol will achieve all her goals. The narrative she creates will not allow her a happy ending either.

As a figure confronting Lily and her highly ethical system Mrs Gogol is remarkably amoral and this, at least in part, is an aspect of the voodoo queen stereotype she embodies. This stereotype is anchored in the almost mythical figure of Marie Laveau who operated in New Orleans “from sometime in the 1820s until the early 1870s” (Long 93) and who has since become renowned as “an extraordinary woman, a Voudou priestess and a highly

successful entrepreneur capable of both good and evil” (Long XVI). An unpublished manuscript written by Bob Kornfeld and held in the Saxon (Lye) Collection at Tulane University, quotes from an interview with Marie Dede that ““Marie did business with God and the devil at the same time”” (34). Considering that these characteristics form the basis of the voodoo priestess stereotype, it is little wonder that where Lily and Granny are presented as two sides of the same coin, good and bad made of the same material, Erzulie Gogol stands in between these extremes. When invoking her magic she states: ““I stand between the light and the dark, but that no matter, because I *am* between.”” (243).

Avoiding the simplicity of moral condemnation, Pratchett has the people of Genua represented by a figure who is unabashedly problematic. She fights Lily not because she is good, or bad, but because Lily tries to make everything one thing or the other. The invisible people that Mrs Gogol convinces to help her create a god are outcast from stories and thereby outcast from society, and their position distinctly echoes the racial divides that New Orleans struggles with to this day.<sup>38</sup> Due to her morally ambiguous position Mrs Gogol can represent the underrepresented:

Mrs Gogol could feel them among the trees. The homeless. The hungry. The silent people. Those forsaken by men and gods. The people of the mists and the mud, whose only strength was somewhere on the other side of weakness, whose beliefs were as rickety and homemade as their homes. And the people from the city – not the ones who lived in the big white houses and went to balls in fine coaches, but the other ones. They were the ones that stories are never about. Stories are not, on the whole, interested in swineherds who remain swineherds and poor and humble shoemakers whose destiny is to die slightly poorer and much humbler.

These people were the ones who made the magical kingdom work, who cooked its meals and swept its floors and carted its night soil and were its faces in the crowd and whose wishes and dreams,

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<sup>38</sup> Despite the narrator’s assertion that “Racism was not a problem on the Discworld, because – what with trolls and dwarfs and so on – speciesism was more interesting. Black and white lived in perfect harmony and ganged up on green” (169), racism cannot be completely abandoned in favour of classism due to the connection between Voodoo and slavery.

undemanding as they were, were of no consequence. The *invisibles*.

(242)

While building towards a dramatic conclusion, the novel reminds the reader that there are people who do not see themselves in stories. Where Magrat must eventually come to the realisation that she cannot fit into fairy tales, these are figures whom the tales explicitly exclude. The hopelessness of these figures is linked to their capacity to create a new god to save them from the stories which do not reflect their reality. The reader may remember Nanny's remark that "no-one ever cares what happens to defenceless old women" (121) with regards to the Red Riding Hood story. The most vulnerable in society often get 'the short end of the stick' in fairy tales, and the fact that they do not get a "happily ever after" deeply destabilizes Lily's ethics. In standing for the voiceless, Mrs Gogol is able to align with good in the story from a utilitarian standpoint, even though she ends the novel as a liminal figure.

In the recognition that Lily's rule is not increasing happiness for the majority, undertaking to overthrow Lily may be seen as ethical under a utilitarian system. However, Mrs Gogol's motives are drawn into question when she attempts to seize power for herself and the old Baron. The challenge between Mrs Gogol and Granny reinforces Mrs Gogol's position in an ethical grey area. The women set out the terms of the agreement:

"My voodoo against your ... headology?"

"If you like."

"And what's the stake?"

"No more magic in the affairs of Genua," said Granny. "No more stories. No more godmothers. Just people, deciding for themselves. For good or bad. Right or wrong." (268)

Granny's demands seem to mirror Mrs Gogol's goals; however, Granny has realised that Mrs Gogol may end up ruling the city as the power behind the throne, relying on the trope of long-lost family member to bring her power. Granny remarks, "anyway, Lily only had people killed – Mrs Gogol'd set 'em to choppin' wood and doin' chores afterwards" (267). While Mrs Gogol is not recognised as an antagonist proper, it is made clear to the reader that this is because she has not been in a position of power over other people. Or, rather, the power she has had over others has been given over to her by the people willingly, and now she is likely to take it by force.



## Final Thoughts

The tension in the novel between good and evil hinges on the concept of the fairy tale as an antagonistic or parasitic entity, and the godmother, the *deus ex machina* of the fairy tale, as serving the story rather than the people in it. These figures ensure the “happily ever after” ending that readers and audiences have come to expect from fairy tales. But it is this very expectation of fairy tales that Pratchett challenges in this novel – that they should end with “happily ever after”. Rather, the novel undertakes to question the happy result itself: happiness for whom? And for how long? And, most importantly – why?

These questions, already partially addressed in *Wyrd Sisters*, here take on additional urgency. Lilith’s plan has the weight of reader expectation, and she embodies multiple stereotypes as she threatens the protagonists. The reflective link between her and Granny Weatherwax, a witch, confuses the moral boundaries and pushes the reader to consider the delineation between right and wrong, good and bad. Magrat’s reflection of Lilith as a fairy godmother herself denies innocence any virtue. Magrat must recognise the flaws inherent in fairy tales in order to take action against them. The theme of finding self, finally encapsulated in Lily’s failure to escape the mirrors, is further developed in *Lords and Ladies* and examined in the next chapter.

## Chapter Four – Forgotten Sing-Alongs and Lullabies: *Lords and Ladies*

Moving from fairy tales to elves, the fourth novel in the Witches sequence continues the strategy of questioning twee assumptions through complicating the novels' antagonists. *Lords and Ladies* explores the divided intertextual and folkloric roots of elves and fairies. The hostile and folkloric characterisation of the Queen of the Elves contrasts with the diminutive and benign fairies common in the Lancre setting and modern children's literature. This use of intertexts provides a dual face which already exists in English culture and is widely understood. A well-read adult is unlikely to be surprised at the revelation that the elvish invaders do not conform to Enid Blyton's standards, and the novel itself takes pains to extrapolate on the variable nature of elves at several key moments. The dangerous elves are not a plot twist. Rather, the focus of the text is on the various responses these elves trigger in the protagonists; the novel is interested in how the elves are perceived and responded to rather than their precise nature.

The trio of witch protagonists work against the elvish invasion of Lancre in three distinct ways which are anchored in their relationship with the community of Lancre and the intertexts that the novel references. Nanny Ogg, with her matriarchal power and close relationship with the folkloric past of Lancre, approaches the King of the Elves in his own lands to negotiate. Magrat, still searching for herself at the beginning of the novel, takes up arms against the Queen of the Elves in a performance of the warrior queen stereotype. Granny Weatherwax, on the other hand, confronts her past, her choices, and her future as she submits to capture by the Queen before escaping via Borrowing. This chapter investigates these approaches and the ways in which the elves trigger action. First, though, the amoral nature of the elves deserves some attention.

The elves of *Lords and Ladies* differ from the antagonists elsewhere in the sequence in that they are outsiders.<sup>39</sup> They are alien: beings who impose themselves on a reality they are not a part of. As such, they are not a part of a recognisable ethical structure, and the novel makes it clear that they cannot be expected to behave in an ethical manner. The philosopher

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<sup>39</sup> At the same time, they resemble the Creatures from the Dungeon Dimensions, who threaten Esk in *Equal Rites*, in being monstrous in behaviour. Unlike the creatures, however, the elves of *Lords and Ladies* have beauty and style, and the capacity to enter the Discworld. In many ways this makes them much more dangerous.

Badiou's argument on evil in *Ethics: On the Understanding of Evil* identifies it as stemming from awareness of good:

If Evil exists, we must conceive it from the starting point of the Good.  
Without consideration of the Good, and thus of truths, there remains  
only the cruel innocence of life, which is beneath Good *and beneath*  
*Evil*. (60)

A similar construction of ethics appears in *Lords and Ladies* and is emphasised through the morphology of the elves, who appear aloof and above all other beings but, when their glamour fades, are substantially diminished. Unlike the antagonists of the prior two novels, who are heavily engaged with the ethical coding of the novels as their actions echo those of the protagonists, the elves are an ethical void. They are monstrous and the actions they perform are often evil, but they do not choose to be monstrous or evil. As in the earlier novels, choices are emphasised as necessary to be a moral agent. *Lords and Ladies* focuses attention on the protagonists' morality within the framework of past and future, tradition and taboo, which defines their relationships with their community. The elves' contrasting lack of moral agency, which is established early in the novel and repeatedly re-affirmed, combined with their evil actions, results in a monstrosity which serves as a stark backdrop to the efforts of the protagonists.

The elves' divorce from any clear ethical structures has foundations in the familiar imagery used to establish the reader's expectations. The narrator continually reminds the reader that there is a break between stereotypical representations of elves within modern, Tolkien-influenced fantasy worlds and those encountered in this novel. One pivotal passage in particular cements the shift Pratchett is making away from genre-based stereotypes:

Elves are wonderful. They provoke wonder.  
Elves are marvellous. They cause marvels.  
Elves are fantastic. They create fantasies.  
Elves are glamorous. They project glamour.  
Elves are enchanting. They weave enchantment.  
Elves are terrific. They beget terror.

The thing about words is that meanings can twist just like a snake, and if you want to find snakes look for them behind words that have changed their meaning.

No-one ever said elves are *nice*.  
Elves are *bad*. (142-43)

Key words that are fundamental to positive depictions of elves are turned on their head to evoke much more ambivalent folklore. There is a marked decline from the potential good of “wonderful” to the questionable “terrific” which emphasises the danger of the elves in a subtler manner. The clarification at the end of the passage that the elves are not nice, but instead bad, may in fact continue the wordplay with ‘bad’ being slang for ‘excellent’, and does not necessarily bring them into an ethical schema. Graham Harvey, in “Discworld and Otherworld: The Imaginative Use of Fantasy Literature Among Pagans”, claims that the elves in Pratchett are not morally bad, just bad for humans, but he overlooks the evidence that the elves are destructive towards all living things. When the elves break into the castle they “killed the fish in the ornamental pond, eventually” (231). ‘Eventually’ here implies that the elves tortured the fish first, and later in the passage the elves begin to destroy the beehives. Of course, it could be argued that these are examples of a domesticated and therefore human natural world. Earlier in the novel, however, a stag finds its way through the circle, and when Lankin brings it to the Queen: “It was still alive. Elves were skilled at leaving things alive, often for weeks” (31).<sup>40</sup> If anything, references to the natural world in conjunction with elves are used, in the novel, to imply the elves’ penchant for torture.

Harvey’s argument that elves are not morally bad does deserve further attention, however. While they are certainly not morally good, they are constructed as ‘other’ and thereby divorced from usual measures of morality. In this I mean that they are distinctly inhuman, and yet not animals. When Granny goes Borrowing, she finds the Queen also using a similar magic:

This other roving intelligence ... it’d go in and out of another mind like a chainsaw, taking, taking, taking. She could sense the shape of it, the predatory shape, all cruelty and cool unkindness; a mind full of intelligence, that’d use other living things and hurt them because it was fun.

She could put a name to a mind like that.

*Elf*. (61)

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<sup>40</sup> The name Lankin, in this context, alludes to the ballad “Long Lankin”. In some versions, such as that recorded by Steele Span in *Common Crown* (1975), the character Lankin who torments and kills a mother and baby in their home is decidedly fey-like.

The passage preceding this extract clearly establishes Borrowing as a practice which increases compassion in the practitioner. The mind of the elf, however, is not constructed as a human mind is. In some ways this description harks back to that of the Wolf's mind in *Witches Abroad*, but where increased intelligence had caused the Wolf to become less predatory and arguably more moral, intelligence here is not at odds with the predatory nature of the mind. Despite the intelligence of these beings, they are no more capable of moral thought or action than an animal like a wolf or a cat.

The analogy between elves and cats is used repeatedly over the course of the novel, and it takes advantage of the established characterization of Greebo. Nanny Ogg, as she lies in her bed, considers that trolls and dwarfs are inhuman and yet "just like *us*" (114), whereas:

we're stupid, and the memory plays tricks, and we remember the elves  
for their beauty and the way they move, and forget what they *were*.  
We're like mice saying, "Say what you like, cats have got real *style*."  
(114)

Where the other beings are thought of as existing on a similar level as humans, the elves are a step up the ecological system. This image is not meant to imply that there is anything right in the mice being eaten by the cat, only that there is something very wrong with them being complicit in their own demise. When Granny explains elves to Verence and he asks why they are not widely known for their cruelty, she tells him:

"Glamour. Elves are beautiful. They've got," she spat the word, "*style*.  
Beauty. Grace. That's what matters. If cats looked like frogs we'd  
realise what nasty, cruel little bastards they are. Style. That's what  
people remember. They remember the glamour. All the rest of it, all  
the truth of it, becomes . . . old wives' tales." (138)

The use of this cat metaphor hinges on both positive and negative stereotypes of cats. The stereotypes are often based on the perceived 'nature' of the animals, which is strengthened by the widespread belief that cats cannot be trained. Cats, it is often believed, are bastards by nature and they do not have a choice to be good or evil. If an ethical existence requires freedom to choose, then, because the elves are driven by basic instinct rather than conscious choice, they are amoral. Pratchett's elves are not morally bad, because they are not presented, here, as capable of moral choice.

One of the key causes of their amoral nature seems to be lack of empathy. Granny Weatherwax explains to Verence:

“Even a hunter, a good hunter, can feel for the quarry. That’s what makes ’em a good hunter. Elves aren’t like that. They’re cruel for fun, and they can’t understand things like mercy. They can’t understand that anything apart from themselves might have feelings. They laugh a lot, especially if they’ve caught a lonely human or a dwarf or a troll. Trolls might be made out of rock, your majesty, but I’m telling you that a troll is your brother compared to elves. In the head I mean.” (138)

Lacking any empathetic connection to the suffering of others means that the elves here cannot engage ethically with the world. While their actions may have evil outcomes, the elves cannot be considered moral agents because they lack agency. There is no ambiguity in how these antagonists are presented to the reader. Later, in the Tiffany Aching series, the Elf Queen reappears and is demonstrably less cruel, but in this novel she has no redeeming qualities.<sup>41</sup> There is no attempt to make the elves sympathetic, and much of the novel works to undermine any existing sympathy the reader might hold for elves due to their presentation in other fiction.

There is no indication that the reader might be meant to doubt the facts the witches present, even though they are kept continually aware of a disconnect between perception and reality, between style and substance. The only two points in the novel in which the elves are presented sympathetically occur when the King of the Elves is approached by Nanny Ogg and later when he reunites with the queen, and even then there is fair indication that the reader is still meant to interpret him as an ‘other’ figure without much empathy. In presenting a group of antagonists who are not only irredeemable, but also ultimately alien in their motives and behaviours, Pratchett shifts focus away from the moral problems of the antagonist’s world view in favour of engaging with the protagonists’ approach to the threat.

### **Nanny Ogg and Roots of Folklore**

“We only remembers that the elves sang. We forgets what it was that they were singing about.” (114)

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<sup>41</sup> In *The Wee Free Men* the Queen does not torture or kill her young captives to amuse herself, for instance, and the posthumously published *The Shepherd’s Crown* sketches a redemption arc for the Queen of the Elves.

Pratchett's elves are drawn from English folkloric traditions in which elves or fairies are capricious and often cruel. The novel emphasises this cruelty by contrasting it with the more modern and literary tendencies to either depict elves as often diminutive, mischievous, floral creatures (as in Enid Blyton's novels), or as tall, graceful, and intrinsically good (as in Tolkien's novels). Importantly, the shift towards imagining kind elves is not only intertextual as it has taken place in the world of the story. As such, the protagonists repeatedly need to clarify the erroneous nature and the danger of this belief, which facilitates the intertextual linking the novel stresses. Nanny Ogg's relationship with and use of folklore as a means to counter the elves deals closely with this matter of reinterpretation and loss of context.<sup>42</sup> Unlike Magrat or Granny, Nanny Ogg uses her relationship with her community and knowledge of tradition and folklore as the basis of her action against the Elf Queen.

The reader is expected to have a degree of folkloric knowledge, and the transfer of this knowledge is one of the major concerns of the novel. The novel opens with a girl – whom readers of the series can infer is a young Granny Weatherwax – visiting a circle of stones:

She knows about the stones. No-one ever gets *told* about the stones.  
And no-one is ever told not to go there, because those who refrain from  
talking about the stones also know how powerful is the attraction of  
prohibition. It's just that going to the stones is not ... what we do. (3)

This first instance of the transfer of knowledge across generations in the novel places emphasis on the incomplete and insufficient nature of the knowledge transferred. From the outset of the novel, "those who refrain from talking" have failed. The construction of this passage highlights "the attraction of prohibition" through the repeated use of "no-one" and "not" which function as prohibitive despite the vagueness of the taboo. The only knowledge which has been transferred effectively is knowledge of the taboo, which is more attractive

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<sup>42</sup> That is not to suggest that neither of the other two witches have a relationship with folkloric sources. Granny Weatherwax has a strong foundation in the matter, which she displays very clearly when explaining the elves to King Verence. Magrat's knowledge of folklore is somewhat less clear, but it is made evident that she is aware of a fair amount; she has simply been prone to mis-reading it. Granny says of Magrat that "She thinks you can lead your life as if fairy stories work and folk songs are really true" (37). This is a rather unfair accusation, as any reader familiar with *Witches Abroad* might recall that fairy stories did take place, and within this novel we do find that there is a truth to folk songs.

than prohibitive. Hence the ability of the younger generation to recognise the elves' threat is compromised, as is their ability to make an informed decision.

This is further complicated by the attribution of folkloric knowledge to the past and to the elderly, which leads to pervasive dismissal. Verence, surprised at the existence of elves, tells Granny Weatherwax that he thought them "old wives' tales" and therefore not real (135). The irony of him doubting the accounts of old women, while depending on Granny to tell him what is true, emphasises the ingrained cultural bias against elderly women. This repeats some of the concerns raised during the Red Riding Hood episode in *Witches Abroad*, but has further weight as Verence applies this stereotypical view to Granny Weatherwax who rarely conforms to those aspects of the old woman stereotype that are conjured with the reference to 'old wives' tales'. The disbelief and miscommunication that fracture the community response to the elves (and the response of the witches) are rooted in these assumptions. Just as Verence doubts old wives, Granny Weatherwax doubts Magrat's judgement because she seems to be the sort of person who would believe in good and helpful fairies. Nanny Ogg initially resists this assumption (24), and she is also the witch whose response exemplifies the relationship of the community and its folklore, and her own power as a keeper of Lancre knowledge.

Nanny Ogg embraces the romantic nature of folklore (in both senses) in her journey into a metaphoric past to contact the King of the Elves, and this romance is supported through the abundant intertextual references to folklore. The narrator makes reference to both the titles of other texts and their associated plots when they explain to the reader how the elves access the Discworld:

normal directions don't work in the multiverse, which has far too many dimensions for anyone to find their way. So new ones have to be invented so that the way *can* be found.

Like: East of the Sun, West of the Moon.

Or: Behind the North Wind.

Or: At the Back of Beyond.

Or: There and Back Again.

Or: Beyond the Fields We Know.

And sometimes there's a short cut. A door or a gate. Some standing stones, a tree cleft by lightning, a filing cabinet.

Maybe just a spot on some moorland somewhere . . . (69)



The first of these references is to a Norwegian fairy tale in which a youngest daughter must quest to the castle located east of the sun and west of the moon, to save a prince. The fairy tale was popularised in English by Andrew Lang who included it in *The Blue Fairy Book* (1890). The second is close to the title of George MacDonald's children's novel *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871) about a boy going on adventures with the North wind, but it also happens to be a translation of 'Hyperborea', which referred to a region Ancient Greeks thought was inhabited by giants. The third is an idiom, often used to refer to a place being isolated and difficult to get to. The fourth is the subtitle of *The Hobbit*, Tolkien's famous children's fantasy novel. The final reference on the list refers to the works of Lord Dunsany, a pioneer in the fantasy genre, whose novel *The King of Elfland's Daughter* uses the phrase "beyond the fields we know" to refer to the border of Elfland. There is also a collection of Lord Dunsany's shorter work in fantasy titled *Beyond the Fields We Know*. Most of these references are works for children, all deal with journeys or distant locations, and, with the exception of the idiom, all are works which can be described as either fantasy or fairy tale. The quest story is particularly brought to prominence through these references, even for readers who do not recognise the particular intertexts due to the focus on movement or unusual locations. Those readers who do recognise the references are likely to have encountered them during childhood, or at least recognise the tone. Childhood being invoked heightens the sense of wonder and, in taking the familiar and making it unfamiliar, the novel develops that peculiar sort of dread, popular in modern horror, that comes from distorting images of comfort and escapism. Given the novel's focus on the danger of the elves, this is apt, but these references are also key to developing a particular sense of inter-generational knowledge transfer which Nanny leverages in order to prompt the King of the Elves into action.

Later in the novel, folkloric intertexts are invoked once more. Again, these appear in a list and refer to texts which may have been encountered by the reader in childhood, but here the intertexts are already unsettling and vaguely threatening:

People remember badly. But *societies* remember well, the *swarm* remembers, encoding information to slip it past the censors of the mind. Passing it on from grandmother to grandchild in little bits of nonsense they won't bother to forget. Sometimes the truth keeps itself alive in devious ways despite the best efforts of the official keepers of information. Ancient fragments chimed together now in Magrat's head.

*Up the airy mountain, down the rushy glen ...*

*From ghosties and bogles and long-leggity beasties ...*  
*My mother said I never should ...*  
*We dare not go a-hunting, for fear ...*  
*And things that go bump ...*  
*Play with the fairies in the wood ... (245)*

There are three rhymes referenced here: William Allingham's poem "The Fairies"; a traditional Scottish poem/prayer often referred to by the title "Things That Go Bump in the Night"; and a variation of the traditional children's rhyme "My Mother Said I Never Should". In the case of this last rhyme, 'fairies' is often substituted with the word 'gypsies'. Allingham's "The Fairies" is written in the style of a traditional folk poem, and, since its publication, has appeared in numerous anthologies, thereby entering a similar level of social consciousness as the other two poems. Of particular note in Allingham's poem is the stanza:

High on the hill-top  
 The old King sits;  
 He is now so old and grey  
 He's nigh lost his wits.  
 With a bridge of white mist  
 Columkill he crosses,  
 On his stately journeys  
 From Slieveleague to Rosses;  
 Or going up with the music  
 On cold starry nights,  
 To sup with the Queen  
 Of the gay Northern Lights.  
 (17-28)

Echoes of this image of the King here can be found in Pratchett's work, where the King of the Fairies is found seated under a hill waiting for people to forget iron, and is persuaded to make a journey to meet with his Queen. Folkloric narratives combine to suggest a journey or quest narrative while they warn of the danger of fairies and imply the passing on of knowledge to children. It is little wonder that Nanny Ogg, the witch who has children and grandchildren, has the strongest connection to folklore.

Nanny Ogg's large family means she is mother, mother-in-law, or grandmother to a large number of Lancre's occupants and this relationship ties her closely to the concerns of the community. Her children hold important positions both in the town and in the story,

further increasing this sense of her presence, and yet Nanny is also least drawn into conflict with the Elf Queen. Where Granny Weatherwax is linked to the Elf Queen through the encounter she had in her youth, and Magrat by their shared position as queens (or soon-to-be queen and queen), Nanny lacks any such connection to the primary antagonist. Her concern and drive to resolve the situation are not wholly selfish, but rather motivated by her connection to the community and folklore, while her control over her quest and over the king is linked to her responsibilities as a keeper and teacher of tradition.

While she is a moderating and comical force in the previous two novels, in *Lords and Ladies* the reader sees more of Nanny and, particularly, more of her here separately from the other witches. Her attitude towards life is expanded with the reappearance of Casanunda, who continues trying to romance her as he did in *Witches Abroad*. Nanny allows herself to be distracted by the beginnings of the new romance:

It occurred briefly to Nanny Ogg that she really should be somewhere else, but at her time of life invitations to intimate candlelit suppers were not a daily occurrence. There had to be a time when you stopped worrying about the rest of the world and cared for yourself. There had to be a time for a quiet inner moment. (205-6)

While on the one hand the reader is likely to find it difficult to imagine Nanny Ogg not caring for herself, on the other, this passage paints a compelling image of Nanny in a believable light as a person for whom duty has been a significant factor. There is almost immediate bathos when the next paragraph involves Nanny commenting that the wine is named “cat’s water” and she hammers in the cork and gives it a good shaking (206). While the wooing of Nanny Ogg by Casanunda is certainly comical, it is a sort of a romance in the more modern sense of the word. Nanny Ogg is figuring in a love story. The significance of this is largely due to the fact that, when the elves return, Nanny’s modern romance shifts into a medieval quest romance. This coincides with the narrative stressing a return to an older time. When Magrat rides through the town we have it described:

Night had fallen in Lancre, and it was an old night. It was not the simple absence of day, patrolled by the moon and stars, but an extension of something that had existed long before there was any light to define it by its absence. It was unfolding itself from under tree roots and inside stones, crawling back across the land. (244)

Shortly thereafter we are reintroduced to Nanny Ogg and Casanunda, whose romantic dinner has been ruined by the invasion. Nanny leaps into action, firmly stating:

“I ain’t having the Queen of the Fairies ruling *my* children. So we’d better get some help. This has gone too far.”

[...]

“Esme won’t thank me for this, but I’m the one who has to wave the bag o’ sweets when she overreaches herself . . . and I’m thinking about someone who *really* hates the Queen.” (253)<sup>43</sup>

Nanny’s first thought is for her children, and of the three witches she is the only one who seriously considers going for help. Going for help, to search for a person or object to assist against a great evil, is a staple of the quest-romance narrative as well as the fairy story. The recognition that she needs help marks not only a shift in sub-genre here, but also the necessity of both compromise and communal action in ensuring a good outcome.

Nanny’s compromise, which strongly distinguishes her ethical viewpoint from that of Granny Weatherwax, relies on her connection with the community just as her interference at the challenge between Diamanda and Granny does. The help Nanny seeks takes her further back into the mythic past. The Long Man is set in a forest which is “old even by the standards of Lancre forestry. Beards of moss hung from gnarled low branches. Ancient leaves crackled underfoot” (258). Nanny Ogg is entering the folkloric landscape of Lancre with her journey to see the King of the Fairies and this reversal of the intrusion narrative places her in a context of moral uncertainty. However, this landscape is not unfamiliar to her and she recounts the history of the landscape to Casanunda as they travel. The stories she tells come not just from her, but also from her great-grandmother, emphasising the generational basis for her role as a keeper of lore (259). Her connection to this folkloric landscape is cemented with the ancient Oggham inscription, and this connection to the past through folklore allows her to confidently navigate the landscape under the Long Man.<sup>44</sup> When Casanunda asks her, ““You haven’t been down here before?””, she replies, ““No, but I know the way”” (262). While folklore may not have passed knowledge down in explicit detail, it does allow Nanny Ogg the capacity to confidently find her way through the landscapes they deal with. Her journey

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<sup>43</sup> “bag o’ sweets” here is a reference to the staring contest between Granny and Diamanda, which Nanny interrupted by showing a bag of sweets to her grandson Pewsey, who entered the magic circle “*whereup he fell down with a terrible scream also a flash. The olde witche looked around, got out of her chair, picked him up and carried him to his grandmother*” resulting in consensus that Granny had won the contest (83).

<sup>44</sup> “Oggham” is a reference to ogham, an early medieval script used in Ireland.

highlights, more than any other, the value of an oral tradition even as it draws into question the nature of ‘good’ action.

The novel alludes to several widely known cultural texts throughout Nanny’s journey, ensuring that the traditions she is engaging with are not likely to be alien to the reader. The Long Man itself, a declaration of “I’ve Got a Great Big Tonker” written large on the landscape (259), brings to mind both the Long Man of Wilmington, and the Cerne Abbas Giant both of which are giant figures cut into English hillsides, the second of which might be described as having ‘a great big tonker’. While the actual dates of these figures have been disputed, both are still generally thought of as pre-historic and holding a mythical significance.<sup>45</sup> Once Nanny and Casanunda descend into the caves under the mound, they find sleeping warriors and Nanny explains “‘It’s some old king and his warriors, [...] Some kind of magical sleep, I’m told. Some old wizard did it. They’re supposed to wake up for some final battle when a wolf eats the sun’” (263). Readers might recognise this as an allusion to King Arthur and his knights, and to Norse Ragnarök when the wolf Fenrir will eat the sun. Casanunda’s reply, “‘Those wizards, always smoking *something*’” (263), mocks these references to serious myths, while also bringing Tolkien’s wizard Gandalf irreverently to mind. By the time Nanny reaches the door to another fairy land, she has taken the reader on a tour of their own familiar mythical landscape and brought to the fore a conflation of myth, truth, and belief.

Nanny Ogg’s folklore has a physical truth in the landscape she travels, and yet it is exactly this that she threatens to destroy in order to force the King of Elves into action:

“Everyone needs ‘one day’. But it ain’t today. D’you see? So you come on out and balance things up. Otherwise, this is what I’ll do. I’ll get ’em to dig into the Long Man with iron shovels, y’see, and they’ll say, why, it’s just an old earthworks, and pensioned-off wizards and priests with nothin’ better to do will pick over the heaps and write dull old books about burial traditions and suchlike, and that’ll be another iron

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<sup>45</sup> Chris Baynes reported in the *Independent* on 08/07/2020 that “The Cerne Abbas giant may only be a few hundred years old” (“Cerne Abbas Chalk Giant is Not Prehistoric, Snail Remains Suggest”) while the entry on “Hill Figures” in Charles Arnold-Baker’s *The Companion to British History*, Routledge “The ithyphallic Cerne Giant (Dorset) may be a Herculean figure related to a fertility cult revived in the 2nd cent. by the Emperor Commodus [...] The Long Man of Wilmington has lately been supposed to be a 14th cent. sign to guide travellers to the Wilmington priory guest house”.

nail in your coffin. And I'd be a little bit sorry about that, 'cos you know I've always had a soft spot for you. But I've got kiddies, y'see, and they don't hide under the stairs because they're frit of the thunder, and they don't put milk out for the elves, and they don't hurry home because of the night, and before we go back to them dark old ways *I'll see you nailed.*" (266)

This is perhaps Nanny Ogg's most significant speech in all the novels as it emphasises the depth of her care as well as her understanding. Her threat to call in the Discworld version of Time Team clearly establishes verification as the antithesis of folklore in a very sympathetic way. Her willingness to fundamentally change the folklore she passes down in order to keep her descendants from fear and suffering is a choice which diminishes her own power for the good of the community. That she ultimately does not need to make that choice does not undermine the significance of the moment, as Nanny exposes the power she has to change the narrative of Lancre's past and thereby destroy the threat it poses to the present.

### **Magrat and Royal Jelly**

Shawn stared down in fascination at the dead elves as Magrat stepped over them.

"You killed them," he said.

"Did I do it wrong?"

"Um. No," said Shawn cautiously. "No, you did it ... quite well, really." (237)

Nanny Ogg, with her power anchored in folklore and community takes action in a distinctly different way to Magrat, who finds her power in a fabricated history and a sense of duty as a soon-to-be queen. 'History' within the novel might be defined in terms of catalogues and physical artefacts and written texts. "*Twurp's Peerage of the Fifteen Mountains and the Sto Plains*" (161), which Magrat struggles with in order to properly act the part of a queen, highlights two of these elements as it historicises the nobility through categorization. As Magrat steps out of her role as a witch abruptly when Granny refuses to treat her as an equal, she casts aside the stereotypical trappings of witchcraft and exchanges them for elements which define the stereotypical story-book queen. Her struggle to fit in, and her gradual

progress towards control of her own narrative, is catalysed by the elvish invaders. In grasping a sense of duty to confront the threat in a manner distinct from witchcraft, she finds inspiration in the past and in bees, emphasising the importance of positive and varied stereotypes.

Magrat engages with the history of Lancre in the context of her transition from witch to queen, and where in folklore the truth relates directly to an actual threat – the elves – the history Magrat engages with most deeply does not relate to an actual past. Fabricated histories appear frequently in Pratchett's work. In *Wyrd Sisters*, Felmet's attempt to have history re-written is a major plot point. In *Witches Abroad*, Lily is able to change her personal history as she pleases (to an extent anyway), the narrator stating, "she'd had to go a mere hundred miles to become a Lady" (12). In *Lords and Ladies*, Queen Ynci, who figures as an important role-model for Magrat is a largely fabricated historical figure in the vein of Boudicca.<sup>46</sup> This fabricated history allows Magrat to confidently step into battle against the elvish invasion: the untruth is necessary for her to succeed. In the Watch novels, *Men at Arms* and *Feet of Clay* particularly, where history and lineage represent truth alongside and above folklore, the accuracy of history is a threat. In *Men at Arms* the antagonists work to put Corporal Carrot, the rightful heir, on the throne. During the final confrontation Dr Cruces points to the evidence that Carrot is the heir, saying: "'It's all there, sire, [ . . . ] Everything written down. The whole thing. Birthmarks and prophesies and genealogy and everything. Even your sword. It's *the* sword!'" (359). In that case, historicising of folklore and cataloguing of lineages threatens to overwhelm the careful balance of power in Ankh-Morpork. Returning to the monarchy of the past threatens to undo the rule of law, and the implication in *Lords and Ladies* that the elves once ruled Lancre similarly threatens the contemporary way of life. However, the malleability of history in both novels proves key to the success of the protagonists. While Magrat takes inspiration from an imagined past, she does not allow Lancre to fall backward into the power of the Queen of the Elves.

History's capacity for change threatens the elves, as their right to rule can be ignored as easily as Carrot ignores the history that Dr Cruces provides. Nanny Ogg, in the passage I quoted earlier, threatens the King of Elves with "pensioned-off wizards and priests" who will "write dull old books about burial traditions and suchlike" (266). The implication is that once

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<sup>46</sup> Tellingly, Boudicca ruled the Iceni tribe.

the mounds have become a part of recorded history, the elves will lose a significant amount of power. Written history allows the narrative to be disputed, changing patterns of belief and seizing narrative control from the antagonists. In a manner similar to that in *Wyrd Sisters*, the text of a play is positioned as a thing of power. Granny Weatherwax tells the Queen of Fairies:

“I suspect you may be capable of being *reduced*.”

The Queen’s smile didn’t vanish, but it *did* freeze, as smiles do when their owner is not certain about what has just been said and isn’t sure what to say next.

“You meddled in a play,” said Granny. “I believe you don’t realize what you’ve done. Plays and books . . . you’ve got to keep an eye on the buggers. They’ll turn on you. I mean to see that they do.” She nodded amicably at an elf covered in woad and badly tanned skins.

“Ain’t that so, Fairy Peaseblossom?”

The Queen’s brow knotted.

“But that is not his name,” she said.

Granny Weatherwax gave the Queen a bright smile.

“We shall see,” she said. (292)

The transition of information through written texts threatens the elves with a reduction that has already happened for the reader. Where the majority of the novel has worked against the stereotypes which have come about through real-world texts, against the image of the mischievous but harmless or good elf, here at the end the reader is reminded deliberately of that exact stereotype. The Queen is threatened with a reputation that the reader likely began the novel aware of. Moreover, in reminding the reader that the elves are not nice, the novel has simultaneously ensured that the elves of the novel maintain a dual stereotype.

To the elves, the written word is destructive, or at least reductive. To Magrat, history is constructive and imaginative. Magrat’s divorce from the coven inspires her initial engagement with Lancre’s history as her wedding approaches. Granny’s refusal to share with Magrat the danger that the elves pose, on the basis that “‘She’d get it all wrong. The Gentry. Circles. She’d say it was *nice*. Best for her if she’s out of it’” (27), results in an imbalance of initiative, with Nanny and Granny taking the first steps to resolve the crisis while Magrat has her own distinct crisis of self. Granny’s assessment speaks to a stereotyped view of Magrat, one which the reader is certainly aware of; however, an astute reader will also recognise that Magrat cannot change her perspective if she is not given the knowledge held by the other



two. The assumption made by Granny, about how Magrat will react, reiterates arguments from *Witches Abroad*. Readers who are familiar with the earlier novel might recall that while Magrat is presented as idealistic, she still brings herself to destroy the ballgown, a symbol of the “happily ever after” (202-3). Granny is effectively ignoring the character development that Magrat has undergone, in favour of persisting in viewing her as a stereotype figure, which is an obvious injustice.

Granny Weatherwax’s mistreatment of Magrat falls within the bounds of the disapproving elder and can certainly be read as a reprisal of Granny’s role as a transitory antagonist in *Equal Rites*. After the final showdown Nanny Ogg remarks on how well Magrat did in standing up to the Queen of Elves, to which Magrat responds darkly “‘I’ve had practice’” (300), obviously referring to how the older witches have treated her. The antagonist-protagonist relationship between Granny and Magrat in the early stages of the novel serves primarily to drive the plot forwards in the absence of direct attacks from the elves. Magrat’s abandonment of witchcraft is encapsulated in her collecting her mystical jewellery and other trappings in a sack and throwing them into the river:

On the way up to the palace she crossed the bridge over Lancre Gorge and tossed the sack into the river.

It bobbed for a moment in the strong current, and then sank.

She’d secretly hoped for a string of multi-coloured bubbles, or even a hiss. But it just sank. Just as if it wasn’t anything very important. (31)

The repetition of “just” creates a tone of resignation and regret. Magrat’s hope that her stereotypical trappings of power will produce a stereotypical magical effect on being discarded, and thereby validate her dedication to their use, is dashed. The stereotype she had been trying to fit, that was very important to her, is too easily discarded for comfort.

Having discarded a major element of her identity, Magrat begins to learn how to fit into the queen stereotype (Magrat’s journey as a character consists in a large part of her endeavouring to fit into one stereotype or another). She and the reader share a limited number of concepts about what a queen is and does, and much of the novel is concerned with delving into the traits of the stereotypical queen. This discussion brackets the relationship between the Queen of the Elves and Magrat, and the most positive progress is made when Magrat begins to define herself in opposition to her antagonists. One of the key conversations about queenship, however, takes place between Magrat and Mr Brooks shortly after she has moved into the castle and before Magrat finds out about the elves:

[“]I thought queens were *born*,” she said.

“Oh, no,” said Mr Brooks. “There ain’t no such thing as a queen egg. The bees just decides to feed one of ’em up as a queen. Feeds ’em royal jelly.”

“What happens if they don’t?”

“Then it just becomes an ordinary worker, your ladyship,” said Brooks, with a suspiciously republican grin. (105)

The idea that bees are beneficent and right in their social structures has been clearly established before this point in the novel and is integral to understanding the importance of this exchange. The queen bee’s divorce from any concept of elevated bloodlines makes it a clear metaphor for Magrat, who is being made into a queen, and this reassures both her and the readers that this process is right and good. The use of bees as an analogy for an ideal society mirrors the situation in Lancre, and as the elves impose themselves on society and destroy this natural order, we are given the image of the wasps breaking into the hives and the reflection that “Wasps looked pretty enough. But if you were for bees, you had to be against wasps” (209). There is no middle ground; there is only for or against, a black and white morality which reinforces the idea of elves as external to the natural order of things and therefore outside normal moral concerns.

The use of the metaphorical phrase “Lords and Ladies” for elves gains significance in proximity to the model of aristocrat-less bees as an ideal society. Lancre seems to have shrunk since the time of Duke Felmet in *Wyrd Sisters*, and now the reader is presented with a social order comprised of monarchs, workers, and witches. Verence’s earnest interest in his workers’ duties further breaks down the idea of a distant ruling class, and, more often than not, his role in society is presented as an occupation rather than anything more significant like a divine birth right. In stressing the ‘Lords and Ladies’ euphemism for elves the novel critiques the elevated depiction of aristocrats in English literary tradition. The tendency, especially in fantasy literature, to depict aristocrats as above the regular people, is taken to an extreme. The elves assume that they are above any other forms of life, and their destructive natures reflects the consequences of this unreflective elitism. Granny Weatherwax explains how elves position themselves to Verence:

“Feudal system! Pay attention. Feudal system. King on top, then barons and whatnot, then everyone else . . . witches off to one side a bit,” Granny added diplomatically. She steeped her fingers. “Feudal system. Like them pointy buildings heathen kings get buried in. Understand?”

“Yes.”

“Right. That’s how the elves see things, yes? When they get into a world, everyone else is on the bottom. Slaves. Worse than slaves. Worse than animals, even. They take what they want, and they want everything. But worst of all, the worst bit is . . . they read your mind. They hear what you think, and in self-defence you think what they want.” (137)

This description emphasises the elves’ belief in their own innate superiority, but it also acknowledges a group of aristocracy, “barons and whatnot”, who are a part of the regular social order. The introduction of at least the idea of an established aristocracy highlights the threat the elves pose through establishing that there is no room for them within the social model.

The elves, then, pose a threat to the system Magrat is becoming a part of, both directly and indirectly. Indirectly as an unnecessary aristocracy and wasps, and directly with the Queen of Elves being imagined as a rival queen bee. When Magrat visits Mr Brooks he describes how queen bees fight:

“Course,” he went on, righting himself, “the *real* fun starts if the weather’s bad and the ole queen can’t swarm, right?” He moved his hand in a sly circular motion. “What happens then *is*, the two queens – that’s the old queen, right? and the new queen – the two queens start astalkin’ one another among the combs, with the rain adrummin’ on the roof of the hive, and the business of the hive agoin’ on all around them,” Mr Brooks moved his hands graphically, and Magrat leaned forward, “all among the combs, the drones all hummin’, and all the time they can sense one another, ’cos they can tell, see, and then they spots one another and –”

“Yes? Yes?” said Magrat, leaning forward.

“Slash! Stab!”

Magrat hit her head on the wall of the hut.

“Can’t have more’n one queen in a hive,” said Mr Brooks calmly.

(105-6)

While Magrat is unaware of the danger the Queen of Elves poses to her at this point, the reader is aware of the threat she poses to the metaphorical hive. When Mr Brooks goes on to explain the stakes, saying “The old queen’s more cunnin’. But the new queen, she’s *really*

got everything to fight for” (106), the metaphor becomes complicated. On the one hand Magrat is arguably only a queen-to-be still and so may seem to fit the role of the “new queen”, but on the other she is the queen currently in possession of the hive. Nonetheless the importance of this metaphor cannot be understated, as Magrat is reduced down to her core impulses and lashes out at the Queen of Elves, we have the line: “Only one queen in a hive! Slash! Stab!” (299).

Magrat’s strength at the end of the novel is not only drawn from Granny’s antagonism and the metaphor of the hive, but also from the history of Lancre. As established earlier, a major element of Magrat’s development into an appropriate queen figure is her discovery of Queen Ynci. Initially Magrat endeavours to conform to a passive stereotype of the medieval queen though, admittedly, she wants to be active in the role from the outset. She asks her maid:

“So what do *I* do? What’s my *job*?”

Millie looked puzzled although this did not involve much of a change in her general expression.

“Dunno, m’m. Reigning, I suppose. Walking around in the garden. Holding court. Doin’ tapestry. That’s very popular among queens.”  
(47)

Magrat is disappointed to find that there is not much beyond the royal succession expected of a queen. Initially, when she looks into the Long Gallery with its tapestries of ancient battles and historical portraits of queens, she finds the past queens “all of them pretty, all of them well-dressed according to the fashion of their times, and all of them bored out of their tiny well-shaped skulls” (80). The portraits all seem to uphold a stereotypical image of a queen, one that Magrat is dissatisfied with, but nonetheless determined to fit into. Despite her unhappiness, she does not question the stereotype. Her initial doubts about the wedding are about filling the role of queen prescribed by this stereotype:

It was just that she could see a future of bad tapestry and sitting looking wistfully out of the window.

It was just that she was fed up with books of etiquette and lineage and *Twurp’s Peerage* of the Fifteen Mountains and the Sto Plains.

You had to know this kind of stuff, to be a queen. There were books full of the stuff in the Long Gallery, and she hadn’t even explored the far end. How to address the third cousin of an earl. What the pictures

on shields meant, all those lions passant and regardant. And the clothes weren't getting any better. (161)

Much of her dissatisfaction is rooted in having to engage with a different sort of knowledge. The record keeping of the upper classes and their many peculiar traditions are bewildering, but also have little to offer her. As the guests start to arrive, she recognises ““this *stuff* ... it's not for *me*! It's for some kind of *idea*. [...] It's ...it's like the bees! I'm being turned into a queen whether I want it or not!”” (176-7). Millie notes in response to Magrat's outburst that she had fallen in love with a king, and notes that Magrat continues to pull rank when convenient (177). The conflict between stereotype and self is also a conflict between power and expectation, and between past and future.

The elves, then, become a catalyst which forces Magrat to engage more with the portraits of the Long Gallery, and with the history they refer to. When she does, she encounters a different sort of stereotypical queen, Queen Ynci, the warrior queen stereotype:

Some shape, some trick of moonlight, some expression on a painted face somehow cut through her terror and caught her eye.

That was a portrait she'd never seen before. She'd never walked down this far. The idiot vapidness of the assembled queens had depressed her. But this one...

This one, somehow, reached out to her.

She stopped.

It couldn't have been done from life. In the days of *this* queen, the only paint known locally was a sort of blue and generally used on the body. But a few generations ago King Lully I had been a bit of a historian and a romantic. He'd researched what was known of the early days of Lancre, and where actual evidence had been a bit sparse he had, in the best traditions of the keen ethnic historian, inferred from revealed self-evident wisdom\* and extrapolated from associated sources[\*\*]. He'd commissioned the portrait of Queen Ynci the Short-Tempered, one of the founders of the kingdom.

\* Made it up.

[\*\*] Had read a lot of stuff that other people had made up, too. (223)

The narrator's implication that Queen Ynci had never existed is purely for the reader. For Magrat, Ynci is a historical figure, and a possible role-model:

Magrat stared.

They'd never mentioned this.

They'd told her about tapestries, and embroidery, and farthingales,  
and how to shake hands with lords. They'd never told her about spikes.

(224)

There is the presentation here of an acceptable feminine type of queen directly contrasted with the unacceptable Ynci with her spikes. This is reiterated after Magrat kills the elves within the castle and rescues Shawn when she says: “‘No-one told me about her. You'd think it's all tapestry and walking around in long dresses!’” (238).

Magrat's frustration speaks to the social difficulties of both stereotypes and ethics. The older witches repeatedly expect Magrat to side with the elves, and this expectation leads Magrat to try to fit into the passive queen stereotype. Both expectations are dramatically shattered when Magrat takes on the mantle of Queen Ynci:

A change had come over Magrat. It showed in her breathing. She'd been panting, with fear and exhaustion. Then, for a few seconds, there was no sound of her breathing at all. And finally it returned. Slowly. Deeply. Deliberately.

Greebo saw Magrat, who he'd always put down as basically a kind of mouse in human shape, lift the hat with the wings on it and put it on her head.

Magrat knew about the power of hats.

In her mind's ear she could hear the rattle of chariots

[...]

Greebo drew back into the safety of his armour. He recalled a particular time when he'd leapt out on a vixen. Normally Greebo could take on a fox without raising a sweat but, as it turned out, this one had cubs. He hadn't found out until he chased her into her den. He'd lost a bit of one ear and quite a lot of fur before he'd go away.

The vixen had a very similar expression to the one Magrat had now.

(230)

Magrat ceases to fit the stereotype expected by everyone around her in favour of another she identifies with, and her belief in this new stereotype is enough that she hears chariots when she puts on the helmet similarly to Granny hearing the sounds of battle when she puts on the crown in *Wyrd Sisters*. In taking up this mantle, Magrat's ethical values shift dramatically. The metaphor put forward from Greebo's perspective meshes with the well-established

metaphor of elves as cats and it establishes Magrat's actions as defensive. But when she shoots an elf through the armoury keyhole, before killing two more and threatening to torture another (233-7), she not only chases away the metaphoric cats, she destroys them. Her lack of hesitation appears as moral certainty and is noted by Shawn in an internal monologue: "She shot one of them in the eye, right through the keyhole. I couldn't have done that. I'd have said something like 'Hands up!' first. But they were in the way and she just ... got them out of her way" (242). Both the comparison of Magrat to a vixen with cubs and the established threat the elves pose, have the reader sympathise with her use of lethal force as goodness and rightness is reshaped as action in opposition to inaction.

Even though Magrat has no children, there is still the implication that she has something she is justified protecting. As she rides out seeking the Queen of the Elves, there are several references to the traditional ballad "Tam Lin" (243 for instance), which serve as precedent to contextualize and endorse her behaviour as an appropriate response to the threat of the elves. Magrat's connection to folklore, however, is a matter to be doubted, unlike Nanny's confident journey into a folkloric landscape. Several individuals see Magrat's ride as hopeless, with Nanny reiterating the view of Magrat, shared with Granny Weatherwax, that "She's a kind-hearted soul and a bit soft. Wears flowers in her hair and believes in songs. I reckon she'll be off dancing with the elves quick as a wink, her" (269). This reminder functions as a comedic 'wink' to the reader, who has been privy to Magrat fulfilling the warrior queen stereotype, but the narrative cuts then to Magrat doubting herself. While her doubts are temporarily allayed, they return when she reaches the forest near the Dancers and begins to think seriously about her odds:

Only now was it dawning on her that the trouble was that they were songs and ballads and stories and poems because they dealt with things that were, not to put too fine a point on it, untrue.

She couldn't, now she had time to think about it, ever remember an example from *history*. (287)

Magrat is concerned, unlike the other protagonists, with *verifiable* precedent. Her reliance on the image of Ynci is dependent on her belief that Ynci was, at some point, a real person. She draws on the idea of Ynci to provide her with goals that she believes must be attainable as when Lord Lankin orders her to kneel and "She felt her muscles strain to comply. Queen Ynci wouldn't have obeyed ..." (270). The idea of Ynci continues strongly even as the folklore allusion to "Tam Lin" becomes irrelevant. Nevertheless, the bloodthirsty and remorseless image of Magrat as Ynci is tempered by her doubts about her folkloric ride and

by her wishing “she could go home.” (277). While she is shown as devoid of any remorse about her actions, it is important that she is shown to have some reluctance to continue on the war path as it proves that she is demonstrably different from the elves, unlike Granny Weatherwax.

Granny’s position as a pseudo-antagonist, in the case of Magrat, is shown to come to a positive end even as she is most explicitly shown to be ethically problematic in her treatment of Magrat. When the Queen of the Elves is explaining her plans for Magrat to a captured Granny, Granny demonstrates an uncomfortable level of insight: “‘Yes,’ said Granny, ‘but that wouldn’t be much fun, would it? Humiliation is the key.’ The Queen nodded. ‘You know you think very much like an elf.’” (285). Granny’s insight here is not out of the bounds of her character, as she has a good grasp of “headology”, yet it also highlights her tendency to take on the role of antagonist. But where the elves are purely evil, Granny is relatively good. She assists Magrat at the critical moment, allowing Magrat to embrace her belief in Queen Ynci:

Magrat heard the voice clearly in her head.

“You want to be queen?”

And she was free.

She felt the weariness drop away from her and it also felt as though

pure Queen Ynci poured out of the helmet. (297)

While the ‘historical’ figure fuels Magrat’s fighting instincts, it is insufficient on its own to free Magrat of the Queen’s influence, or keep her from regaining the upper hand. In the end it is Magrat, reduced to her core sentiments, who defeats the Queen of the Elves. While this certainly fits the trope ‘the power was in her all along’, Magrat needs both the precedent of Ynci and the antagonism of Granny to realise it.

### **Granny Weatherwax and the Importance of Caring**

“You couldn’t fight elves, because you were so much more worthless than them. It was *right* that you should be so worthless. And they were so beautiful. And you weren’t.” (291)

Where the elves’ threatening actions and lack of any concern for other beings appear to simplify the moral structure of the novel, Granny Weatherwax’s dual roles as antagonist and protagonist complicate how the reader can approach its ethical structure. The parallels



drawn between the Queen of the Elves and Granny work alongside Granny's visions and false memories to problematise her choices, both past and present. Choices themselves are not necessarily good or bad, but Granny comes to terms with their necessity over the course of the novel as she confronts the results of the choices she has made over the course of her life. These concerns are brought forward again in *Carpe Jugulum*, but here in *Lords and Ladies*, her similarity to the Queen of the Elves remains problematic to the end. Unlike in *Witches Abroad* where Lily is tied to Granny by blood, the relationship between Granny and the Queen initially seems transitory, as a young Esmerelda Weatherwax declines the Queen's offer of power. Diamanda, a young headstrong girl who wants to become a witch, develops the connection between Granny and the Queen as she echoes the ambition of Granny's younger self and reinforces Granny's role as an antagonist figure. The triangle of these three complicates the vision of right in the novel as Granny struggles with her role as the Big Bad Witch.

While parallels between these figures take some time to establish themselves, they are clearly foreshadowed from the outset. The novel opens with a young Esmerelda Weatherwax in conversation with the Queen, in which the Queen offers her esoteric knowledge so long as Esmerelda steps into the circle (3-6). Not only does this passage evoke fairy folklore, it is also suggestive of Christian folklore about witches involving deals made with the devil in exchange for power and knowledge. It is a stereotypical situation which immediately frames the Queen of the Elves as a threat, and the conversation as a test of virtue, which Esmerelda passes (but Diamanda fails). The line between good and evil implied by the circle is not crossed. However, the final lines of the scene "And besides, the bitch is .../... older" (6) leaves some ambiguity as to who the term "bitch" refers to.<sup>47</sup> The very next scene features the Queen of the Elves observing the stone circle, but there is little indication that she has aged, whereas Granny Weatherwax most certainly has, and the slur shadows her goodness with uncertainty.

As an old bitch, Granny Weatherwax motivates and bullies both Magrat and Diamanda, but though she behaves as an antagonist the reader is privy to her vulnerability in a way that we are not with the Queen. Granny's uncertainty stems from her exceptionalism

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<sup>47</sup> This line, and the one prior, alludes to Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* "Fornication? but that was in another Country: / And besides, the Wench is dead" (4.1) which, in part, asserts a reduction in the magnitude of transgression due to the passing of time.

which leaves her divorced from the community and often at odds with it. As mentioned earlier, Granny refuses to share her knowledge with Magrat and triggers Magrat's rejection of witchcraft. Her attempt at matchmaking, sending a letter to Verence instructing him to begin preparations for the wedding is viewed as an unjust imposition, and in doing so she constrains Magrat's choices in a fashion reminiscent of Lily Weatherwax in *Witches Abroad*. She remains, however, a figure for whom choice is immensely important, and these offences are forgivable social blunders. However, her lack of empathy continues to set her at odds with those around her and emphasise her otherness as a witch. When she humiliates and sends away the girls who came to her and Nanny to learn witchcraft, Nanny asks her if she remembers how it felt to be chosen to be a witch. Granny tells her that she was not chosen:

“You mean you weren't chosen?”

“Me? No. I chose,” said Granny. The face she turned to Nanny Ogg was one she wouldn't forget in a hurry, although she might try. “I chose, Gytha Ogg. And I want that you should know this right now. Whatever happens. I ain't never regretted anything. Never regretted one single thing. Right?”

“If you say so, Esme.” (110-1)

Granny's denial of regrets is somewhat reminiscent of the duchess in *Wyrd Sisters*, who defeats Granny by refusing to regret her monstrous actions. However, Granny's insistence to Nanny in this passage suggests that she does, in fact, have regrets. Furthermore, this passage contextualises her behaviour as resulting from expectations that others should be as determined as she is. By this point it is becoming clear that Granny is experiencing some odd problems remembering things that did not happen, and these false memories result in her losing confidence in her choices. Later in the story, when this is revealed to be because she is remembering the pasts of her other selves in alternate universes, her regret fades. Multiverse theory as a means of circumventing regret might seem a uniquely philosophic approach, but Granny is shown to require not simply a lack of regret but also an understanding of the consequences of her choices in order to stand against the Queen of the Elves.

While Granny's hostility towards Magrat helps develop Magrat's character, her hostility towards Diamanda serves primarily to develop her own character. When the witches discover that young ladies have been frequenting the Dancers, Granny confronts and challenges the group's leader, Diamanda, in a scene which clearly encapsulates generational conflict. Granny lists a genealogy of witchcraft: “I learned my craft from Nanny Gripes,” said Granny Weatherwax, ‘who learned it from Goody Heggety, who got it from Nanna

Plumb, who was taught it by Black Aliss, who—” (67). This list emphasises age, with all the witches except the legendary Black Aliss having honorifics associated with grandmothers. Diamanda responds by claiming this means that no one has learned anything new (67). Her disdain is mirrored later when Granny recalls that it only took a week for Nanny Gripes to tell her everything she knew (110), a sentiment which further ties the attitudes of the pair to one another. The subsequent duel, though, clearly shows their differences: when Pewsey screams, Granny Weatherwax stops staring at the sun to go to his aid while Diamanda, determined to win, keeps her eyes fixed on the sun and the township declares that Granny has proved herself a true witch (83). When she must choose between her reputation and the security of a child, Granny makes the right and empathetic choice. While she acts as an antagonist in some circumstances, she still responds to key circumstances in an admirable fashion.

When Granny later rescues Diamanda from the Queen of the Elves, she cements her transition from antagonist to hero. Her assertion that it ““makes no difference”” (130) that she and Diamanda had been at loggerheads places her firmly in the role of challenging teacher in a manner reminiscent of *Equal Rites*. However, this does not ultimately shift her out of the antagonist role she inhabits, as she continues to alienate Magrat by refusing to explain what threat the elves pose, insisting that there is no time (130-1). Her acknowledgement that Magrat is a better doctor, nonetheless, confers on the younger witch a great deal of respect. In the context of her determination to maintain her superior reputation in front of Diamanda at great personal expense, this decision carries a great deal of weight. Key to this shift is the realisation that Granny prioritises the lives of others over her own self-interest, and this ultimately sets her apart from the elves with their all-consuming selfishness.

And yet the novel continues to draw strong parallels between Granny and the Queen. When Granny speaks with the Queen while she is her captive, the Queen tells her ““you know, you think very much like an elf”” (285), and a page later “Granny nodded. As one expert to another, she recognized accomplished nastiness when she saw it” (286). Granny does not entirely break free of the matched stereotypes of the evil witch and the bad fairy, and Magrat’s resolve against the Queen has deep roots in Granny’s bullying. Once her helmet is knocked off and she no longer has the support of Ynci, Magrat finds her mind invaded by the Queen:

the Queen attacked again, exploding into her uncertainty like a nova.

She was nothing. She was insignificant. She was so worthless and unimportant that even something completely worthless and exhaustively unimportant would consider her beneath contempt. In

laying hands on the Queen she truly deserved an eternity of pain. She had no control of her body. She did not deserve any. She did not deserve a thing.

The disdain sleeted over her, tearing the planetary body of Magrat Garlick to pieces.

She'd never be any good. She'd never be beautiful, or intelligent, or strong. She'd never be anything at all.

[...]

And the ablation of Magrat Garlick roared on, tearing at the strata of her soul . . .

. . . exposing the core.

She bunched up a fist and hit the Queen between the eyes. (298)

The Queen relies on the same bullying tactics that Granny Weatherwax has used against Magrat. As Magrat remarks later to Nanny, she has had practice dealing with them (300). The novel simultaneously condemns this treatment of people and acknowledges that dealing with such attacks can build valuable resilience. Magrat's upset "'I hated her and hated her and now she's dead'" (305) pulls back into focus Nanny's earlier insight:

"I thought Granny *was* my enemy for life." [Magrat said]

"If you think that, my girl, you've got no understanding," said Nanny. "One day you'll find out Esme Weatherwax is the best friend you ever had." (83)

Nanny implies that Granny acts in an antagonistic fashion because she believes it is for the good of others that she does so. She is an ethical antagonist so that people can be prepared for the villains who think nothing of ethics.

## Final Thoughts

The final banishment of the elves comes not with the departure of the Queen with the King of the Elves, but with the shoeing of the unicorn. As the Queen's captive, Granny tells her that the land no longer has a place for the elves, and "'It's not just land any more, it's a country. It's like a horse that's been broken and shod or a dog that's been tamed'" (284), harking back to the assessment of the kingdom as an entity in *Wyrd Sisters*. In her capture of the unicorn she usurps the place of the Queen of the Elves as its master, and with the shoeing of it, she

ensures it will not return to her, as the action symbolizes a taming of folklore. The release of the unicorn afterwards is equally necessary, as a symbolic rejection of the position of power which would leave her comparable to the Queen, as well as a recognition that she should not control folklore as an individual.

Granny's complicated relationship with the younger two witches treads a fine line at the edge of morality, but her fundamental belief in the value of people is highlighted by the uncaring cruelty of the elves, and it is this belief that underpins the morality of all three protagonists. Nanny demonstrates it when she admits her affection for the King of the Elves but nonetheless threatens him with a sort of death, while Magrat finds her own value in the face of the Queen's assault on her self-worth. Without this morality, all the Queen can offer, in a nod to Keat's "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*", "is the cold hillside, and emptiness, and the laughter of the elves" (293).

## Chapter Five – No Actor Anywhere Quite Like an Opera Ghost: *Maskerade*

Over the course of the Witches sequence thus far, Pratchett has made inventive use of the performing arts. *Wyrd Sisters* not only constantly references Shakespeare's tragedies and histories, it also includes a play as a major feature in the downfall of the antagonist.

Likewise, in *Lords and Ladies*, we not only have multiple allusions to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we also have a version of the play feature as a performance at Verence and Magrat's wedding. In these instances, the narratives share parallels, mirroring one another. The plays within *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* already create a mirroring effect and this is extended further in Pratchett's novels. In *Maskerade*, Pratchett once again extends the performance and performativity within the source text, only in this case the retelling of the text and the inclusion of performance elements are even more central to the action and characterisation of the novel.

*Maskerade* is heavily based on Gaston Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera* (*Le Fantôme de l'Opéra*, 1909-1910) and its musical adaptation by Andrew Lloyd Webber, Charles Hart, and Richard Stilgoe (1986). Pratchett's version is not a simple retelling, however. He makes numerous changes and shifts the primary concerns of the story away from love and towards ethical behaviour. Where the source texts focus on the romantic plot and the love triangle between Christine, the Phantom, and Raoul, Pratchett's novel erases this romance by removing Raoul and deposing Christine in favour of Agnes as the female lead, and delves into the secondary concern of the original: the mystery of who the Opera Ghost is. *Maskerade* is a detective novel and, as Alyce von Rothkirch argues, in "I suppose that I am commuting a felony, but it is just possible that I am saving a soul": Ethics in Detective Fiction", ethical concerns "provide the *raison d'être* for the way characters act and the story progresses" in detective fiction (23). *Maskerade*'s main setting, the Ankh-Morpork Opera House, locates the action in a setting familiar to readers of the wider Discworld series. This metropolitan landscape is the usual setting of the Watch sequence, a group of Discworld novels which fall firmly under the umbrella of detective fiction. While a few minor characters cross over, the absence of the Discworld's usual Ankh-Morporkian detective cast from this novel in favour of the witches reflects the difference between the two sequences in terms of their major concerns. The Witches sequence prioritises how the individual interacts with the community, while the Watch novels are concerned with how the community – the socio-political system –

interacts with the individual. *Maskerade* does not ignore systemic issues, but the framing and the weight of attention falls on the individual characters.

*Maskerade*'s plot has two main threads. The first follows Agnes Nitt, a new protagonist who had a minor role in *Lords and Ladies* as one of the young ladies interested in witchcraft. In this novel, however, she attempts to escape witchcraft by journeying to the big city of Ankh-Morpork and joining the opera. In two minds about most things, she has difficulty fitting in and, when people are murdered, she finds herself sleuthing. The other thread follows Nanny Ogg and Granny Weatherwax as, with Magrat no longer in the coven, they find themselves in need of a new youngest member. Under the guise of gaining cook-book royalties, the pair travel to Ankh-Morpork to recruit Agnes. Upon their arrival at the opera house, they find out about the opera ghost and the murders and take up the role as amateur investigators in the tradition of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple. As the story progresses the local simpleton, Walter Plinge, becomes an increasingly likely opera ghost. However, his strict morality and apparent harmlessness complicate matters until Granny Weatherwax points out that more than one person can wear a mask. The on-stage revelation and final battle blur the line between reality and performance, and the true villain, Salzella, dies when he can no longer tell the difference between the two.

Pratchett's interest in the Bildungsroman form continues in earnest with Agnes Nitt, and her efforts to make a place for herself in the world (one that does not involve her becoming a witch) highlights the struggle to find a satisfactory definition of oneself. The counterpoint of the older witches, who largely avoid becoming mentor figures and instead channel their strong personalities into the investigation, provides an appealing vision of self-confidence as they take control of the unfolding narrative. Agnes' uncertainty, however, becomes central to the exploration of the importance of an individual to a community as she finds value as a ghost voice for Christine, creating a sympathetic echo between herself and Walter Plinge.<sup>48</sup> Neither Walter nor Agnes is in control of their own narratives, and Walter's loss of control over the opera ghost figure and subsequent framing by Salzella hinges on the power of stereotypes and assumptions.

As this novel makes use of the basic format of detective fiction, the handling of the antagonist figure is complicated by the fact that their identity is not fully revealed to the

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<sup>48</sup> Agnes is asked to stand behind Christine in the chorus and sing on her behalf.

reader until close to the end of the novel. However, where in other detective fiction the murderer is a mystery for much of the novel, in *Maskerade* the antagonist has an ongoing presence in the figure of the Opera Ghost. If the appeal of detective fiction is that, as Christine A. Evans argues in "On the Valuation of Detective Fiction: A Study in the Ethics of Consolation", it "shows the reader what he or she already knows and wants to know again" (160), the Opera Ghost promises this pleasure, but the complications confound the reader's simple re-knowing. The Opera Ghost is a red herring, being a costume rather than an individual within the novel, and, as a costume with a variable performance, it cannot be engaged with on the same level as the figure in Leroux or Lloyd Webber's stories. The uses it is put to denote but do not define the ethics of the actor wearing the costume; the Ghost is a performance, not an agent. In lending this degree of intangibility to the Opera Ghost, the novel both uses and circumvents, to an extent, the initial response of readers familiar with the source texts and the romanticising of the Opera Ghost in popular culture. Furthermore, the redemption of the Opera Ghost no longer hinges on the community accepting a murderer – the murderous Salzella can perish, and the musical genius, Walter Plinge, can be embraced. Certainly, this may initially appear a less morally challenging resolution, but it should be remembered that the source texts end with the Opera Ghost outcast as his transgressions exceed what may be forgiven by society. Christine's decision to marry Erik is primarily sacrificial not forgiving. Andrew Lloyd Webber's appeal to audience sympathy for the Opera Ghost in his *Love Never Dies* (2010) still results in the death of the Opera Ghost rather than his redemption. The doubling of the Opera Ghost in *Maskerade* feeds into the major concerns of the novel without compromising the novel's sense of moral veracity.

The setting of the Opera House, as well as the reliance on the established texts of *The Phantom of the Opera*, place the moral or ethical veracity of the novel in direct contrast to the unreality of musical drama. A tension is maintained between what seems to be real, what might be real, and what is real – which is drawn out through reference to musicals and operas. This results in the reader being suspended in a state of unknowing which reflects broader social anxieties about the universality of morality itself. The fictional morality and behaviour seem to bleed out from the operas, which in turn affects the behaviour of the characters living in the Opera House, leading to the distinct impression that the majority lack or have abandoned their own agency. The chorus of potential murder victims increases the potential danger while limiting the number of suspects in line with the 'country house' detective story, but the key result of the uncertain divide between opera and life is the



assumption that the murderer has no motive. Part of what the reader sees stemming from opera is a pervading concern with appearance, acting, roles, and particularly stereotypes.

Within the text the tension between the stage stereotype and the stereotype of detective fiction mimics the uncertain divide between acting and authenticity. Evans argues that “detective fiction is ‘overdetermined’, relies heavily on literary formulae and archetypes, as both its critics and defenders recognize” (163) and undoubtedly this assessment can also be applied to operas which draw from character types established in theatre and add to these a further vocal basis for stereotypes. It is worth noting, however, that the stereotypes of detective fiction are, to an extent, expected to shift and change as the story develops, since the novel form is more flexible. Stereotypes born out of opera are tied to voice types, and meant to be instantly recognisable to avoid confusion. These stereotypes are archetypal in nature: the heroine, the hero, the villain, the comic servant, etc. Stereotypes from detective fiction, on the other hand, resist confident recognition on the part of the reader, who must remain alert to shifts in understanding of characters beyond the detective figure.<sup>49</sup> *Maskerade* combines these two forms with a degree of authenticity when it comes to the central characters, which results in a complication of both forms of stereotype and confronts the reader with their own acceptance of these stereotypes.

### **The World and Walter Plinge**

Walter Plinge struggles with his interpersonal relationships and the novel makes it clear that he is a social misfit, existing in a liminal space in the community of the Opera House and within the novel itself. His name is, as some readers might recognise and Andrew Martin records in his article “The Sunday Post: What's in a Name?”, used in British theatres as a filler when performers do not want their name associated with a particular role, or when doubling occurs, or when a particular character is mentioned but does not appear (2 April 2017). He is marked from the outset as belonging but not belonging, as almost more a ghost than a character. His introduction in the early pages indicates his importance to the detective narrative and his association with the Opera House, as well as establishing him as a peculiarly

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<sup>49</sup> Of course, sometimes the detective should be suspected as well, as in Agatha Christie’s *The Mousetrap* (1952) and its parody Tom Stoppard’s *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968).

stereotypical figure. When he meets Agnes, he is characterised by his inability, ineptitude, or lack. He is only “theoretically sweeping” the steps, his long coat is “slightly too small”, and his beret is incongruous (7-8). Beyond that, his face is “underdone” and when he trips up it takes a couple of “false starts” (8) for him to recover. His walk “wasn’t so much a walk as a collapse, indefinitely postponed” (9). His ineptitude makes him noteworthy as a misfit figure whose outward deficiencies are used to indicate an inward mental lack and this is just the first and most obvious example of dualism with regards to Walter himself in this novel obsessed with duality. Walter’s physical ineptitude makes him an unlikely villain, but, at the same time, descriptions of Walter may well remind the reader of the television show *Some Mothers Do ‘Ave ‘Em* and the character Frank Spencer. The actor who played Frank Spencer, Michael Crawford, was later cast as the Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera* musical. While not all readers might know this piece of trivia, those who do will probably be quicker to accept the theory that Walter is the Ghost before the revelation that there are two ‘Ghosts’.

The similarities between Frank Spencer and Walter Plinge include the beret, a certain klutziness, and a well-meaning earnestness; however, Walter is not nearly the walking disaster that Frank is and appears more mentally impaired than Frank. Walter begins the novel as an example of the Village Idiot stereotype. The doorman explains to Agnes that “Everyone knows our Walter Plinge” (9), emphasising his relationship with the community at large. He is treated well though condescendingly at the opera, and tormented by others outside its walls. His vulnerability in this role is stressed and becomes a potential motive for murder. Mrs Plinge tells Granny Weatherwax: ““they torment him so, [...] They poke at him and hide his broom. They’re not bad boys round here, but they will torment him”” (144). These acts of aggression provide a motive for the murders in the minds of the characters, but this speech by Mrs Plinge is preceded only pages earlier by Walter crying over Dr Undershaft’s body and protesting that Undershaft never kicked him and that the Ghost would not have killed him (141-2). In the position of Village Idiot, then, Walter is presented as both a victim and potential aggressor. This structure emphasises the duality of the text itself with Walter set up as an obvious red herring and innocent to the reader, whilst also explaining that the characters within the story still have reason to regard him as a serious suspect.

Of course, Walter’s innocence at this point is predicated in part on his status as a Village Idiot and his incapacity, both physically and mentally, to commit murder. When this is complicated by the gradual revelation that he is the Ghost, a figure who is physically graceful and mentally acute (thereby fitting more the Idiot Savant stereotype in an extreme fashion) he gains further credibility as a red herring. While the shifting of stereotypes is a

feature of detective fiction, as a character we thought of in one way is revealed to be another, it is noteworthy that this shift does here lend depth to Walter's character while avoiding lending credence to the possibility that he is the murderer. These shifts notably take place early in the novel and, as Eyal Segal points out in "Closure in Detective Fiction", "if a solution of the crime mystery appears at a significant distance from the end, the reader can assume that this solution is not the correct or final one" (156). Walter retains his sense of innocence throughout the novel's exploration of his moral position and association with the Opera Ghost, even as he is subjected to the suspicions of other characters.

The gradual foreshadowing and coincidences which slowly reveal that Walter is the Opera Ghost generally emphasise the contrasts between the figure of Walter as Village Idiot and the Opera Ghost as Mad Artist. When he disappears from Dr Undershaft's side after being told his mother has walked home so late and pages later the Ghost appears to rescue Mrs Plinge and Granny Weatherwax from thieves (143; 145-6), the two figures are at odds with one another. Walter is described as "like a puppet with the strings cut" (141) next to the body, while the Ghost "danced among the gang, his sword almost leaving trails in the air" (145). The shift from one to the other is incongruous. Pages later, the connection between these two incongruous figures is clarified when Agnes hears singing from the stage and finds Walter, who, after she departs:

carefully lowered Greebo to the floor, took off his beret, and removed something white and papery from inside it.

"What shall we listen to, Mister Cat? I know, we shall listen to the overture to *Die Flederleiv* by J. Q. Bubbla, cond. Vochua Doinov."

Greebo gave him the fat-cheeked look of a cat prepared to put up with practically anything for food.

And Walter sat down beside him and listened to the music coming out of the walls. (159)

While the "white and papery" thing could conceivably be sheet music, sheets of paper are not often described as something papery. Rather, the object is most likely the white paper mask the Ghost has been seen wearing and this passage helps build the picture that Walter is the Ghost – which is at odds with both his construction as a Village Idiot and his protests that the Ghost would not kill Dr Undershaft. This passage is key to the shifting of Walter's stereotype from Village Idiot to Idiot Savant – a figure who is inept in everything excepting a small field in which they excel. Note the use of the abbreviation "cond." for conducted as if he is giving a bibliographic reference, demonstrating an academic grasp of the opera superior to most

displayed in the novel.<sup>50</sup> This shift complicates our understanding of Walter's character even though we do not depart entirely from well-established stereotypes. One of the most important and easily missed stereotypes connected to Walter at this point in the novel comes a couple of pages earlier, when it is noted that the singing Agnes hears is "in a tenor voice of such tone and purity that the kettle dropped out of Agnes's hand" (157). In a stereotypical opera, the tenor is the hero and here Walter's tenor voice indicates that he is the hero despite the subsequent revelation that he is the Ghost.

The complexity of Walter's dualism is illuminated by comparison with the dualism of Agnes, whose internal 'Perdita' is a sort of second personality. The inner workings of Agnes' mind offer a base from which the reader can extrapolate and understand the identities Walter switches between and the pressures which may have inspired them. When Agnes is trying to find out who the ghost is, she bases some of her surmises on her own inner life:

It all fitted. He could go anywhere, and no one took any notice of Walter Plinge. In a way he was invisible, because he was always there. And, if you were someone like Walter Plinge, wouldn't you long to be someone as debonair as the Ghost?

If you were someone like Agnes Nitt, wouldn't you long to be someone as dark and mysterious as Perdita X Dream?

The traitor thought was there before she could choke it off. She added hurriedly: But I've never killed anyone. (213)

Agnes' frantic attempt to distance herself from the logic she has employed plays with the idea of a sympathetic killer. Where in other novels there is also a reluctant link between antagonist and protagonist, here the revelation functions in a different manner. Instead of the antagonist revealing something about the protagonist, the reverse occurs. Even Agnes' addition that she herself "never killed anyone" serves to further illuminate Walter Plinge's character. Additionally, this passage subtly alludes to the central difference between Agnes and Walter when it comes to their split personalities. Agnes' Perdita allows her to escape, in her own mind, internalised stereotyping imposed on her by the people around her, and part of this escape is Perdita's ability to engage in selfish and immoral acts. Influenced by her Perdita

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<sup>50</sup> *Die Flederleiv* is a play on *Die Fledermaus*, an operetta composed by Johann Straus II. *Die Fledermaus*, meaning "the bat" or, literally, "the flittermouse", seems an appropriate opera for a cat to listen to. Furthermore, it is worth noting that much of the action in *Die Fledermaus* centres on a masquerade ball.

side, she goes so far as to drug Christine in order to continue to take advantage of the Ghost's singing lessons. Walter Plinge, on the other hand, remains true to the moral values his mother and community have instilled in him, regardless of which side of his personality is in charge. To call Walter Plinge the antagonist is only true in that he is one of the people who operates as the Opera Ghost, and, even then, the Opera Ghost *he* disguises himself as is not an immoral figure. Agnes' moment of connection, recognising her similarity to Walter Plinge, assists the reader in recognising that Walter is not the killer, partially through the recognition that becoming a debonair figure might be an end in itself with no further need to kill, but her own immorality delays clarity on the issue until later in the novel.

The division between Walter's personalities is marked but does not compromise his moral certainty. Emphasis is placed on this rigidity when Walter ends up in the company of Nanny Ogg, whose moral flexibility is especially highlighted in this novel. Nanny Ogg uses this flexibility to manipulate Walter Plinge's own very strict sense of right and wrong. While Nanny uses his aversion to being 'bad' to her advantage, she does feel guilty for doing so which emphasises the ethical uncertainty of her actions. When Walter initially refuses to let her see his manuscript, she responds: "'Well, now,' said Nanny, hating herself for dropping the atom bomb, 'I'm sure your mam wouldn't want to hear that you've been a bad boy, would she?'" (259). The comparison of the threat 'bad boy' to dropping an atom bomb is on one level humorous exaggeration, but on the other hand it creates an image of devastation which not only characterises Walter as helpless against such a threat, but also emphasises the villainy of Salzella who has done worse. Effectively, Walter's understanding of ethical obligation has trapped him as a victim of those without such strict principles and he is at the mercy of those around him.

Walter's lack of agency with its ties to his strict morality appears to have been largely instilled by his mother and enforced by the rest of the community of the opera house. Where Salzella reinforces Walter's moral certainty, using it to his own ends, Nanny uses her flexibility to sway Walter's understanding of his ethical obligations, circumventing the walls of his moral prison rather than attempting to destroy them. When Walter struggles to explain what is down in the cellars, we have the following exchange:

"It's wrong to tell lies," said Walter.

"Probably," said Nanny, who'd never let it worry her up to now.

"It wouldn't be right for our mum to lose her job Mrs Ogg."

"It wouldn't be right, no."

The feeling drifted over Nanny that Walter was trying to put across some sort of message. “Er . . . what sort of lies would it be wrong to tell, Walter?”

Walter’s eyes bulged. “Lies . . . about things you see Mrs Ogg! Even if you did see them!”

Nanny thought it was probably time to present the Oggish point of view. “It’s all right to tell lies if you don’t *think* lies,” she said. (260)

Nanny’s circumvention makes a distinction between the actions a person takes and their thoughts, placing greater emphasis on thoughts rather than actions. The argument draws on the Christian construction of sin which places sinning in thought as equally evil as sinning in action. In this case Nanny takes it to an interesting extreme as she claims that the outward act of telling lies is not bad, only the inward thinking in lies. Curiously, in not using the term ‘lying’, instead using “tell lies” and “*think* lies”, the assertion neatly avoids distinguishing between conscious and unconscious lying to oneself. This anticipates the climax of the novel where Salzella’s death suggests his close ties to opera even as he insists that he hates the form, indicating his madness involves self-deception.

In this pivotal conversation between Walter and Nanny, Walter’s limitations serve to highlight aspects of Nanny’s character. Her attitude towards self-deception, and her continuing arguments against Walter’s rigid morality, reframe her attitudes towards ethics in general. She points out:

“Anyway, if you was to go to this room with the sacks and I was to follow you, that wouldn’t be telling anyone, would it? It wouldn’t be your fault if some ole woman followed you, would it?”

Walter’s face was an agony of indecision but, erratic though his thinking might have been, it was no match for Nanny Ogg’s meretricious duplicity. He was up against a mind that regarded truth as a reference point but certainly not as a shackle. Nanny Ogg could think her way through a corkscrew in a tornado without touching the sides.

(261)

The narrator suggests that Nanny has a tendency to think her way out of ethical dilemmas rather than be bound by a strict code, and the erudite “meretricious duplicity” emphasises her proficiency. Her agency appears to be tied to her moral flexibility which allows her to interact with the world at large in a variety of ways. She “didn’t so much enter places as insinuate herself” (212) and her ability to fit in has her act as a maid, a waiter, a concierge, and a cook

as well as in other roles across the novel. The novel does not, however, insist that flexibility is necessary for an individual to function in society. Nanny Ogg's conduct is in direct contrast with Granny Weatherwax's, though in both cases Walter is the figure used to highlight their ethical stances. When Granny meets Walter in the cellar, she remarks, "'The trouble is, you see, that if you do know Right from Wrong you can't choose Wrong. You just can't do it and live'" (284) – a somewhat Socratic position that locates right alongside self-interest. Peter Singer argues, in *Practical Ethics*, that the Socratic position makes the assumption that "to live well is both to do what is right or just and to prosper and be happy" (287). Pratchett has certainly not reproduced this error, as Walter does not benefit from his own moral code. Instead, her point here is, in part, that Walter himself is incapable of being the killer, because he understands clearly the difference between Right and Wrong, and that she herself, sharing his certainty, cannot choose to do Wrong.

Walter is trapped by his morality and at the mercy of those around him, whereas Granny Weatherwax is not. While he illuminates both elderly protagonists, he cannot be considered as wholly aligned with either. Granny Weatherwax, for instance, does not care particularly for arguments of Good and Evil, considering that "Good and Evil were quite superfluous when you'd grown up with a highly developed sense of Right and Wrong" (145). Her breaking of rules in *Wyrd Sisters* and the bullying highlighted in *Lords and Ladies* which continues on to her wanton use of Nanny's royalties in *Maskerade* all emphasise that Granny is quite capable of behaving badly. Walter, on the other hand, desires to be considered good, and seems terrified of being bad. Recognising this, Nanny manipulates him by suggesting that he is good to follow her lead (259). These two dichotomies of ethical thought are effectively ranked, with Walter's concern for Good and Evil/Bad, coming a distant second to Granny's Right and Wrong. Walter's storyline demonstrates that Good and Evil are dependent on society's perceptions and can be manipulated by others, and it does so in an overt manner, making use of Walter's gullibility:

"You haven't seen anything, Walter Plinge!" he said, in a voice so like Salzella's that even Granny raised an eyebrow. "And if you tell lies, you will be locked up and I'll see to it that there's big trouble for your mother!"

Granny nodded.

"He found out about the Ghost, didn't he?" she said. "The Ghost who comes out when he has a mask on . . . doesn't he, Walter Plinge? And the man thought: I can use that. And when it's time for the Ghost

to be caught . . . well, there *is* a Ghost that can be caught. And the *best* thing is that everyone will believe it. They'll feel bad about themselves, maybe, but they'll believe it. Even Walter Plinge won't be certain, 'cos his mind's all tangled up."

Granny took a deep breath. "It's tangled, but it *ain't* twisted." (284)

Walter is told what he has seen, what to believe, by Salzella and lacks the ability to twist his own perspective and see things from a less moral perspective. Granny, however, can see things from Salzella's perspective, and can imagine how the public will respond. The ability to understand that others have the capacity to do wrong, even when she does not, set in contrast with Walter's incapacity, makes Granny both a compelling detective and a compelling moral figure.

While the novel does not frame Walter as a villainous figure, the idea that someone as ever-present yet innocuous as a butler could be a murderer in a crime novel has now become a well-known trope. The members of the Opera who readily accept that Walter could be the Ghost after the chase seem well-aware of this convention. Furthermore, of the two main figures who play the Ghost, Walter is the one with the obvious physical differences which link him to the disfigurement of the titular character in *The Phantom of the Opera* (not to mention the Michael Crawford connection which is reserved for the reader). To the reader, then, the expectations and the willingness to accept the mob mentality of the opera members is not unexpected. At the same time, the reader, convinced of Walter's innocence, is confronted by the horror of the situation. Granny Weatherwax, rising from the trapdoor in the stage, confronts both the characters and the reader in a direct and italicised address:

*"No one would believe Walter Plinge. Even Walter Plinge gets confused about the things Walter Plinge sees. Even his mother was afraid he might have murdered people. People could accept just about anything of a Walter Plinge."* (289)

The final line, which shifts from Walter Plinge as a character into "a Walter Plinge" as a stereotype, harking back to the use of the name in programmes, broadens the application of the condemnation to instances beyond the novel. The novel places the responsibility for vulnerable people on the community, even while it demonstrates the vulnerability of the same individuals to those communities who, misinformed by stereotypes, can respond violently to their difference.



### Salzella's Handshake and Five Exclamation Marks

The Opera Ghost's actions trigger the opera community to attack Walter, and the orchestration of this by Salzella has greater significance than the murders he commits. Salzella, the primary antagonist and villain, is responsible for the Ghost's murders and in seizing control of the figure's narrative he distorts Walter's creation. The fact that Walter continues to also play the part of Opera Ghost complicates matters, though the revelation is humorous in its simplicity. When Granny meets Andre and reveals he is a policeman, we have one of the most important exchanges in the novel:

"I was almost sure it was Salzella," said Andre. "I know he creeps off to the cellars sometimes and I'm sure he's stealing money. But the Ghost has been seen when Salzella is perfectly visible. So now I think—"

"Think? Think?" said Granny. "Someone thinking around here at last? How'd you recognise the Ghost, Mister Policeman?"

"Well . . . he's got a mask on . . ."

"Really? Now say it again, and *listen* to what you say. Good grief! You can *recognize* him because he's got a *mask* on? You recognize him because you don't know who he is? Life isn't neat! Whoever said there's only one Ghost?" (271)

This exchange breaks one of the basic rules of the traditional English detective novel as it reveals the perpetrator before the final scenes. This unusual revelation stands as one among many across the course of the novel which illuminate the complexities and simplicities of the plot and antagonist. The above exchange, however, does not specify exactly who has been committing the murders but when Granny says "Think? Think?" she is both mirroring an imagined detective fiction reader's annoyance at characters slow on the uptake and urging the reader of this novel to think. Her final sentence, "Whoever said there's only one Ghost?", allows Andre's almost surety to become certainty in the mind of the reader, while also renewing Agnes' certainty about Walter Plinge. When Granny chastises Andre and Agnes for recognizing the Ghost by his mask, she reveals how 'operatic thinking' – thinking about the world in terms of shallow stereotypes and dramatic instances – extends beyond the people of the opera and the audience. Agnes has been shown to be an observer of the opera who has had difficulty embracing 'operatic thinking' and Andre is an undercover police officer who is meant to be investigating in depth. Nonetheless, both characters have been deceived by the

surface image of the Ghost as much as the stagehands and chorus members who exaggerated the Ghost's monstrosity.

As an antagonist in a detective novel, Salzella is a central character though we rarely see his perspective. Instead, he serves as an expository force and thereby helps shape the reader's understanding of opera. One of the few instances in which we see Salzella's point of view is where he offers a critique of Mr Bucket:

*Definitely* that kind of owner, he thought. Self-made man proud of his handiwork. Confuses bluffness and honesty with merely being rude. I wouldn't mind betting a dollar that he thinks he can tell a man's character by testing the firmness of his handshake and looking deeply into his eyes. (19)

His critical dismissal of Bucket in this instance, places him firmly on the side of the Opera alongside Dr Undershaft.<sup>51</sup> From this point he might be regarded as having a level of expertise, so he is trusted when he explains how opera works to Mr Bucket and, in turn, the reader. In this position he garners a level of confidence usually granted to narrators, or a character whose point of view we see more frequently. He is the untrustworthy trusted advisor stereotype directed towards the reader, just as the Opera Ghost in *The Phantom of the Opera* is, however briefly, Christine's trusted Angel. He is a guide to the setting of the novel, and yet always makes certain to present himself as divorced from the setting, an urge which is at odds with his snobbish internal condemnation of Mr Bucket. Salzella theatrically takes on the role of the misfit by rejecting the community around him, in the reverse of Walter's positioning as a misfit rejected by the community.

Salzella's depth of understanding of the opera is tempered by his cynicism, creating a sense of detachment which encourages the reader to trust him as a guiding character. Salzella's estrangement from the operatic community aligns him more closely with readers who are also distanced from the inner workings of the opera and, even when he is not physically present, Salzella's explanations shape our understanding of how opera works. Shortly before he is murdered, Dr Undershaft ponders:

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<sup>51</sup> His name's similarity to operatic composer Antonio Salieri also ties him closely to the opera. In the 1979 play *Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer, and the 1984 film by the same name, the character Salieri plots to murder the genius Mozart and claim Mozart's requiem mass as his own – a move not dissimilar to Salzella's plot to murder the genius Walter and claim that Walter committed the murders.

Of course, Salzella said that, while everyone accepted that large women of fifty could play thin girls of seventeen, people wouldn't accept that a fat girl of seventeen could do it. He said that they'd cheerfully swallow a big lie and choke on a little fib. Salzella said that sort of thing. (110)

Dr Undershaft's sympathetic approach to Agnes, and his belief that voices and the music should take priority make him a likeable figure. When he reflects on Salzella, he adds credence to Salzella's arguments even though it is made clear that Undershaft is not in agreement with them. There is a respectability by association which nevertheless continues to place Salzella at the forefront of the opera management and thereby keep him in focus up until the revelation of his villainy. This respectability, in conjunction with the reader's reliance on Salzella to provide information about the Ghost, means that he seems less suspect. Even so, Salzella's cynical approach to opera, and his mockery of Mr Bucket and Agnes signal his irredeemable nature.

Salzella's Ghost is responsible for the murders and Salzella himself is responsible for conflating the behaviour of himself as the Ghost and that of Walter as the Ghost. Salzella describes the gifting of dead rose stems and, by extension the Ghost, as "“Odd, but safe. And it didn't worry people because everyone thought the Ghost was on their side. At least, they did. Until about six months ago”" (57). This harmless behaviour is then aligned with the "accidents" which include:

“A seamstress stitched herself to the wall. A deputy stage manager was found stabbed with a prop sword. Oh, and you wouldn't like me to tell you what happened to the man who worked on the trapdoor. And all the lead mysteriously disappeared from the roof, although personally I don't think that was the work of the Ghost.” (57)

The exclusion of the lead disappearing from the roof is a clear indication, on rereading the novel, that Salzella is attempting to fit the crimes of the Ghost into a clear format. His exclusion of one crime from the list, initially serves to make Salzella appear possessed of both clarity and charity. While he is conflating the actions of his Ghost and Walter's Ghost, he is contrasting his own apparent sanity with the Ghost's insanity. When he reveals the first letter to Mr Bucket, he provides a reading of it which positions himself as a reasoning individual and the Ghost as insane:

“What sort of person,” said Salzella patiently, “sits down and *writes* a maniacal laugh? And all those exclamation marks, you notice? Five?

A sure sign of someone who wears his underpants on his head. Opera can do that to a man.” (58)

While Salzella, with his patient tone, appears to be the sane one, a rereading of this passage reminds us that it was Salzella himself who sat down and wrote maniacal laughter. It is then apparent that these questions serve more to close enquiry than to open it and, at the conclusion of the novel, this passage is still more relevant, as Salzella loses control and becomes overwhelmed by opera, demonstrating a reflected and twisted form of Walter’s dualism. Where Walter attempted to escape the impositions and typecasting of the community by taking on the debonair role of the ghost, Salzella seems to be unintentionally reversing his professed desire to be apart from the operatic drama of the community in his embodiment of the Ghost.

The Ghost figure itself reflects the dualism of the two characters controlling the manifestation. The letters from the Ghost become a point of contrast that heavily hints to the audience that there are two Opera Ghosts at play, whilst also providing the clearest impressions of the sanity of the actors. Walter’s Ghost is placed in direct contrast to Salzella’s violent and insane caricature through the letters written to Mr Bucket after the murder of Mr Pounder. One letter politely requests Christine play the character Iodine and closes with the statements, “The weather continues fine. I trust you are well” (95). These are at odds, not only with the earlier letter from the destruction of the organ, but also with the Opera Ghost from *The Phantom of the Opera* with which many readers will be familiar. In this context these lines suggest not so much that the writer is trying to be polite as that they cannot help but be polite. The letter given to Mr Bucket only two pages later consists of maniacal laughter, a signature, and a postscript of more maniacal laughter (97). When Mr Bucket questions the contrast in the style of the two letters:

Salzella put an arm around his shoulders and led him away from the crowd. “Well, now,” he said, as kindly as he could. “A man who wears evening dress all the time, lurks in the shadows and occasionally kills people. Then he sends little notes, *writing* maniacal laughter. Five exclamation marks again, I notice. We have to ask ourselves: is this the career of a sane man?”

“But *why* is he doing it?” wailed Bucket.

“That is only a relevant question if he is sane,” said Salzella calmly.  
(97)

By once again questioning the sanity of the Ghost, Salzella shapes the response of Mr Bucket to the Ghost. While Salzella does lose his calm grasp of reality at the end of the novel, he does have some reason for his murders (the discovery of his wrongdoing) and his repeated requests for a mob to hunt down the Ghost (to allow him to arrange the transport of the stolen money). He is not only hiding his theft and murder behind the figure of the Opera Ghost, but also behind claims of the Ghost's insanity, which is used to hinder investigation into mundane motives. Nonetheless, Salzella does not remain rational to the end of the novel, and he does not, in fact, use the excuse of the mob to smuggle away the stolen money. His use of the very tropes he professes to despise trap him in a performance he cannot help but commit to.

Salzella's performance of rationality is noteworthy in how it is undermined by Granny's measures of morality. Foremost among these is her question: "your house is on fire, what's the first thing you'd try to take out?" (61). The first instance in which this question is asked provides a model for the reader to interpret the answers. Granny asks her friend Nanny Ogg the question and she points out "'I've known you all my life, I *knows* what you're like. I don't need to guess. But answer me, all the same'" (61). This, then, is a template not a serious interrogation. Nanny's answer, that she would take Greebo, she argues indicates she has a "'warm and considerate nature'" (61). Granny rebuts by saying, "'No, it shows you're the kind of person who tries to work out what the right answer's supposed to be [...]. Untrustworthy. That was a witch's answer if ever I heard one. Devious'" (61). This establishes a model for the reader. It suggests that there is more to the answer than it might appear as the answerer should be regarded as conscious that the answer will say something about them. The act of revelation becomes twisted into one of deception. That is not to say that some answers to the question do not manage to be straightforward. When Andre is asked the question, he asks in turn "who set fire to it?" which confirms to Granny that he is a policeman (271). Nonetheless, the text does encourage the reader to closely interrogate the answers characters give to this question.

Two of the most significant responses to Granny's question are those given by Salzella and Walter Plinge. Salzella, who has been playing the part of the murderous Opera Ghost, asks Granny "'what would you like me to take, madam?'" (186) instead of giving an answer. It is noted that Granny reacts to this "thoughtfully" but the reader is given no indication of what she thinks. His sycophantic response reveals that Salzella, like Nanny Ogg, is concerned about how he is presenting himself to others. The circumstances under which the question is asked are noteworthy as Granny is posing as a wealthy woman interested in

becoming a patron of the opera house. Salzella's overt efforts to please her align with his embezzlement but ultimately mask his underlying cynicism with which the reader is already familiar.

Walter's answer to Granny's question, on the other hand, is much more revealing, though more complicated. The narrative obfuscates the moment in which the question is asked by switching to Greebo's point of view, and Walter's answer is not directly quoted due to the cat's indifference (245). The weight of the question has been well established by this point, and in withholding the answer, still more weight is placed on Walter's response which garnered Granny's explicit approval. Three pages later, when Walter is showing Nanny Ogg his way down to the cellars, he mentions conversationally: "she asked me a very silly question Mrs Ogg! It was a silly question any fool knows the answer!" (248). Walter's confidence in there being a right answer contrasts with Salzella and Andre's answers which are both in the form of questions indicating an uncertain approach. His actual answer, that it would not be his mum as Nanny suggested but instead the fire, functions on an unreal though undeniably logical level. Nanny thinks: "You're daft but you're sane. That's what Esme would say. And there's worser things" (249).

As this conversation occurs only shortly before the revelation of Salzella's crimes and his madness, it clearly foreshadows and shapes the reader's opinion of Salzella's insanity. Walter's unorthodox logic denotes both innocence and the potential for him to be reunited with the opera house community. Salzella's non-answer, falling well outside the right answer Walter sees as so obvious, marks his instability and untrustworthy nature. The clear division between these two characters, highlighted by their differing answers and distinct stereotypic roots, marks a deconstruction of Leroux and Webber's *Opera Ghosts*. Walter's Idiot Savant stereotype draws on the savant aspects of the original Ghost who is both a musical and architectural genius. Salzella's advisor position is somewhat reminiscent of the trusted position the Ghost tangentially holds as Christine's Angel of Music in the original. Salzella's murderous insanity and monetary motives draw on the original's reign of terror over the Paris Opera House. In dividing out these aspects of the original character and removing romantic love from the concerns of the novel, *Maskerade* presents the reader with two characters who are very distinct from the original Ghost and yet recognisable enough that the novel can overtly reflect on underlying and fundamental questions prompted by the earlier texts.

The central issue raised for audiences of *The Phantom of the Opera* is whether the Ghost is redeemable or not. Indeed, this is the basis of Lloyd Webber's fanfiction-esque sequel *Love Never Dies*, which creates a clear redemption arc for the Ghost. *Maskerade*, to

some extent, both rejects and facilitates this same urge by distilling stereotypic aspects of the original Ghost's character into Walter and Salzella, dividing the qualities which make the Ghost redeemable from those which undo him. However, regarding Salzella as simply the irredeemable aspects of the original Ghost and nothing more, and viewing *Maskerade* as a simplification of the source texts, would be a serious under-reading. As mentioned earlier, Salzella is an untrustworthy trusted advisor for much of the novel, and this stereotype, while, perhaps, based on the *Phantom of the Opera*, more significantly impacts the reader in *Maskerade*. The removal of romance elements, and consequent heightening of the elements of detective fiction in the narrative, shift the focus onto the personalities, and motives, as much as the actions of the characters. It is particularly noteworthy that both Salzella and Walter spend the majority of the novel in plain view, not skulking in the shadows like the original Ghost. These shifts mean that more focus is placed on the factors necessary for redemption than in the original works.<sup>52</sup>

That being said, redemption is not possible for *Maskerade*'s ghost. Walter, as mentioned earlier, is clearly established as innocent and sane. Whilst there is a need for reconciliation between Walter and the operatic community, he does not require redemption so much as revelation, having done nothing wrong. Salzella, on the other hand, ends the novel as an unrepentant madman. While focus has shifted onto the qualities that tie both characters to the Ghost in the source texts, *Maskerade* deconstructs and de-romanticises the Ghost figure to the extent that redemption is impossible. The relationship between the novel and its source texts, however, creates the impression of redemption. This impression, supported by the now stereotypical opera ghost behaviours, reinforces the sharp condemnation of Salzella at the end of the novel.

The death of Salzella, steeped as it is in tropes and stereotypes, curtails pity through bathos. Salzella's overtly operatic insanity denies his death any poignancy as he insists that the events conform to a particularly common narrative form:

“Oh dear oh dear oh dear,” he said. “How extremely *operatic* of me. And now, I fear, I shall have to take this poor girl hostage. It's the appropriate thing to do, isn't it?”

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<sup>52</sup> It is worth noting that Leroux's novel more clearly portrays the Ghost as irredeemable except in death than Webber's musical.

He looked around triumphantly. The audience watched in fascinated silence.

“Isn’t anyone going to say ‘You won’t get away with this’?” he said.

(286)

Insisting that events are predetermined and that they should follow a scheme laid out by well-known tropes, Salzella is playing into the stereotypical role of the antagonist, and this results in him ending the novel in the stereotypical fashion of an opera – “an art form that has proved to be obsessed with death from its birth” (Hutcheon *Opera: The Art of Dying* 8) – in dying. His overt insistence on common operatic tropes becomes a vicious mockery of his own performance as critic and actor become indistinguishable. His death in increments, highlighted as it is by his final words: “‘in opera everyone takes such a *long*!!!! ... time!!!! ... to!!!! ... argh ... argh ... argh ...” (293) is a performance from which he cannot escape.

It is worth noting that with Salzella’s death, Pratchett returns to a particular comical form of suicide that first appeared in this sequence at the end of *Wyrd Sisters*. Felmet there believes he has been stabbed and has become a ghost, eventually stepping off the walls during his raving and dying in truth. In that case the prop dagger becomes a real dagger in Felmet’s mind as he has twisted the reality in which he exists and the reality of the play together and he acts accordingly. The variation in *Maskerade* again has the antagonist step into the performance, in this case to hide from pursuit, and then be ‘stabbed’ by a prop weapon. Agnes notes that the sword “‘isn’t even sticking in him! It’s just tucked between his body and his arm’” (294).<sup>53</sup> Salzella has become so caught up in his performance that he has not noticed and has died because he thinks he should be dead; in performing death, he dies. Both these antagonists blur the reality of the stage with the reality in which they live, and in doing so they highlight the fragility of the division between fiction and reality. The greater power the opera has over Salzella marks a deepening concern with these divisions in Pratchett’s novels. The power of performance harnessed by Salzella overtakes him as the line between who he is and who the Ghost is becomes immaterial. Whether he is performing or not, he is the murderous madman.

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<sup>53</sup> Amusingly, Agnes is expressing a similar outrage against stage conventions that Salzella did before he died.



## Christine and Playing One's Part

The novel's concern with performance is further developed using a subplot of sorts between Agnes and Christine. While the ghost undoubtedly dominates as the novel's primary antagonist, *Maskerade* also twists the narrative bones of *The Phantom of the Opera* to make Christine a secondary antagonist whose manipulations are heavily based in her performance of stereotypes. Much of what we see of Christine comes from Agnes' point of view, though at times it is uncertain where the line is drawn between the comments of the narrator and Agnes' own opinions. Regardless, Christine is introduced to the reader as "someone who is aware that she is thin and has long blond hair" (21), which brings to mind a particular stereotype – the Dumb Blonde. This is further reinforced when, later on the same page, we are told "anything she found too difficult to understand, she ignored" (21). Later she is compared to a small fluffy animal: "a rabbit, perhaps. It was certainly impossible for her to get a whole idea into her head in one go. She had to nibble it into manageable bits" (26). Not only is Christine framed as intellectually underwhelming and harmless, she is also presented as vulnerable. Rabbits are widely understood to be prey animals, with the most famous depictions of rabbits, Brer Rabbit, Peter Rabbit, and Bugs Bunny all having narratives concerning the thwarting of hunters. Christine does not demonstrate the cunning of these rabbits, yet she is not entirely without intelligence. When confronted with the Ghost, Christine faints:

But she managed, Agnes noticed sourly, to collapse in a way that probably didn't hurt when she hit the ground and which showed off her dress to the best effect. It was beginning to dawn on Agnes that Christine was remarkably clever in some specialized ways. (216)

The stereotype of the Dumb Blonde is not exactly undermined by this elaboration, but it is complicated. Christine's ability to play to the stereotype she embodies empowers her at the expense of Agnes.

In many ways Agnes' relationship with Christine mirrors the relationship between Walter and Salzella though in a less bloody fashion, with Christine using Agnes' voice to shift from being a Dumb Blonde to a Starlet in a similar way that Salzella uses Walter's Ghost figure to become an Opera Villain. Christine uses Agnes and Agnes' voice to further her own career and it becomes increasingly evident that she is not innocent of her exploitation, and the description of Agnes' role as a 'ghost' reinforces the similarities between the scenarios:

“We would like you, as it were,” said Bucket, “to *ghost* the part . . .”

“Ghost?” said Agnes.

“It’s a stage term,” said Salzella. (102)

As it becomes clearer that Christine is manipulative and, if not smart, clever in some ways, the initial stereotype becomes inadequate to encompass her character and simply becomes an aspect of it. Whereas she begins the novel as a discountable shallow side-kick of our protagonist Agnes, with the slight quirk that she is a facsimile of the original protagonist of *The Phantom of the Opera*, there is just enough deviation from expectations that when she usurps the rewards usually granted to the protagonist it is unsurprising.<sup>54</sup> There are echos of *Singin’ in the Rain* which features a plot to dub over a silent film star’s poor voice, and so, while the resolution of Agnes’ story in *Maskerade* is not surprising, this resonance certainly creates room for sympathetic disappointment. Another subtler story of conflict between antagonist and protagonist has taken place under a veneer of friendship, and Christine who is willing to play to her role in the community and enrich the feedback loop which shapes her life, comes out on top.

Christine’s exploitation of Agnes is presented as inevitable and the focus of the text is on how Agnes responds to the moral challenge and her own complicity in the framework of Christine’s rise to stardom. Faced with the passive aggressiveness of Christine’s ‘friendship’ which only emphasises the stereotypical view Agnes was trying to escape when she left home, she allows herself to undertake actions which are, even in her own mind, morally wrong. She understands that drugging Christine is not good or right, but finds that she can justify it:

What she was about to do was wrong. Very wrong. And all her life she’d done things that were right. [...] In fact, if you averaged out the moral difficulty of what she was proposing to do over all the little activities she had to undergo in order to do it, it probably wasn’t that bad at all, really— (113)

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<sup>54</sup> Though it is worth noting that Agnes’ brunette hair matches the Christine of the musical, while *Maskerade*’s Christine has the blond locks of Meg. This results in Agnes, with her exceptional voice and good hair, obviously carrying the best traits of the protagonist of *The Phantom of the Opera*, while Christine embodies the least sympathetic aspects of that character, alongside the subtle hint in hair that she ought to be a side character.

Her internal justification which makes her actions more reasonable to her also serves to explicate in a general manner how self-justification can work. She is engaging in a form of moral reasoning relying on a form of incrementalism, which is defined by Chris Park and Michael Allaby in *A Dictionary of Environment and Conservation* as “[a]n approach to decision-making which is based on making decisions one at a time, each one designed to deal with short-term imperfections in an existing policy, rather than establishing long-term future goals” (“incrementalism”). By approaching each of her actions separately she rationalises that they are not bad, but she does have a “long-term future goal” which means that she cannot be given the ‘benefit of doubt’ true incrementalism might provide. Her clear acknowledgement that the end result is “very wrong” means that she remains culpable, regardless of her subsequent justification. This incrementalism also reflects Agnes’ decisions which have allowed her to be exploited by Christine while Christine rises to fame. Agnes’ willingness to swap rooms with Christine initially, and her deception when the Ghost gave his initial singing lesson, lead to the Ghost (Walter) requesting Christine to sing Iodine’s part, which leads to Agnes being asked to ghost Christine, etc.. Christine, while not innocent, is too passive to be regarded as a threat, rather she is at the centre of Agnes’ desires and compromises as Agnes tries to escape herself.

Despite Christine not achieving her position through merit, but rather through firstly her father’s wealth and then through Agnes’ voice, she is not condemned for playing the starlet and taking advantage of circumstances. Agnes’ compromises are placed squarely on her and ultimately condemned by the moral authority of Granny who, when Agnes challenges her integrity, points out her flaws:

“What you’re doing is *wrong*, Granny Weatherwax,” said Agnes from the doorway.

Granny glanced up. “Wrong as living other people’s lives for them?” she said. “S’ matter of fact, there’s something even worse than that, which is living other people’s lives for yourself. That kind of wrong?”

Agnes said nothing. Granny Weatherwax couldn’t *know*.

Granny turned back to the books. “Anyway, this only *looks* wrong.

Appearances is deceivin’.” (262-3)

Salzella, Christine, and Agnes have been living other people’s lives for themselves. Salzella lives a piece of Walter’s life for himself in taking on the mask of the Ghost in order to steal and murder. Christine lives Agnes’ life of stardom with her borrowed voice, but Agnes has

been able to do so because she has been pretending to be Christine for singing lessons. The passivity of Christine's performance of her stereotype heightens the reader's awareness of Agnes' choices while obscuring Christine's, echoing the main plot's concern with Walter's possible guilt or victimhood over Salzella's criminality.

The literary and operatic nature of Christine's performance lends her an unreal quality furthered by her literary origins in *The Phantom of the Opera*. Where Enrico Basilica's overt stereotyping as an Italian tenor is stripped away by the revelation that he is actually an Ankh-Morporkian named Henry Slugg who is trapped in his performance, Christine has no further revelation to deepen her character. Nonetheless, her performative behaviours, particularly her fainting spells, stem from the opera. The prima donna, Dame Timpani, is also noted for having hysterics and fainting spells and she and Christine use these episodes to compete for attention (147). Christine is a part of the opera community because she plays into these stereotypes. Granny Weatherwax points out that Agnes remains outside the community:

“But you ain't part of it, are you?” said Granny conversationally. “You try, but you always find yourself watchin' yourself watchin' people, eh? Never quite believin' anything? Thinkin' the wrong thoughts?”  
(257)

Part of Agnes' inability to fit in is her own reluctance to conform to the expectations of others alongside her awareness that others can be conforming rather than being. Even her performative other self, Perdita, is too far developed into her own person to perform an operatic stereotype. Part of fitting in is playing a recognisable role within the community, and there is no suitably operatic stereotype left for Agnes.

Where Walter Plinge ends the novel becoming a valuable member of the opera community, Agnes finds herself still a misfit and Christine still the centre of attention. She appeals to Walter:

“But it was *me* you taught!” she said desperately.  
“Then you were *very* good,” said Walter. “I suspect she will never be quite that good, even with many months of my tuition. But, Perdita, have you ever heard of the words ‘star quality’?”  
“Is it the same as *talent*?” snapped Agnes.  
“It is rarer.” (297-8)

This rejection is an unfairness right in the midst of a feast of just desserts. Walter is saved and his musical genius recognised; Salzella perishes by virtue of his own hubris; Henry Slugg reunites with his lost love; but Christine is taken in and Agnes is abandoned. Christine is

willing to play to the stereotypes the community accepts and Agnes is not. When Agnes protests this injustice, Granny tells her ““them as *makes* the endings don’t *get* them” (301). This is reminiscent of *Witches Abroad* in which Magrat must destroy the ballgown that she herself has dreamed of wearing. For all the novel’s concern with right and wrong, Agnes cannot remain within the opera – she lacks the mask and performative abilities Walter possesses – and she is exiled back to Lancre.

### Final Thoughts

The dualism that predominates in *Maskerade* continues the themes of mirroring and doubling which are evident in the earlier novels. The surface similarities between the ghost figures conceal stark differences between the moral actors behind the masks. However, these differences in moral framework notably do not provide satisfactory answers to the quandary of determining right and wrong. Walter’s inflexibility highlights Salzella’s degeneracy, but it does not provide a satisfactory template for moral action. Nor does the internal dualism of Agnes and Perdita, or external dualism of Agnes and Christine, resolve the issues of identity and fairness they debate. The older witches, with their own mirroring as a comic duo and Sherlockian detective team, seem to have answers, but as their journey home in the stagecoach past the determinedly slogging Agnes symbolises, these answers are withheld from the reader. We must make our own way home.

The performative nature of interpersonal relationships which function as a centre point for the narrative in *Maskerade* do not so much provide clues for any definite moral resolution, as they provide a flexible view of the framework of society. From how Nanny Ogg is able to infiltrate the Opera House through her performance of the mothering old woman stereotype to the opera ghost figure who is a performance by two separate individuals to the eye contact and a firm handshake which is trusted implicitly by Mr Bucket, communication in this novel is both reliant on and curtailed by performance. Though they might not realise the extent of his folly, the reader knows Mr Bucket is a fool when he says:

“I happen to pride myself that I am a good judge of character,” he said.

“Look a man deeply in the eye and give him a firm handshake and you know everything about him.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Salzella. (59)

Gullibility and the blurring of lines between performance and reality lead both Mr Bucket and Salzella to their downfall. The novel ends with Granny contemplating the prevalence of belief in the trustworthiness of the firm handshake. As she digs her new privy, she thinks: “you knew where you were with a hole in the ground. Dirt didn’t get strange ideas, or believe that people were honest because they had a steady gaze and a firm handshake” (310).



## Chapter Six – No New Things Under the Sky: *Carpe Jugulum*

Pratchett's sixth Witches novel brings to the foreground the underlying structures of stereotype and tradition which inform our understanding of antagonists in the earlier novels. Where in *Lords and Ladies* an effort was made to distinguish between old truths and newer fictions about the elves, *Carpe Jugulum* emphasises the evolving nature of stereotypes as the vampire antagonists represent a whole history of vampire folklore and literature. The issue of redemption, skirted in *Maskerade*, becomes more central in this novel and the longstanding role of vampires as antagonists in fiction anchors a discussion of what constitutes monstrosity and evil. The conscious twisting of stereotypical responses brought about through the Count de Magpyr's pioneering training scheme challenges both narrative and social expectations, and, as the main antagonist, his successes and failures provide an appropriately complex backdrop against which the Quite Reverend Oats and Granny Weatherwax discuss the nature of sin.

The Magpyr family, collectively the novel's antagonists, have deep roots in both literature and popular culture, reflecting elements of the vampire figure from across the monster's history in English language texts. Partway through the novel, Vlad shows Agnes a portrait gallery that points to the various stages of the vampire as a creature. While Vlad works backwards through the history, from the present into the past, showing how far his family has come, here it makes more sense to travel from the past and towards the present of the Magpyrs. The earliest vampires were folkloric creatures, and largely unrecognisable as vampires now due to the shifting of our expectations – bearing more resemblance to what we now think of as zombies. Paul Barber, who explores the folkloric version of the vampire in *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, describes folkloric and fictional vampires as entirely in contrast to one another:

I have found it necessary to distinguish repeatedly between the fictional and the folkloric vampire. The former sucks blood from the neck of the victim, for example, while the other – when he sucks blood at all – attacks the chest area of the victim, in the vicinity of the heart, with only rare exceptions (see chapter 6). The fictional vampire tends to be tall, thin, and sallow, the folkloric vampire is plump and ruddy, or dark in colour (see chapter 5). The two would be unlikely to meet socially, for the fictional vampire tends to spring from the nobility and to live in



a castle, while the folkloric vampire is of peasant stock and resides  
(during the day at least) in the graveyard in which he was buried. (4)

Pratchett's portrayal is not so sharply divided. Though he mostly deals with stereotypes rooted in literary tradition, these vampires trace their descent from strange and unrecognizable origins. Vlad shows Agnes:

“[W]ell, some distant ancestor, that's all I know.”

This picture was mostly dark varnish. There was the suggestion of a beak on a hunched figure.

Vlad turned away, quickly. “We've come a long way, of course,” he said. “Evolution, Father says.” (217)

Where the historian, as in the case of Barber, is frustrated by the conflation and continuing connections between the historical phenomenon of the folkloric belief in vampires and the literary re-fabrication of the figure, Pratchett, a novelist, makes use of the variety of typology encompassed by the term ‘vampire’ to construct an evolution of a sort. The Vampire stereotype might here have little more than a ghostly suggestion of its folkloric past, but the historical variety Vlad shows Agnes in their tour of the Magpyr family portraits displays the varied and shadowed associations still haunting the edges of popular knowledge.

The earliest vampire in British literature originates both from mainland European folklore and a broken friendship. *The Vampyre* (1819) by John Polidori, Byron's one-time doctor, launched the creature into the contemporary popular consciousness, invested with meanings which still resonate today. Polidori's vampire, Lord Ruthven, is generally accepted as a thinly veiled jab at Byron, and, notably, much of his evil nature manifests in the way he encourages the sins of those around him. Despite his evil, and unlike many vampires in later texts, Lord Ruthven triumphs over the protagonist and leaves the novel undead and unreformed. Vlad's gallery lacks a portrait for this beginning, likely because Lord Ruthven was more man than monster in his appearance and his behaviour. Nonetheless, echoes of him remain in the vampire's Byronic tendencies, and in the desires of *Carpe Jugulum's* Count.

According to Anne Williams, in the century following, “vampires proliferated in popular culture”, and became a stock figure of popular literature (8). Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), Rymer and Prest's *Varney the Vampire* (1847), and Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) cemented the traits and quirks of the stereotypical British version of the vampire in popular culture. These works reinforced Polidori's vision of the vampire as a monster of the upper classes, as a sexual predator, and as an ‘other’ figure who perpetrates their evils through the cultivation of a familiarity with their victims. These texts also added some of the long list of

weaknesses and supernatural abilities now associated with the vampire stereotype, as well as the figure of the vampire hunter. Vlad's gallery contains an "Aunt Carmilla" in a nod to this era, but the other noteworthy vampires of this period are depicted in the gallery more as they appeared in film than in novels. Nonetheless, Stoker's literary monster, Dracula, cemented the central traits of the vampire for the next century, adding vulnerability to garlic, religious elements, and dependence on sleeping in a form of grave. *Dracula*'s popularity led to the titular monster being used in other stories, despite his death at the end of Stoker's novel and these 'sequels', and the popular understanding of their legitimate illegitimacy, anchors the figure's ability to be endlessly resurrected apparent in Pratchett's imagining of vampires.

The advent of film gave further scope to these texts, as novels and plays provided the new medium with easily recognisable and already popular stories to attract and hold interest. While vampires were not the first supernatural monsters in film, they were among the earliest and have had an enduring impact on the form. Feuillade's *Les Vampires* (1915-16) used vampires conceptually, but it was not until Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) that the vampire in all its monstrosity became an international sensation on the silver screen. *Nosferatu* relies heavily on Stoker's *Dracula*, and the monstrous appearance of Count Orlok, which has its roots in Stoker's description of Count Dracula, remains fixed in the popular imagination.<sup>55</sup> Vlad's grandfather, old Magyrato, has a portrait described in a short list of very recognisable traits: "A bald head. Dark-rimmed, staring eyes. Two teeth like needles, two ears like batwings, fingernails that hadn't been trimmed for years . . ." (217). This catalogue recognises the cultural resonance of *Nosferatu* despite the litigation and obfuscation surrounding the film at the time of its release. A copyright dispute with the Stoker estate, resulted in an order that all copies of the film were to be destroyed (however, a number of copies survived).

*Dracula* was adapted for screen again in 1931, though in this case the adaptation was legal and adheres far more closely to the 1924 stage play adaptation than to the novel. This 1931 adaptation popularised the image of the vampire as a well-dressed figure in evening attire, with dark hair swept back to show off a dramatic widow's peak.<sup>56</sup> Bela Lugosi's flair for the dramatic, and Christopher Lee's reprisal of the role, seem reflected in the old Count,

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<sup>55</sup> *What We Do In The Shadows* (2014) invokes this image of the vampire in the appearance of Petyr.

<sup>56</sup> Vampires made in this image can be seen on cereal boxes and Muppet shows.

whose portrait shows “a tall, thin, grey-haired man in evening dress and a red lined cloak. He looked quite distinguished in a distant, aloof sort of way. There was the glimmer of a lengthened canine on his lower lip” (215). The old Count’s sporting approach also fits with the older movie vampire, as dramatic scenes often featured the vampire’s victims cobbling together means of warding off the vampire from the rooms around them. The old Count begins Vlad’s tour through the portraits, but does not end our history as the Count and Vlad himself bear traces of more recent stereotypes.

The vampire’s popularity continued from the black and white films of the early twentieth century into colour and television, and continues today in a variety of digital media. The sympathetic vampire figure gained significant traction in popular culture when the daily soap opera *Dark Shadows* (1966-71) introduced the iconic vampire character, Barnabas Collins, a character who bears some resemblance to Varney. Barnabas’ dress echoes the dramatic cape and evening wear of the earlier film vampires, and a portrait of him hung in the house emphasises the ‘unchanging’ image of the vampire. However, rather than hunting or threatening the central characters, he befriends them. The boost in ratings that accompanied the introduction of Barnabas attests to the lasting popularity of the vampire figure, and while the more recent film *Dark Shadows* (2012) failed to be a blockbuster, the success of the animated *Hotel Transylvania* (2012; 2015; 2018) films attests to both the continued popularity of the sympathetic vampire and the extent to which the vampire figure has become imbedded in the English-speaking cultural marketplace.

The publication of Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) marked a revival of the vampire in popular literature, after something of a lull in interest, and the increasingly positive responses to the ongoing series reflected a renewal of interest in not only the figure of the vampire, but particularly in the sympathetic vampire. Even the popular 1990s television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, despite its name, ended up including sympathetic vampires. Vampires in this vein often appear as lover figures and Vlad echoes their less hostile and far more interested approach to heroines. Since the publication of *Carpe Jugulum* in 1998, the *Twilight* novels (2005-8) marked a further resurgence of the vampire romance in popular literature, and then into television and film. Even in these vampire-positive novels, it is worth noting that the antagonists are often still vampires, despite the inclusion of a heroic vampire figure. At the time Pratchett was writing, this dual image of the vampire in literature was already well established, and in *Carpe Jugulum* elements of these various tensions within the vampire stereotype can be detected. Vlad fills the role of the lover vampire, but also supports his father’s narrative of vampire superiority. At the same time, the Count seeks to

escape elements of the traditional antagonist role of the vampire, while retaining the power of the antagonist and, in contrast, the old Count consciously embodies literary traditions of the early twentieth century resisting their subsequent shifts.

Throughout their use in literature and film, vampires have been written against the backdrop of other vampire texts. Each text responds, usually covertly, to those which appeared earlier, clarifying which aspects of the vampire stereotypes are in play, which are to be ignored, and which are new or improved. This intertextual relationship has led to deeply symbolic understandings of the vampire which may be applied across texts. Most often vampires are seen as an intrusion: an intrusion of the past into the present, of superstition into a reasoning world, of sex and violence into an innocent and civilised society. The Magpyr family cannot be divorced from these themes, as they are rooted in the vampire figure itself, but they do twist these traditional interpretations. The Count presents himself as a reasoning and forward-looking figure, seeking to limit the violence of his nature, and even Vlad, the lover figure, is more interested in Agnes' mind than her blood. The Magpyrs' self-awareness, their ability to engage with and actively resist aspects of the vampire stereotype and embrace others, complicates how typical elements of the vampire narrative can be interpreted.

What the vampires in *Carpe Jugulum* symbolise, then, is not a straightforward matter, as the symbolism and the meaning of the vampire stereotype has been elevated from subtext to the conscious level of the text. The symbol of the family, the magpie, brings the physical presence of black and white into the novel alongside the repeated discussions of metaphorical light and dark and other dichotomies. These corvidae are an unusual choice as a gothic bird, with crows and ravens far more typical – indicating a simpler, singular evil, as well as being well established as symbols of death in literature. Magpies are, however, noted for both their intelligence and their avaricious love of bright objects and these qualities relate directly to two of the central questions raised about the stereotypical vampire by the narrator early in *Carpe Jugulum*: “Two things have traditionally puzzled vampire researchers. One is: why do vampires have so much *power*? [...] The other puzzle is: why are vampires always so stupid?” (12-13). To answer these questions the Count has both power, intelligence, and a magpie's greed. His career over the course of the novel as he attempts to circumvent the narrative tropes which result in a vampire's downfall warns of the danger of allowing such a thing to succeed.

Monstrosity is rarely a simple matter in Pratchett's novels, as his construction of monstrosity reflects his more nuanced approach to moral concerns, and it is little wonder that it is complicated in *Carpe Jugulum*. By taking the stereotypical behaviours and symbology of

vampires into account, the problems involved in the novel's ethical framework become clearer. This chapter's first section discusses the civility of the vampires, an aspect of the vampire stereotype since their first appearance in English literature. The overt politeness of the antagonists draws attention to the complex interpersonal power balances and the idealisation of order whilst the novel's primary motif, that of invitation, highlights the dichotomies of inclusion and exclusion, and action and inaction. The second section discusses related tension between progress and tradition. This staple of the vampire novel is inverted here, where, instead of representing tradition, the Count takes control of progressive rhetoric and undermines opposition by labelling it 'tradition'. The final section of this chapter investigates the use of sympathetic vampire tropes in relation to the novel's violence.

### **Etiquette and False Friends**

Invitations, permission, and good manners all figure prominently in vampire lore, though the origins of the stereotypical behaviours related to these are unclear. Older folklore, for instance, might be behind the belief that vampires require an invitation to enter a private abode, as many similar creatures with the power to steal away or feed on humans, such as fairies and elves, are constrained by similarly strict prohibitions. The connection, however, between folklore and literature is not one of clear progression from one to the other. The first literary vampire, Lord Ruthven, binds the protagonist of *The Vampyre* with an oath that forbids him from telling anyone what he has seen for a set length of time, but Lord Ruthven himself does not seem to be bound in any way. Nor does Ruthven seem to possess any of the wide range of weaknesses now associated with vampires. He does, however, move in polite society and wear a mask of civility which only the protagonist suspects could be false. With this as our basis, it is reasonably clear that civility, etiquette, and manners began their association with literary vampires as a means of camouflage and power.

Nonetheless, attention to current vampire stereotypes shows that, whilst manners still play a significant role in making the vampire figure appealing, rules of civility have become less one-sided. As vampires rose in popularity and started to evolve into a plethora of competing breeds, civility and the rules of etiquette began to constrain them and become widely recognised as weakness. While, certainly, some vampires have no need for an invitation before they can enter a house, others are stopped at the door, and, over time, invitations have become an expected aspect of the stereotype. However, as David Baker,

Stephanie Green, and Agnieszka Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska claim in the introduction of *Hospitality, Rape, and Consent in Vampire Literature*: “The liberating power of the invitation may be implied or predicated upon a deception” (5), and thus “The vampire stands precisely at the point of this problematic nexus between rape and consent” (6). In his chapter “Breaking and Entering: Psychic Violation, Metempsychosis and the Uninvited Female Vampire”, Simon Bacon claims that: ““Ever since the publication of Stoker’s vampire tale in 1897, the question of invitation is a central aspect of vampire lore” (80). It is little wonder, then, that Pratchett’s vampires, in line with the wide variety of stereotypes referred to in the novel, have issues entering without invitation. These vampires are creatures not only bound by strange rules of folklore, but also by expectations of civility and etiquette which means their monstrosity is partially anchored in the ideals and constraints of society in general.

The folkloric aspect of the vampires’ adherence to rules associated with etiquette does complicate the relationship between human society and this stereotypical monster. A monster, by its nature, is transgressive, and breaks expectations of civility and codes of conduct. Folkloric monsters generally transgress in one of two ways: either they are bestial and overpower and destroy communities through overwhelming physical/psychic force, or they are intelligent and follow codes of conduct in unexpected and damaging ways. The vampires in *Carpe Jugulum* fall into the latter bracket. Notably, both of these conceptions of monstrosity serve to reinforce the benefits of civilisation through increasing the audience’s awareness of structures and formalities which protect communities from dangers both without and within. Pratchett, in *Lords and Ladies*, uses the folkloric elves as a monstrous threat from outside the bounds of civilisation. While they, too, need a way opened to them in order to begin their invasion, they are by no means figures acting from a civilised standpoint and this ‘invitation’ is merely them taking advantage of a point of weakness. The vampires, on the other hand, depend on civility, and their invitation is explicit – written out in full with gold edging.

Invitations, in *Carpe Jugulum*, stand at the centre of the complications of the plot, driving the characters to take or avoid action. The initial, and most significant invitations are issued by King Verence II, and invitees are asked to attend the naming of his daughter. One of these invitations, issued to the Magpyr family, allows the vampires to enter the kingdom. The Countess remarks that without the invitation “we could not have come” (88). There is a slight exaggeration of the usual vampiric quirk here, in that Lancre is a kingdom and not a private residence, but the conflation of the two here emphasises both the smallness of the kingdom – as it is placed in comparison with a home – and, also, the relationship between the

king and the kingdom. Even as Lancre is diminished, the severity of the invitation's consequences becomes exaggerated as King Verence's invitation not only endangers him, but also all the people in his kingdom. In shifting the stereotypical constraint against entry, the novel increases the significance of Verence's choice, and imagines the repercussions on a national scale.

The choice in question is, given a reader's assumed knowledge of vampire stereotypes, idiotic. Nonetheless, the inferred logic behind Verence's invitations appears, on the surface, sensible and even good as he is consciously making an effort not to judge others based on potentially erroneous stereotypes. When Nanny confronts Verence about asking an Omnian priest to perform the naming ceremony for his daughter, he tells her that "we must be tolerant" (55) and that:

"There is a new world order. Once upon a time trolls were monsters that ate people but now, thanks to the endeavours of men, and of course trolls, of goodwill and peaceful intent, we get along very well and I hope we understand each other. This is no longer a time when little kingdoms need only worry about little concerns. We're part of a big world. We have to *play* that part." (57)

His arguments about globalisation and the need to work towards a tolerant world ring true, but so, too, does Nanny Ogg's protest, which is based on the history of the Omnian faith and its violence against people like herself. When Verence tries to point out that Nanny does not mind other faiths, she points out that "none of *them* object to *me*" (56-7). There is an apparent miscommunication taking place wherein Verence conflates race with ideology, and so, while Nanny's protests are based on the ideology which presents a direct and tangible threat to her safety, Verence objects to this as an intolerance similar to that which once stood between trolls and humans. His argument fails to recognise that an ideological shift was necessary before the reconciliation of trolls and humans. The trolls stopped eating people, and both sides worked towards understanding with "goodwill and peaceful intent". The Quite Reverend Mightily Oats is not the antagonist of the novel, because, in the earlier novel *Small Gods*, the Omnian religion underwent a theological shift. Mightily Oats' recollections of his training suggest that the religion, in fact, became something of a hotbed of reforms after the events of *Small Gods* in a comic echo of the rise of Protestantism in the Christian faith. Unlike many Protestants of the sixteenth century, though, Mightily Oats does not believe the witches should be burned, and so, in this case, Nanny's protests might seem flawed in that they ignore the development and shifts which can change a society or system for the better.

The flaws in Verence's approach, however, become clear when they are shifted into the context of his invitation to the Magpyrs. Nanny doesn't directly confront him on this matter because, she decides:

“if I asked him Verence'd tell me to mind my own business. O' course, he wouldn't put it quite like *that* [...] He'd probably use the word 'respect' two or three times at least. But it'd mean the same thing in the end.” (82)

In returning attention to the earlier discussion between Verence and Nanny, particularly the King's oblique refusal to concede to Nanny's point about Mightily Oats, the reader is engaged to apply Verence's argument to his invitation of the vampires, and thereby find the flaw. Tolerance without limitations results in tolerance of intolerance – the paradox of tolerance.

In depicting the paradox of tolerance, the novel complicates the act of choosing. Verence's choice to invite the vampires offers the monsters the choice to spread their evil, and they are more than ready to make their choice. It is not enough to choose to be tolerant indiscriminately – discrimination is necessary to combat evil. And yet the one act of discrimination Verence takes pains to make in sending out his invitations also results in a negative outcome. He ensures that Granny Weatherwax's invitation is given extra gold leaf as a sign of favour (51), but this results in a magpie stealing the card away. While the vampires are free to take over Lancre, having been issued an invitation, conversely Granny Weatherwax is unavailable to function as the kingdom's defender without her invitation. In a fashion, we once again have the mirroring of protagonist and antagonist, though, in this case, Granny Weatherwax's inability to act without an invitation does not have a mystical basis, as the vampires' does, rather it is a choice. Her pride leads her to make the choice not to attend the naming ceremony without an invitation, and so she is not in attendance when the vampires initially show themselves. While the vampires are prevented from going where they are not invited, Granny Weatherwax refuses to go uninvited. Her stubborn commitment to the principles of social rules results in vulnerability and voluntary exile.

Like the vampires, Granny Weatherwax is constrained by a version of civility and tradition. There is a strong tension between the idea of choice and that of socially imposed behaviours when it comes to Granny's decision to go into a self-imposed retirement when she believes herself unwelcome at the naming ceremony. Not only can she not bring herself to intrude on the ceremony, she also feels compelled to leave the nation altogether: but while her actions strongly echo the mystic binding of vampires to invitations, they continue to be



framed as choices. Her choices, though, are clearly vulnerable to the mores of civility, folklore, and tradition. She ‘thinks in threes’, as she removes herself from Lancre, believing herself to be surplus to the requirements set down in folklore and tradition. The idea of the maiden, the mother, and the crone appears in the earlier novels and the search for a new maiden underpins the journey Granny Weatherwax and Nanny Ogg undertake in *Maskerade*. So it is not an insignificant concept in the sequence as a whole, but the reader’s sympathy for Granny Weatherwax means the idea must be at least partially rejected as it appears in *Carpe Jugulum*. The ideal has become harmful, excluding a vulnerable character from the society of witches rather than being the impetus to include others.

Granny’s exclusion, also, serves as the first of a number of ‘invitations to the dark side’. The Witches novels as a sequence have dealt heavily with the shape of stories, especially fairy tales and other traditional stories, and so it is noteworthy that Granny Weatherwax is a witch who believes she has not been invited to a naming ceremony. A snubbed witch or fairy is the primary antagonist of the “Sleeping Beauty” story, and so it is possible to read Granny’s refusal to attend the ceremony as a refusal to relinquish her autonomy to the demands of a story. As with the Red Riding Hood episode in *Witches Abroad*, this framing presents the reader with a sympathetic imagining of a fairy tale antagonist: Granny, like the wolf, has found herself in an unfortunate position due to powers outside her control. However, unlike the wolf, Granny is still capable of choice and the self-sacrificial mode she enters is an implicit condemnation of the “Sleeping Beauty” antagonist who lashes out and unjustly harms a child. Granny refuses the opportunity to be a classic antagonist, even though she believes she no longer has a place amongst the protagonists, and this choice points back to the choices the Magpyrs are making which shape their role as antagonists.

The balance between exclusion and inclusion is a delicate one and it shifts in unexpected ways throughout the novel, often serving to highlight injustices and the structures which support them. The Magpyr family, having been invited in, encourage inclusion on their terms and use facsimiles of civility to lend their rule the impression of propriety. As the vampires support inclusion, exclusion becomes desirable, creating a pilgrimage to the bastion of exclusion, Dontgonearthe Castle, in the second half of the novel. The Old Count’s refusal to grant an invitation becomes a symbolic rejection of the inclusion the Count advocates. Where the Count takes advantage of his invitation to invade Lancre and seems to be involved in the misplacement of Granny Weatherwax’s invitation, thereby reducing her capacity to oppose him, his predecessor and counterpart, the old Count de Magpyr, takes an opposite

position. He remains as remains throughout much of the novel, entombed in his own domain and home, Dontgonearthe Castle, reliant on uninvited guests rather than invitations. Even the furnishings of his castle, equipped as it is with easily torn drapes, a cellar of holy water, and even an anatomical diagram helpfully showing the location of the heart, encourages the decay of hospitality typical of a gothic vampire romance. The new Count, unlike the old, resists such stereotypical decays inherent to the genre, seeking instead to maintain control through structured social interaction.

Civility and politeness are often referred to in relation to vampires as ‘old-world courtesy’ or ‘old-fashioned chivalry’, elevating the mannerisms of the monster in order to stress the threat of the past alongside the daunting savagery of the current world. The vampire’s politeness emphasises the decaying civility of modernity even as its nature inevitably leads it to commit the most uncivil acts, creating a tension within the texts. In *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971), Barnabas Collins impresses the occupants of Collinwood with his genteel ways, but his punishment of the boorish Willie Loomis is an expression of his dangerous nature (“211”- “220”) In *Carpe Jugulum* the Count makes a show of his civility with a stress on modernity. Igor complains, when Nanny questions him early in the novel, that the Count is not upholding the appropriate vampire traditions:

“Being a vampire’th about continuity, ithin’t it? You get loht in the mountaint and thee a light burnin’ in thome carthle, you got a right to expect proper thqueakin’ doorth and thome old-world courtethy, don’t you?” (81-2)

The Count’s modernity and desire to change are approached as ideals which exist in contrast to the usual themes associated with vampires. The modernity, evident in his clothes and his language, complicate the tension between past and future within the novel, but the civil Count also proves to be reliant on civility for his power; he is not entirely at odds with the courtesy side of traditional vampire behaviour. His mind control, for instance, primarily constrains his listeners to polite attentiveness: Lacrimosa’s piano playing, appalling as it is, must be praised as it would be polite to do so. The ‘old world courtesy’ not only affects the vampires (or “vampyres” in the ‘new’ spelling the Count prefers), it also proves binding to those around them. Courtesy can only be met with courtesy, no matter the threats underlying it, as the Count includes his victims.

Agnes is one of the few characters able to meet the vampires’ courtesy with anything less than absent politeness, and this is due to her having a second personality, Perdita, who is the part of her that “wants to do all the things you don’t dare do, and thinks the thoughts you

don't dare think" (97). Because she has Perdita, she is not so charmed by Lacrimosa's attempt at piano playing. It is noteworthy, too, that this piano playing comes shortly after another attempt at music, that of "the Lancre Light Symphony Orchestra (cond. S. Ogg)" (89). While Agnes tries to give them credit, Vlad makes no effort to be polite about their efforts, bluntly pointing out that "they're a very *bad* orchestra" (89), thereby playing the part of Perdita by saying what Agnes cannot bring herself to, and he likewise commiserates with Agnes over his sister's abuse of the piano. Vlad meets her internal discourtesy with a show of fellow-feeling, mitigating the risk that Agnes would be excluded from the company due to her underlying difference. Her momentary impoliteness in not applauding, insisted on by Perdita, sets her apart from those who are mind-controlled, which risks breaking apart the unity that social manners are reliant on (106). In a more removed sense, Vlad's subsequent flattery and mirroring of her internal disgust not only aligns him as her love interest, it also highlights the connection between the urge to be polite and mind control. Conversation becomes entrapment and a means of demanding sympathy in a strategy not dissimilar from that which is used by advocates of certain religions and charitable causes who accost people on the street. Conversation leads to compromise and submission, as it emphasises the innate human desire for interconnection.

Civility undermines resistance even as it encourages sympathy, and conversation becomes an avenue by which the vampires can both dominate and indoctrinate those around them, making their actions seem reasonable through the cultivation of a reasonable tone and a refusal to be the ones to compromise. When Vlad speaks with Agnes, engaging her in a conversation that is at first an effort to mind-control her and then becomes an effort to understand her, he takes the opportunity to insist on the reasonableness of the Magpyrs' goals (108-9). As Vlad continues to overwhelm her, Agnes's far less polite other self, Perdita, rises to the surface and resorts to violence in order to escape, and the trap of the conversation is made quite clear:

Agnes would have pushed him away. That is, Agnes would have dithered and tried to talk her way out of things, but if push had come to shove then she'd have pushed hard. But Perdita struck, and when her hand was halfway around she turned it palm out and curled her fingers to bring her nails into play... (109)

Agnes' instinct is to continue talking until violence became imperative, and that instinct creates the weakness that the vampires exploit. Inclusion in the polite exchange of conversation undermines Agnes' ability to resist, as well as making her complicit in the

ideology the conversation explores. This transaction, reliant as it is on the manners of the victim, bears some resemblance to the oath in *The Vampyre* wherein the protagonist swears not to disclose Lord Ruthven's death – and thereby expose his true nature – for a year and a day after witnessing it (Polidori 79). The oath is at once a matter of civility and honour, and of a seemingly mystical nature as the protagonist finds himself in desperate straits and yet cannot, or at least does not, break his word. The constraint in *Carpe Jugulum* does not rely so heavily on the premise of unyielding honour, and the conversations which bind people are closer to reality and serve to highlight the issue with conflating civility with goodness or honesty. Manners, here, maketh monsters.

Manners are an intrinsic part of the inclusionism and appeal to order which define the Count's ethos and they serve to empower him and disenfranchise others in an unequal exchange. Civility seamlessly includes others, as it makes up the roots of any social system in one form or another, and it forms the basis of society's conceptual understanding of social order. It also allows the Count and his family the means to threaten those who stand against them in a subtle yet clear fashion without allowing the threatened people a 'just' reason to respond with violence. In illustrating these aspects of social engagement, and demonstrating how they can be used to take advantage of others, the novel questions the prominence of appeals to civil discussion in real world ethical debates.

The imposition of order onto the mob by the Count combines an appeal for civility with the threat of violence. The Count's concept of civility clearly has more to do with how others treat him than how he treats others. His treatment of the mob at the gate involves a façade of good humour and amiable support, but ends with a clear threat:

"If you could keep the noise down over dinner I would be grateful, but of course I appreciate you have a vital traditional role to play. I'll have the servants bring out some mugs of hot toddy shortly." He knocked the ash off his cigar. "Oh, and may I introduce you to Sergeant Kraput, known to his friends as 'Bent Bill', I believe, and this gentleman here picking his teeth with his knife is Corporal Svitz, who I understand has no friends at all. I suppose it is faintly possible that he will make some here. They and their men, who I suppose *could* be called soldiers in a sort of informal, easy-come easy-go, cut-and-thrust sort of way" – here Corporal Svitz leered and flicked a gobbet of anonymous rations from a yellowing molar – "will be going on duty in, oh, about an hour. Purely for reasons of security, you understand." (227)

The Count's primary protest has to do with noise levels disturbing his dinner, a dinner which ends up being Granny Weatherwax. His understanding stance which recognises the 'traditional' nature of civil uprisings does not cater to literary traditions in which the monster counters violence with violence. He removes himself from the violence by pretending he does not understand the threat he makes in his stationing of the Sergeant and his men, more or less pointing out that he means to plead plausible deniability if the guards should hurt anyone. Meanwhile, labelling the civil uprising 'traditional' reframes its primary motives and reduces the immediacy of the mob's protests, a strategy which reflects the undermining of union power by large corporations. He makes a similar move when he insists that someone say: "You'll never get away with it" (229) and then critiques Mightily Oats' attempt to banish him during the Lancre confrontation (229-30). By treating attempts at violent revolution as matters of etiquette and obligation, he deprives them of their immediacy and power, and seizes authority over the situation by remaining calm and civil.

The mesmerising mannerisms of the Count and his control of situations through civility have their roots in vampire stereotypes, so it is little wonder that this scene is mirrored when the old Count, the most enthusiastically stereotypical vampire, meets the mob of townsfolk from Escrow who have stormed his castle. The old Count, however, differs in his approach by acknowledging the violent nature of his relationship with the townsfolk and he goes so far as to praise the manner in which the ancestors of the townspeople defeated him. The 'tradition' of resistance is held up as a marker of community and a form of propriety in and of itself. Resistance is the logical and desirable response to monstrous behaviours, but the suggestion of a metaphoric aspect to the monster, the vampire, connects this resistance and the Count's declawing of resistance through appeals to civility to the dismantling of the workers' unions and the rise of 'friendly' corporations.

### **Progress and Tradition**

The novel's satire is rooted in real world social change and concerns about the seemingly blind push towards 'progress'. The resemblance of the relationship between unions and corporations to that between the townspeople and the vampires is merely one aspect of the critique of progress in the novel, though it is one of the most significant. The Count's 'rebranding' efforts, including his insistence on his family having changed for the better, and claiming people making a fuss over his diet is insulting moments before admitting that

“sometimes we kill people” with the caveat “although hardly at all these days” (88), is reminiscent of the rhetoric of industrial representatives insisting that their operations shouldn’t be criticised because they are no longer quite as unsafe as they once were. His financial outreach in Escrow, paying for the clock and bell tower, and employing local labour to build them (321), has parallels with the practice of large corporations ‘investing in the local community’ in order to be seen as benevolent despite the impact they might have on local business and work practices, while his aggressive international expansion into Lancre at the slightest invitation speaks to the globalisation of large businesses and their ability to dominate both the commercial and political spheres in small nations. The Count’s push for progress is a push that benefits the few, not the many, and rather than looking for change in the power structures that benefit him, his vision of progress is one of rigid adherence to, or exacerbation of, these structures and the removal of others from power.

The Count’s ideals are such that *Carpe Jugulum*, as a whole, approaches the idea of change in an ambivalent fashion. While the mob at the gates in Lancre, and the townspeople of Escrow threaten revolt and revolution, these movements towards social change are overshadowed and distorted by how the Count frames his ambition in terms of ‘progress’ and dismisses the interests of others using the rhetoric of progress. At the outset of the novel this aspect of the Count’s characterisation is established as he talks with Lacrimosa about the wounding of the phoenix. He labels the phoenix: “‘A symbol of a credulous past [...] An evolutionary cul-de-sac [...] A marooned survivor on the seas of progress’” (14). The Count twists the usual themes and symbolism associated with vampires, wherein they usually represent the past with their old-world manners, and instead connects the central antagonists to the idea of the future and progress. However, this rebranding of the vampire as modern is highly dependent on the characterisation of other species as ‘backward’.

The connection between the past and vampires is partially rooted in their nature as undead. In folklore and early literary references they are a return of those who have passed on who prey on the local living, the deceased fathers or mothers who are cursed to destroy their offspring and sever their bloodline as in Byron’s “The Giaour”. The folkloric figure destroys local lives to achieve a monstrous unlife, finding immortality at the expense of those who would otherwise go on without them. Barber argues that the vampires of history were highly local to both time and place, and views their wide variety of attributed evils sceptically, noting that: “when folklorists try to document the form and the doings of the vampire, they tend to end their sentences with ‘etc.’ or some equivalent” (87). In contrast to Barber’s case studies which detail ‘vampires’ killed days after their initial death, the literary vampire is

often lifetimes removed from the society they prey on, and familial connections are not necessarily the ones stressed.<sup>57</sup> They pose a more general threat, but there remains an anxiety about the destruction of the future. More often than not, the vampire figure is male, and preys upon virginal women – destroying their capacity for reproduction as they consume their blood. Most vampires pose a threat to the future – they do not embody it – and the future in turn usually poses a threat to them. The vampire hunter, epitomised in Van Helsing, is a figure usually strongly associated with progress and scientific advancements. More recent vampire hunters or mortal foils have exemplified the social shifts that have accompanied modernity, with plucky attitudes and contemporary ideals. The death or conquering of the typical post-Stoker vampire symbolically kills the past and provides a pathway to the future.

Instead of appearing as unchanging and eternal figures from the past, the Magpyrs (with the exception of the old Count) strive to both represent change and the future and serve as catalysts of change in terms of the structures underlying the narrative; rather than being threatened by the future, they embrace it. Their arguments and plans mimic the ideals of the revolutionary while the Count's scientific bent repurposes the science that would typically give the hunter an upper-hand and uses it to eliminate his weaknesses. His family stands in parodic, and at times satirical, contradiction to the stereotypical Dracula-faced vampire who is doomed by the turning of night into day. Every reference to progress emphasises the stereotypical vampire's weaknesses and backward ways. In them we hear the echoes of calls for progress, and, if for no other reason than that, revolution must be questioned.

In taking the side of progress the Magpyrs hamper the ability of others to confront them. It is difficult to argue against progress, modernity, or evolution, and the novel lays out both these arguments and the difficulties associated with them through the moral complication of the monsters embracing the arguments. The contempt, embarrassment, or patronizing tolerance the vampires show towards tradition contain notes of impatience which may resonate with readers culturally divorced and disillusioned. What underlies the vampires' rejection of tradition is an urge to erase the identity and will of their victims in combination with a desire to obscure their own villainous past. The vampires (or "vampyres")

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<sup>57</sup> Barber's primary sources, quoted at length in his book, are both gruesome and interesting reading. In the translated account of Pitton de Tournefort given, the suspected vampire was initially exhumed on the tenth day but then "disinterred three or four times a day, according to the caprice of whoever came by" (23). Not even the old Count is quite so close to the general populace.

continue to use ‘traditions’ or stereotypes to define themselves, but instead of playing them up as the old Count does, they continually reject them with the act of rejection itself becoming a part of their identity.

The identity issues in the novel go further, as the vampires’ outspoken identification with progress forces those who oppose them into identification with the past and tradition. This identification, furthermore, is imposed as much as chosen, due to the way the Count frames his relationship with progress. Modernity must, in the Count’s world, include himself and his family at the top of the social order and any other world view is labelled either backward-thinking or superstition. By condemning others through framing their actions as outdated, the Count creates the impression that his progress stands in contradiction to inertia. As with the more traditional dichotomy of good versus evil in fantasy literature which Pratchett complicates in earlier novels and, indeed, in this novel, the counterpoint of progress against the implied inertia of Lancre becomes an indictment of the ‘progress for progress’s sake’ mentality of the 1990s.

The Count presses for traditions to be upheld by the protagonists, manufacturing an impression of inertia, a lack of progress, or of strong tradition. Like Salzella in *Maskerade*, the Count anticipates the necessary actions of all players in the central ‘showdown’ of the novel, turning the dramatic event into something more like a pantomime. While he is not necessarily directly responsible for Granny Weatherwax’s decision to retire, he does emphasise how bound to narrative expectation she is. This harks back to *Witches Abroad* where the witches were trying to break the stories and their expectations. Granny Weatherwax’s shift closer to the expectations of story elevates the question of whether or not she will ‘turn’ either into a vampire or into an evil witch. The novels of this sequence have always raised the possibility of ‘cackling’, and of Granny Weatherwax especially ‘going to the bad’, but *Carpe Jugulum* builds up the possibility into an inevitability through the Count’s construction of the protagonists as falling into the past, and Granny’s troubled consideration of the figure of Alison Weatherwax, or Black Aliss.

However, the Count’s chokehold on the narrative of the future is not absolute. The novel contains a more compassionate sort of progress in its Omnian thread. Mightily Oats struggles with theological doubt and questioning in a reflection of the state of his religion which has become plagued by reforms. The novel *Small Gods* (1992) most explicitly framed the religion’s violent history, which resulted in worshippers believing more in the Inquisition than in their god Om, but Nanny Ogg’s early and ongoing aggressive rejection of Mightily Oats, based as it is on the Omnians burning witches, establishes the impression of a violent



past that serves independently to create a progression of the religion into a better form. The Count, however, takes pains to glorify the past, and to present Mightily Oats and his indecisiveness as a weakening of religious conviction.

“Oh, I remember your prophets. They were mad bearded old men with the sanitary habits of a stoat but, by all that’s crazed, they had *passion!* *They* didn’t have holy little minds full of worry and fretfulness. They spoke the idiot words as though they believed them, with specks of holy foam bubbling away in the corners of their mouths. Now *they* were *real* priests, bellies full of fire and bile! *You* are a joke.” (230)

Even in his glorification of the prophets of the past, the Count is derisive, undermining both their sanity and their sanitation. This undermining undoes any ‘golden age’ ideals even as the Count leans on the concept in arguing that there has been a decay in the quality of priests. The past cannot be better than the future even as the future cannot exceed the past; Mightily Oats, it seems, cannot win.

Nonetheless, this confrontation is one of the very few instances in which the Count acknowledges his own connection to the past, and it is certainly the most significant. As Mightily Oats attempts to cast him out, the Count interrupts him to make the point that he contributed to the writing of a number of the texts used in the Omnian church – texts which were written “hundreds of years ago” – and he tells Oats that “none of those stupid fictions work on vampires” (230). This acknowledgement broadens the Count’s power at a critical point in the novel, as he controls the present via the past. The list of texts he gives coalesces his opposition to the Omnian Church that produced Mightily Oats, with its many schisms and libraries of conflicting truths. The entire “*Arca Instrumentorum*” (230) the Count saw produced lacks any truth whatsoever. Misinformation and idiocy in the past, which the Count mocks, has been seeded there by him. This passage reveals the Count’s false espousal of progress in general; far from facilitating the gathering of knowledge, he deliberately restricts it for his own gain. The past reveals that the only future the Count supports is one that benefits him.

Singularity of vision is central to the Count’s ordered vision of the world, and the novel sets this against a plurality of traditions and a divided religion that has resulted in a Reverend who is divided in himself. Order is pitted against chaos, but the usual lines of engagement have changed, with reader sympathy being on the side of the chaotic. The chaotic but ethically motivated progress of the Omnian Church, however, cannot effectively oppose the Count’s orderly and structured image of the future which promises the certainty

Mightily Oats lacks. It is only once he has completed his pilgrimage and found unity within himself that Oats is able to effectively counter the Count. Likewise, Granny Weatherwax can only succeed by confronting the dark parts of herself and achieving unity through self-knowledge (267). Agnes, too, learns to work with herself over the course of the novel. These characters function as microcosms of social progress whilst they simultaneously illustrate the benefits of self-knowledge alongside the importance of doubt. Doubt, the novel suggests, plays an essential role in ethical action even as the action itself, in order to succeed, must be certain. While certainty is possible without doubt, the process of doubt must take place in order for the certainty to be right. The Count's certainty, his self-assurance and the rhetoric of inevitability he uses to frame his future lacks this key element of doubt which means there is no room for debate, for disorder, or for ethics.

### **Sympathy for the Vampire**

The Count's certainty, civility, and progressive patter build rather than deconstruct the stereotype of the vampire as a false friend. From the roots of the vampire in folklore where they appear as monstrous twisted dead who prey on their families and neighbours, to the early literary vampires who, like Lord Ruthven, took advantage of close ties of friendship and social bonds to prey on people, to the sympathetic vampires of recent times who appear as love interests or figures to be pitied, vampires have consistently been monsters who are defined by their close relationship with human societies. The vampires in *Carpe Jugulum* take advantage of civility – the structures that underly social connection – but their manipulation of sympathy is equally important to our understanding of how they parasitically attack the social and ethical frameworks of the novel. The Count often calls upon others to recognise vampires as a population who have been unfairly treated, or to recognise himself as a person who should be admired for his forward thinking, and others in his family take a similar sort of route<sup>58</sup>. Nonetheless, the Count's appeals for sympathy are usually quickly undermined:

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<sup>58</sup> The Count deliberately perverts the reading of vampires as metaphorical stand-ins for a maligned group. Allusions to this common metaphor appear in *The Truth* (2000) and *Monstrous Regiment* (2003), among other Discworld novels, in which the respective vampires, Otto and Maladict, are “Black Ribboners” with the “League of Temperance” (*Monstrous Regiment* 21) and their blood-drinking is treated as a humorous parallel of alcoholism. The Count shows no appetite for any similar compromise.

“I am so pleased, Verence, to see your essential modern attitude. People have quite the wrong idea about vampires, you see. Are we fiendish killers?” He beamed at them. “Well, yes, of course we are. But only when necessary. Frankly, we could hardly hope to rule a country if we went around killing everyone *all* the time, could we? There’d be none left to rule, for one thing!” (103-4)

His reassurance harks back to *Wyrd Sisters* and the Duke’s madness when a similar point was made and, like the Duke, the Count’s definition of “necessary” is suspect. The Countess, soon after, makes a similar appeal about her nature, saying: ““And we are only human [...] Well . . . in fact, not *only* human. But if you prick us do we not bleed? Which always seems such a waste”” (104). The reference to Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* (1600) is another example of the Magpyrs falsely aligning themselves with a group suffering prejudice and discrimination. This structure of an appeal to sympathy, which builds on expectations grown throughout the rise of the sympathetic vampire figure, followed by a reminder of the monstrous nature of vampires occurs over and over throughout the novel. Instead of cultivating the sympathies of the reader, this structure, with its expectation followed by a drop into a slightly different set of expectations, in the shape of a joke, keeps the reader at an emotional distance from the antagonists, a distance only reinforced by the delight the vampires take in reminding people of their innate savagery. When Granny is initially defeated by the Count and Agnes stammers: ““You’re going to . . . after all this talk, you’re going to . . . suck her blood?”” the reader is unlikely to share her amazement. The Count has made it quite clear, ““We *are* vampires, Miss Nitt. It’s a vampire thing”” (237).

And yet the Magpyr family, and other vampires, are never quite given the narrative distance granted to the elves in *Lords and Ladies*. These antagonists remain human enough to be regarded as morally accountable. From the first appearance of the family in the novel, when the individuals are characterised by voices which typify them as members of the stereotypical nuclear family, to the knitting that Agnes finds in one of the coffins that makes her think “perhaps even vampires couldn’t sleep sometimes, and tossed and turned all day” (159), to the existence of young vampires who go through a ‘normal’ phase in a parody of the stereotypical teenaged ‘goth’ phase, the vampires are written in a way that makes them superficially sympathetic and it is the speech and actions of individual characters which undermine their appeal. The reader’s idea of the vampire, as a stereotypical figure, is augmented by these comedic humanising moments and part of the appeal of the old Count certainly arises from the fact that he, as the ultimate stereotypical vampire, benefits from

association with these sympathetic, humanising, traits in a passive manner. While sympathy does not necessarily have moral weight in and of itself, it does have a bearing on how ethical arguments are received. When Vlad tells Agnes that the Count “‘says Escrow is a model community’” and that “‘it shows what happens if ancient enmity is put aside and humans and vampires learn to live in peace’” (299), the statement is more likely to be viewed with suspicion and caution because the Count has, in almost every case, undermined such statements by highlighting his potential for violence.

The vampires, then, inhabit a liminal space wherein they are human-like enough for moral decision-making to be, on some level, expected, but are simultaneously monstrous enough that their actions can almost never be considered good or just. Agnes, in particular, highlights the complicated space the vampires inhabit as she tries to reject Vlad’s arguments. When he is in the process of trying to convince her to become a vampire, she objects:

“If I’m a vampire,” she said, “I won’t know good from evil.”

“That’s a bit childish, isn’t it? They’re only ways of looking at the same thing. You don’t always have to do what the rest of the world wants you to do.” (272)

Vlad’s response seems rational, as it undermines the ethical absolutism that Agnes’ assertion suggests, but it neatly establishes an understanding of morality as a communal understanding imposed from the outside. This fits with his argument that Agnes should leave her human community and join the vampires, who, it seems, have a different measure of morality from the rest of the world. However, despite the way Vlad inflates the logic of his argument through his dismissal of Agnes’ point as “childish”, the sympathy imbalance between these characters still bolsters Agnes’ statement, making it seem truer. Vlad’s dismissal of the concepts of good and evil is also key to understanding the ethical arrangement of the novel. When he explains to Agnes how his father’s plans are better for society, she responds, “‘You’re just saying that in exchange for not actually being evil you’ll simply be bad, is that it?’” (219). Rather than there being a clear answer, the Count cuts in to state that the vampires’ “time has come” (219), presenting his idea of progress as an inevitability and therefore not subject to an ethical line of questioning. If there is no choice, the ideology cannot be judged as good or evil.

Most of the elves of *Lords and Ladies* do not have a choice regarding their behaviour, they are utterly at the mercy of their natures, but the vampires in *Carpe Jugulum* are creatures of choice. It is the Count’s explicit choice to try and circumvent aspects of his nature as a stereotypical vampire. While the Count often frames his superiority as a natural state and

thereby irrefutable, he still undoes his nature insofar as possible wherever it might advantage him. The old Count's overt, almost parodic, adherence to vampire stereotype, then, appears more moral because it is a state deeply linked to his nature. The stupidity of vampires removes them from deep questions of right and wrong, of even good and evil, as we can accept that complete adherence to tropes strips a character of agency. The old Count, however, is not merely outside of a moral standpoint, as his adherence to stereotype is a distinct choice. He is the only truly sympathetic vampire in the novel. Rather than being a character devoid of agency, without a choice, or choosing to be merely bad instead of evil, he chooses to adhere to stereotypes which disadvantage him. The parodic humour is in the consciousness of his act, and the sympathy comes with his willingness to choose to let good triumph over and over again. His admiration of the phoenix, a creature who burns evil, aligns him with good even as he acts out the part of evil (391).

The vampires are antagonists not because of their nature but because they choose to be, and as such their violence is not a natural expression of their monstrosity, but a constructed and curated aspect of their evil. From the suggestions of violence which undermine the Magpyr family's friendliness to Vlad's unspoken threat to Agnes, violence is at the root of the reader's discomfort with the vampires despite how they play out some aspects of the sympathetic vampire stereotype. Even as Agnes fluctuates between attraction and fear in response to Vlad, mimicking the inner life of a stereotypical gothic heroine, and Vlad remains largely in control and fluctuates between threatening and protective in typical Byronic hero fashion, Vlad fails to gain much more sympathy than the rest of the family through both his subtle and overt acts of violence. That is not to suggest that Agnes does not act violently towards him, but the novel presents violence on the part of the protagonists as a necessary and liberating expression. Agnes' *Perdita* demonstrates her freedom from mind control by lashing out and kneeing Vlad in the groin even as he expresses admiration for her (109).<sup>59</sup> Agnes' violence stems from resistance, a refusal of evil, whereas Vlad uses his capacity for violence to enforce his superiority and coerce Agnes.

Issues of order, inclusion, and progress figure prominently in the romantically coded relationship between Vlad and Agnes. Vlad is supernaturally strong and fast, very intuitive,

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<sup>59</sup> Just as he mirrored Agnes' secret hatred of the music, at this point he mirrors the reader's satisfaction at her independence, and it is this mirroring that places him in the role of the lover, the most stereotypical role for the sympathetic vampire figure.

and capable of mind-controlling most people, and he strongly aligns himself with his father's ideals. His interest in Agnes is largely linked to her outsider status – linked to her immunity to mind control – and his conversations with her strongly push for her inclusion in the order his father imagines. While Agnes cannot be mentally controlled, she is still vulnerable when her companions are subjected to such control. Nanny Ogg's suggestion that Agnes should marry Vlad if they cannot find a way to defeat the vampires outright is both pragmatic and illuminating (198). Nanny forthrightly observes, "If we was men, we'd be talking about layin' down our lives for the country. As women, we can talk about laying down'" (198). The traditional means for a woman to 'win' is by submitting to the attentions of the man and subverting his power, rather than through becoming powerful herself. While there are a number of sex jokes in the discussion between the witches on this matter, they do not detract from the fundamental truth – the heroine in a romance often has no means by which she can definitively 'win' under her own power. The blunt statement of this trope as fact by Nanny breaks the illusion of romance by addressing the tacitly unfair power structures. While the novel discovers these structures in popular literature, it does not, ultimately, use them. Instead the relationship between Agnes and Vlad results in the realisation of the implied threat of the Byronic hero, with the literal and metaphorical rape of Agnes which divides her from her community as Vlad attempts to force her into joining him.

The abduction of Agnes, a rape in the older sense of the word, marks a turning point in her relationship with Vlad and the novel's shift into illustrating the flawed nature of the power dynamics between the two characters. Vlad disabuses her of the belief that Nanny and Magrat escaped and begins to try and persuade her to become a vampire, largely through explaining the new philosophies of the Magpyrs (260-3). He then drags her, against her will, into the Lancre Gorge. In doing so, he makes her utterly reliant on him for her continued survival. Vlad's toying with her, threatening her with death when she does not agree to continue on his terms, removes any lingering suggestions of romance from the relationship, and Perdita's argument that they should go along with Vlad's whims illustrates the extent to which Nanny Ogg's earlier arguments were about survival (271). Perdita thinks: "*He doesn't seem entirely bad*" (271) as they plunge towards the ground, in what is clearly a piece of situational humour demonstrating Stockholm Syndrome in action. Vlad's quick recourse to violence in order to maintain control of the 'romance' narrative highlights the danger that stems from powerful people treating others as things. There is ultimately no difference between how he treats the "cattle" (262) and how he treats Agnes.

Vlad turning to bite Agnes, when things begin to go badly for the vampires in Escrow, progresses naturally from the established facts of the relationship in a manner bluntly critical of the tropes of Byronic romances. The repercussions of this rape fall on Agnes alone, as biting is expected of vampires, but victims are further victimised by society in parallel to the treatment of rape survivors. Agnes' protests that Vlad 'missed' and she was not really bitten, save her from immediate execution, but the villagers remain alert for any physical changes which might develop and are prepared to execute her. The distinct inadequacy of the comedy in the face of these events, and the harsh truths they point towards, emphasise the discomfort of the logical progression of this romance. Vlad has not acted outside the stereotypical characterisation in attacking Agnes, and by this the novel makes a pointed statement about the harm of the romanticised Byronic vampire figure. Agnes' rejection and condemnation of Vlad, telling him that she will not only allow the villagers to visit upon him the execution they threatened her with, but that she would also hold their coats while they did it, rejects the literary expectation that she will act in a selfless and ultimately self-destructive manner as a romantic heroine. Rather than deliver mercy, Agnes rejects the sacrificial narrative that would have her lay down for her country, and delivers a clear-sighted judgment, rejecting the emotional compromise of the gothic mode. She does not have any sympathy for Vlad, regardless of what might be expected, guiding the reader away from romantic fantasy and towards a more clear-sighted acknowledgment of his transgressions.

### **Final Thoughts**

Violence is, of course, the very thing that the Count claims to have reduced in his model community, his vision of the future. Escrow, a town named after a legal /financial arrangement, is completely subjugated under the vampires, and the people give up their blood initially without resistance. This arrangement is reminiscent of "The Lottery" (1948) by Shirley Jackson, with the inhabitants roused from their beds and gathered in the square with children running around, waiting to find out who is to be the victim of the vampires. Where in "The Lottery" the sacrifice of a scapegoat member of the community is a longstanding tradition, in *Carpe Jugulum* the practice remains 'fresh' and new. As Vlad tells Agnes things could be worse, that "it *used* to be so much worse", the Count approaches to explain

"Three children have just turned twelve." He smiled at Agnes. "We have a little . . . ceremony, before the main lottery. A rite of passage, as it were. I think they look forward to it, to tell you the truth." (326)

The Count is still developing this ‘model community’, and it is noteworthy that his developments are designed to make the practice as easy to traditionalise as possible. Agnes feels terror at this, “the wrong *kind* of terror, a numbing, cold, sick feeling that froze her where she stood” (326), and the horror of the situation is further drawn out with a man’s cut-off attempt to stop the proceedings and the mayor’s expression which Agnes cannot bear to look upon because “people were good at imagining hells, some they occupied while they were alive” (327). The muted threat of the vampires produces the type of fear that forbids action rather than promotes it. The absence of overt violence is not regarded as better, instead, it is a pained surrender linked to an inability to act or choose. The Count’s satisfied cheer and pride at the order he has imposed on Escrow is at odds with Agnes’ horror, and the discordance between these two reactions exemplifies the evil inherent in the Count’s ideal new world order. Despite the claims that the world is less monstrous under his rule, the novel clearly establishes that the Count’s business-like approach is deeply wrong, and even more monstrous than the stereotypical figure the Count sets himself in opposition to. The transactional relationship in Escrow merely reframes the Count’s basis of control, his threat of violence and domination, as a polite arrangement.

As Escrow revolts, freeing itself from the threat of violence and the Count’s narrative of passive acceptance of inevitability, and the vampires fall into bickering and confusion, the themes of the text are gathered together and the lines between order and chaos, good and evil, tradition and progress, and doubt and certainty are brought into focus alongside Agnes’ rape by, and refusal of, Vlad. The Count’s orderly plans are challenged, first from within his family as Lacrimosa resists the familial structure which must result in her eternal subservience:

“So we’ll be pushed around by you for *ever*? We’ll just be your children for *ever*? [...] So I’ll be sent to my room for being disobedient *for ever*?”

[...]

“I can’t be having with this *arguing*!” shouted the Count.

“That’s *it*, isn’t it? said Lacrimosa. “We *don’t* argue! We just do what you say for *ever*.”

“We agreed—”

“No, you agreed, and no one disagreed with *you*.” (328-9)

Absolute order, she realises, undermines self-determination, an idea also key to *Witches Abroad*. Its reiteration here points out that unyielding order not only garners resistance from



the most oppressed, but also from those who can be seen to benefit from it. Lacrimosa, however, advocates for greater evils, simultaneously drawing attention to the benefits of order as she underlines its disadvantages. To either side of this ambivalent declaration of Lacrimosa, Agnes wrestles with the meaning of good and evil on a fundamental level. She thinks:

She might be able to get in one good wallop, and that would be it. And perhaps she'd wake up as a vampire, and not know the difference between good and evil. But that wasn't the point. The point was here and now, because here and now she *did*. (328)

Her decision to take action against the vampires is not so much self-sacrificial as it is a necessary expression of her self and her ideals. Her self cannot continue without action. This recognition of good and evil in a moment of action is critical when Mightily Oats, later, swings his axe (389). Afterwards, he tells Agnes: “‘There was just nothing else to do! Everything just went . . . the air went gold, and there was just this one moment to do something—’” (393). Both Agnes and Mightily Oats are given moments of certain epiphany, when good and evil are shown with a clarity outside their usual doubts brought on by their double-mindedness, and these moments suggest that good and evil are inherent in acts (and axes).

As the figure who believes most firmly in the black and white of good and evil, Granny's defeat of the vampires is a comedic undoing of their evil natures through the firm understanding of not only her own ability to choose but also the certain knowledge of what she cannot choose. In line with her understanding of Walter's innocence stemming from her acknowledgement of her own morality in *Maskerade*, Granny's inability to choose wrong here becomes her greatest strength. In true comic form her 'Weatherwaxing' of the vampires afflicts them with a craving for tea and biscuits – a symbol of civility which undoes their capacity for violent breaches of civility (drinking blood) – even as they become argumentative and the Count's neat order falls into chaos. Chaos, doubt, individualism and arguing, far from being immoral, are all essential parts of this novel's vision of moral goodness. And action, even if it seems doomed to fail, is at the heart of what is right.

## Conclusion

Over the course of this thesis I have argued that stereotypes are used to generate nuance within the confrontations between the antagonists and protagonists of Pratchett's Witches sequence. *Carpe Jugulum*, discussed in the last chapter, emphasises the way that stereotypes are not fixed assumptions about a group, though they retain in their depths a history of what they once were. The stereotype, instead, acts like a nucleus in a metaphoric cell of information and the assumptions contained, like DNA, are not always active and certainly not always applied. While Pratchett unravels these nuclei of stereotypes, and at times seems to play mad scientist in splicing together pieces of stereotypes from a range of sources, his metafictional endeavour in the Witches sequence sees to it that these processes take place in the theatre rather than the basement. It cannot be argued that the novels are a formal deconstruction of stereotypes and a wholly serious investigation of their moral weight; like Igor with his Scraps (or Thcrapth) the novels engage largely in a constructive endeavour. As such, their moral arguments are often cushioned with sentimental humour and a regard for the sheer folly of humanity. Nevertheless, while tradition is celebrated in the service Mightily Oats leads at the end of *Carpe Jugulum*, Nanny Ogg's threat to the King of the Elves remains relevant. Stereotypes, however sentimental, should only be allowed to thrive so long as they are not to be believed.

In tracing the ethical threads in these texts, three important issues emerge: narrative control, the duty of choice alongside the problem of right and wrong, and the place of the individual moral actor within a community. Narrative control, or controlling the narrative, concerns not only how the narrator engages in metafictional commentary, but also how the characters themselves employ metafiction. In acting out, making reference to, and drawing power from narrative structures like stereotypes the antagonists of these novels threaten the reader's position as interpreter and, in doing so, highlight the ethical responsibility involved in interpretation of both texts and reality. In the light of this choice, from the perspective of this thesis, is as much about belief as it is action. Felmet and Salzella choose to believe the narratives they wrap around themselves to the point that they die from them, but all of these antagonists chose to see only themselves when they reflect upon the world. In contrast to this, the protagonists negotiate their stereotypes and their ethical standpoints in a way that respects both themselves and their communities, and it is in response to their communities and the antagonists that the youngest witches figure out which stereotypes should define them. It

would be an impossible task to truly untangle these concepts from one another, and in connecting them all to the phenomenon of the stereotype before making my endeavour to treat them separately I hope to have shown how they function together in constructing the moral foundations of the Witches sequence.

In order to grasp the development of Pratchett's ethical discussion I considered the novels in chronological sequence, and in doing so it became clear that *Equal Rites* does not share the same structure as the latter novels. The Bildungsroman form emphasises the patriarchal tendencies of both the fantasy genre and literary tradition in general as Esk finds few people take her seriously in her quest to be a wizard. Chapter One discusses the relationship between the narrator and the reader and how allusion and metatextual asides as well as the use of stereotypes place the reader in the role of spectator from which they can witness and judge their own cultural norms. Furthermore, allusion and stereotypes are used to add weight and significance to the actions of antagonists through equivalency, as the case of Mrs Skiller demonstrates. The construction of evil as a passive quality strongly links it to the sexism and the Creatures that Esk faces, but this contrasts with the evil depicted later in the sequence which tends to be strongly linked to the actions of the antagonists. The importance of intent is diffused in *Equal Rites*, representing the pervasive ease of sexism but undermining the impact of Esk's triumph as there is little to assure the reader that change has been achieved beyond lip-service.

The attention *Equal Rites* grants to thought processes, especially as regards Borrowing, establishes a theory of thought that continues throughout the sequence. This theory roots the ethical discussions within the novels in the complication of the human mind and the narrative tendencies it possesses. The key role that thinking plays in moral decision making is largely highlighted through its lack or inadequacy on the part of the antagonist figures, and Borrowing illustrates the danger of imposing one's thinking on others. The power of laughter to both relieve and oppress, as it is framed in *Equal Rites*, becomes a matter of power and agency. The simultaneous focus on the structure of stories and the ideal of justice, which form the backbone of the sequence, combine in the concept of narrative control. This concept develops over the course of the novels and is strongly linked to the location of choice at the heart of ethical life: freedom to choose comes with control over our own narratives.

In *Wyrd Sisters* the parodies of Shakespeare reframe the tragic hero figure as the antagonist, bluntly undoing the moral questioning in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*. Felmet, consumed by guilt, is incapable of atonement as he remains poised on the cusp of

ethical comprehension and closure. The balance of the comic and the Gothically tragic simultaneously minimises the act of murder and emphasises the responsibility that comes with rule, while the Shakespearean imagery of the crown and the kingdom is used to create a deep sense of necessity extending beyond human bounds. The competing moral certainties of the antagonists and the protagonists are not clearly resolved, by the end of the novel (though the duchess is very much punished by the kingdom). Felmet's death coincides with Nanny's assessment that he is the kingly sort, while the witches tread dangerously close to forcing Tomjon onto the throne after breaking the clear rules about meddling that Granny Weatherwax herself laid down. Destiny, treated flexibly in this novel, relies upon expectation and the reader's own understanding of the texts alluded to in the novel. What is more, this reliance is overt rather than covert, developing from the meta-aware narrator-reader relationship in *Equal Rites* into a meta-aware character-narrative relationship that questions the complicity of the characters who are destined.

*Witches Abroad* takes the concept of destiny outlined in *Wyrd Sisters* as the basis of its condemnation of unreflective stories. The fairy tales which Lily Weatherwax uses to control the world around her are constantly questioned, and their structures are condemned as coercive and dangerous. Lily's role as fairy godmother, a stereotypically good figure whose motives are not questioned, makes her an unusual antagonist. However, her speech and actions, especially that of using a magic mirror, conform quite closely to the stereotype of the evil queen. This results in a contradictory characterisation as she seems at once to be the saviour figure and the threat, emphasising the manipulative nature of appearance. While she poses as the good figure, her actions are just as coercive as the stories she facilitates. The clean and cheerful city of Genua is not a genuine representation of people who live there. The people are forced to be clean and cheerful, and those who do not fit into Lily's perfect world are cast out. Mrs Gogol's harnessing of the "invisible people" who are not represented in the fairy tales, is deliberately complicated through the use of the ambivalent Voodoo Queen stereotype. This neither entirely good nor entirely evil power foils the stark divisions Lily has laid out and retakes the city. The subsequent banishment of Mrs Gogol by Granny Weatherwax, however, recognises the danger that 'in-between' thinking can pose. None of the witches achieve a 'happily ever after'.

The concepts of social obligation and reward are further developed in *Lords and Ladies* with the introduction of the elves who represent the antithesis of these ideas. The shift from fairy tales to Fairie retains the alien life of narrative in the imagery of the parasite universes amongst the plethora of realities running in parallel. The tone, however, darkens as

the narrative control becomes poorly defined: the humans have limited control over their own narratives, the witches divide their narratives, and the elves are tied to superficially conflicting and troublingly shadowy intertexts. The stereotype of the elf is clearly divided into two sides: a ‘real’ dark folkloric fairy-elf, and the ‘unreal’ literary and good fairy-elf. This good versus bad assessment is an important feature of the stereotypes as the elves are consistently described as animalistic in mind and without morality. In order to grapple with ethical issues in this novel, Pratchett removes the possibility that these antagonists can be good in any meaningful way but this also means they cannot be evil. They can however be both harmful and deceptive. The glamour and style the elves possess as well as their positive stereotyping do, nevertheless, raise important questions about how we perceive the morality of others.

Simultaneously, the varied responses of the three witches to the catalyst of the elves emphasise the plurality of possible good or right responses. Nanny Ogg’s journey into folklore engages with the negative stereotype of the elves in a somewhat positive way, while her threats to the King of the Elves stress the importance of destroying traditions which threaten the modern world. Both her power and her responsibilities as a keeper of folklore are heavily stressed as her existence as an individual is clearly defined by her position within the community of Lancre. Magrat’s own struggle to make sense of her new role as Queen of Lancre highlights the dual problems that stereotyping and precedent can cause people – especially women – while her discovery of Ynci and then her own solid core of self empower her to win her battle with the Queen of the Elves. Magrat’s wry statement that Granny’s bullying gave her practice to withstand the Queen’s assault provides a pointed capping off of Granny’s dual role as antagonist and protagonist. The similarities drawn between the Queen of the Elves and Granny Weatherwax do not quite hold up to scrutiny as it is clear that Granny has consciously chosen to be an outcast and challenging figure in order to protect Lancre. Her bullying, whilst discreditable, is not divorced from her compassion.

Competing positive and negative perceptions are also central to *Maskerade*. The antagonist figure of the Opera Ghost encapsulates the jarring contradictions of a number of stereotypes, and the two characters who play the part of this figure are also built from oxymoronic stereotypes. Walter’s use of the Opera Ghost character as an escape and self-expression builds on the Idiot Savant stereotype and also serves as a nod to the actor Michael Crawford. Pratchett uses Walter as a red herring and demonstrates the flexibility of stereotyping as the community at the opera house come close to turning on Walter as they begin to worry that he might be a dangerous madman. Salzella frames Walter as the

murderer, but it is revealed that though he presents himself as the only sane person in the opera business, he is a madman more beholden to the tropes and superstitions of the opera than anyone else. Salzella's cynicism is undercut by the revelation of his madness, making scornful disaffection more ridiculous than naive sincerity.

The sharp divide between Salzella and Walter, as they are positioned at the extremes of the moral scale, creates the deceptive impression of a simple black and white morality. However, the simplicity of Walter's goodness complicates our approach to Agnes whose own alternate-self dabbles with dubious morality, while Nanny Ogg's good-natured practicality does not seem quite so good in contrast with the innocence of Walter. Nevertheless, the detective suspicion and corkscrew approaches of the witches are necessary to undo Salzella and reconcile Walter with his community. Simplicity and complexity are not the same as good and evil or right and wrong, a point which is repeatedly drawn into the foreground by the erroneous idea that a firm handshake can be used as a measure of moral character, and by Granny Weatherwax's question about what people would take out of a burning house. *Maskerade* never quite provides a satisfactory template for moral action, just as there is no 'right' answer to Granny's question. Walter's certainty when it comes to his answer, while admirable, has its problems and his choice of Christine over Agnes as the new star exemplifies how the ways we commit to acting out stereotypical roles affect how others perceive our value.

The final novel in the sequence inverts the outsider-insider poles of the prior novel as vampires invade Lancre. The antagonists of *Carpe Jugulum* are constantly defined and redefined according to stereotypical traits of both vampires and business moguls, resulting in continual tension between past, present, and future as well as between classes. The novel's preoccupation with defining through generalisation and metaphor creates a depth of uncertainty against which Granny Weatherwax's stark morality seems to be sharply focused. However, the novel simultaneously contains a warning against things which are made to seem good as the Count claims the rhetoric of progress as his own. The intertextual reference to "The Lottery" in his arrangement at Escrow emphasises the complicity and helplessness of the townsfolk in equal measure. Even as Pratchett's construction of good becomes clearer with Agnes and Mightily Oats both realising the need to take action, the evil he imagines becomes more insidious and difficult to counter.

In focusing on the antagonists, light has inevitably fallen on the protagonists of the series. Granny Weatherwax, with her strong and apparently straightforward attitude towards right and wrong, has often been viewed as the moral keystone of the sequence. Sayer and

Mendlesohn establish this firmly in *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, with Sayer in “The Witches” describing her as “The most moral of all the witches” (90) and Mendlesohn choosing to discuss Granny Weatherwax above the other witches in the chapter “Faith and Ethics”. However, the antagonist figures consistently provide a counterpoint to her actions, taking similar actions or reflecting her attitudes in such a way that her potential for evil is drawn to the fore. In *Equal Rites* this is most explicit, with Granny beginning the novel as a blocking figure whose role as a mentor is compromised by her sexism. As a human antagonist, Cutangle merely reiterates the sexism that Granny herself first presents and then foreshadows in her role as mentor. In *Wyrd Sisters* Felmet makes use of the stereotypes that Granny herself has curated as a witch against her, and Granny is pushed to break the rules against meddling in politics that she herself acknowledges within the text. Lily, as Granny’s sister, reflects her strongly, and Granny resorts to working with stories to defeat her. The Queen of the Elves in *Lords and Ladies* highlights Granny’s capacity for cruelty, while to solve the mystery in *Maskerade*, Granny thinks along the same lines as Salzella. By the time Granny makes her profound statements on the nature of sin in *Carpe Jugulum*, the reader of this sequence understands her as a character who exists on the very edge between right and wrong. Far from being a pillar of virtue, Granny’s significance as a protagonist is drawn from her similarity to the antagonists she faces.

Nanny Ogg, on the other hand, presents a very different vision of dissolute old age. Her relationship with the antagonists is often tangential at best, and yet her pragmatic responses to the challenges they represent further erode the ideal of good within the comic world. Where Granny Weatherwax often lends a heightened gravitas to the ethical quandaries within the novels, Nanny Ogg generally undercuts the tension with very human and often petty asides and jokes. This is to say that where Granny’s characterisation focuses on the ethical, Nanny’s focuses on the human. It is only in the common ground between them that the antagonists are defeated and the novels find their resolution.

The common ground between them is often Magrat or Agnes. As younger characters coming to terms with their place in the world, these characters have the most intimate relationships with the antagonists. While Granny Weatherwax often shows similar qualities to the antagonists, it is Magrat who falls in love with Felmet’s Fool in *Wyrd Sisters*, who becomes a fairy godmother in *Witches Abroad*, and a queen in *Lords and Ladies*. And it is Agnes who wonders about the romance of the Opera Ghost in *Maskerade*, and is courted by Vlad in *Carpe Jugulum*. This intimacy, which only becomes more marked as the sequence progresses, provides a counterpoint to the strongminded and in some ways stereotypical

Granny Weatherwax. Magrat and Agnes, who often have their roles in the novels thrust upon them, must negotiate the ethical and narrative world on a more human level. Their challenge, negotiating how they fit into their world in an ethical and fulfilling way without the benefit of certainty, has broader applicability and responds to modern anxieties about how moral certainty can be grasped without abandoning responsibility to a higher power.

It is noteworthy that the antagonists themselves often seek to position themselves as a higher power. From the Count with his New World Order back to the Archchancellor Cutangle and the patriarchy embedded at Unseen University, the antagonists have a strong desire to dictate the way things should be. Cutangle's sexism, unconvincingly defeated at the end of *Equal Rites*, is rooted in the social system from which he derives his power. The threat Esk poses to the way things have always been drives his casual cruelty and dismissive approach to her announcement that she wants to become a wizard. Tradition and stereotyping are enemies, but their deep entrenchment in both the Discworld and our world make suspect the very foundations of the novel's return to order. Perhaps as a consequence, the rest of the novels feature antagonists who challenge established tradition and (dis)order. Even Lily Weatherwax, who makes use of traditional fairy tales and reorders Genua according to the archetypes of these stories, has imposed herself on the previously cheerfully disordered city from the outside. This transgression, from outside in, frequently aligns with claims of superiority morally or otherwise.

Superiority complexes are practically a stereotypical antagonist trait, and the types of superiority the antagonists assert in the Witches sequence act as the lynchpin for their villainy. Lily's claims that she is good, and that people's refusal to conform to strictly defined types can be taken as proof that they are bad, are all simultaneously undercut by the way she acts and speaks like a stereotypical Disney villain. Her moral superiority requires a narrow and stringent definition of good, which makes 'goodness' nigh unattainable because to do otherwise would threaten the basis of her superiority. Similarly, the Count in *Carpe Jugulum* demonstrates his superior 'goodness' through the construction of buildings and the imposition of a highly artificial order on the townsfolk of Escrow. His rhetoric makes it quite clear that he cannot tolerate a world in which the townsfolk build their own towers. Exceptionalism, possession of qualities which stand out, has a double face, however, and the exceptional Granny Weatherwax often serves as a countering figure, while the younger witches act as figures who either cannot attain or cannot escape their own sort of exceptionalism. In *Maskerade*, though, Walter Plinge becomes the face of exceptional goodness, even as the mask he dons as the Opera Ghost is transformed into the visage of the



villain. However, Walter's unwavering goodness, as embodied in his answer to Granny's question, is a problem. His aversion to being bad allows him to be manipulated into becoming complicit in the murder and robbery Salzella orchestrates. The strict delineation between good and bad must be negotiated by the flexible mind of Nanny Ogg and the crafty Granny Weatherwax in order to save Walter from his own ethics.

While the flexibility of the protagonists allows the novel to comedically engage with the issue of how to do the right thing in a complicated world, the largely inflexibly evil antagonists illustrate the logical counterpoint to the complication of good. Where the witches often take actions which appear destructive or selfish and must be carefully balanced in order to achieve just resolutions, the antagonists simultaneously take actions which are meant to appear good. Treatle and Cutangle's patronizing treatment of Esk, Felmet's interest in the Fool's rephrasing strategy, all the way to the Count's public relations ambitions not only serve to build their cases for exceptionalism, they also draw attention to the ways in which shades of grey appear in the practical application of ethics. Granny Weatherwax's statement in *Carpe Jugulum*, that "There's no greys, only white that's got grubby" (302), provides a metaphorical illustration of the approach the witches take in enacting good. Significantly, this view of moral grey areas contains no room for movement towards grey for the side of the antagonists. Their attempts to appear good, or claims to superior goodness are not a black that has been partly cleaned. Instead, these attempts are a part of what makes them villainous.

The fact that these antagonists engage in virtue signalling and support the development of the protagonists in similar ways does not mean that they are entirely similar figures. It would be an over-generalisation to claim that the antagonists from the start to end of the sequence develop in evilness along a linear scale. While the characterisation and thematic interplay of the antagonists improves as complexity and nuance in the writing style develops across the novels, the multifaceted breadth of ethical discussion is tackled from a slightly different angle in each novel. Points of similarity and echoes can be found between the novels out of sequence. The elves of *Lords and Ladies* share their amorality and alien threat with the Creatures from the Dungeon Dimensions in *Equal Rites*, but, unlike the Creatures, the elves manage to break through into the Discworld and become an actualised threat. The metaphorical weight of the Creatures from the Dungeon Dimensions more clearly resonates with the Count in *Carpe Jugulum* who, as a vampire, takes inhumane custody of Lancre. The Count does not, however, share many qualities with Salzella in *Maskerade*, whose struggle with the disorder of the opera repurposes elements of Lily Weatherwax's use of stories and lack of self-knowledge in *Witches Abroad*, and Felmet's madness in *Wyrd*

*Sisters*. As an antagonist, Salzella lacks the overt power Lily or Felmet wield, and his insidious machinations serve to highlight the issues of trust and prejudice based on superficial stereotyping which allow injustice and exploitation to fester unchecked. In taking a variety of interrelated approaches to the figure of the antagonist, this sequence achieves a sense of increasing complexity and unity without atavism.

The strong sense of continuity between this sequence and the Tiffany Aching series for younger readers can, in part, be attributed to reiteration of the central concerns. The latter series continues the strong themes of moral development, individual and communal responsibility, and narrative engagement which define the *Witches* sequence. Tiffany also, it must be said, spends the series learning about witchcraft and what it means to be a witch as it is established in the adult sequence. However, the Tiffany Aching series is not nearly as reliant on stereotypes, and the antagonists support Tiffany's development in a much stronger way than those discussed in this sequence. The reduction of the stereotypical presentations of the antagonists reflects the intended reader's relative inexperience, while the development of Tiffany's personal ethics/ethos thrives in the singularity of the protagonist.<sup>60</sup> These novels, for all they deal with similar issues and characters, require separate attention.

For older or more experienced readers stereotypes, genre markers, and tropes have greater cultural weight. Pratchett uses these in the *Witches* sequence to develop the broad applicability of the themes and issues presented. The academic humour in *Equal Rites* specifically focuses the novel's satire on the university sector. The use of folklore, Elvish antagonists, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *Lords and Ladies* is integral to the development of tension between tradition and modernity. Meanwhile the clever use of vampire and corporate stereotypes in *Carpe Jugulum* allow for an unusual reversal of these same tensions as the Count's modernity strips people of their self-determination while setting itself explicitly in contrast to 'backwards' tradition. These novels do not necessarily rely on reproducing the accepted moral weight or associations of stereotypes. However, contradictory stereotypes are usually used to amend these unusual antagonists. Lily's mirror magic is strongly reminiscent of the wicked queen in *Snow White* and the Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*, while the Elven antagonists of *Lords and Ladies* are explicated through

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<sup>60</sup> Though the role that her second, third, and further thoughts play in this development deserves further attention.

references to contradictory texts and folklore associated with elves and fairies. The stereotype has its breadth partially defined within the text itself, resulting in a use of stereotype which has unusual depth.

Pratchett's rampant intertextuality is so very ingrained in his work that there is hardly a page to be found without some allusion, parody, or amusing metaphor pointing out towards other texts or the world at large; he invites readers to engage with the Discworld on a variety of levels. Triggering a wide range of knowledge sets beyond the genre of fantasy, his novels have a broad array of concerns to match their wide appeal. The Witches sequence in particular leverages intertextuality to comment on the narrative nature of humanity and the challenge of morality in a secular world.

The deeply intertextual nature of the novels supports the wide interrogation of stereotypes alongside its humour. These antagonists are not reliant on stereotypes because they are poorly characterised, but rather because they gain wider relevance through the breadth that generalization lends them. This is particularly notable in *Maskerade* where the most virtuous and the most depraved characters wear the same mask, and appear as the same stereotypical figure. The resolution relies on the careful division of the mad genius stereotype suggested by the opera ghost and the understanding that recognition should not rely on a mask. As Walter's innocence too easily tips towards the sinister and Granny Weatherwax's bad temper is treated differently by those around her depending on how rich she appears, the novel's ambiguity towards stereotypes refuses them simplicity. Likewise, in *Lords and Ladies* when Magrat struggles to discover what being a queen really entails, stereotypes become the focus of the novel rather than a useful shorthand. Throughout this sequence, even as stereotypes initiate familiarity and allow the comedy a certain galloping pace, they are also the subject of critique: their familiarity comes into question, and so does their comedy.

The stereotypicality of the antagonists avoids some of this ambiguity through the addition of typical villain traits and the acting out of villainous tropes. Matters cannot be taken at face value – Lily Weatherwax is not a nice fairy godmother – but the patterns of story can be depended upon. These novels are not surprising, and Pratchett avoids shocking twists or unexpected endings, but that is not a failure in the art of novel writing. Pratchett works within the constraints of expectation to deliver a compelling argument for careful ethical choice and against cruel and thoughtless evil and treating people like things.

This thesis has examined the antagonists in Pratchett's Witches sequence of Discworld novels. These constitute only six of the forty novels in the Discworld series, and so these insights cannot be considered representative of the entire series. The focus in the

Witches sequence on narrative and the structural elements of story makes analysis of the use of stereotypes particularly relevant. However, genre and stereotypes, as well as more specific intertexts, contribute to the humour in Pratchett's work on a broad scale, and so it is not unreasonable to claim that this thesis provides valuable leverage in the ongoing study of the Discworld novels.



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