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# A Social Study of Discworld Autonomy

A Senior Thesis

Morgan Rogers

Director: Dr. Susan Vanderborg

Second Reader: Dr. Michael McCall

## Forward

I first discovered the Discworld novels at 16. I was going through the science fiction/fantasy section of a bookstore when I stumbled upon a recent release of Pratchett's, *Unseen Academicals* (2009) in the 'New Books' section. I bought it on a whim and read it. Once I had finished reading it once, I read it again. After that, I went back to the bookstore and went to find more. I nearly cried when I first found Pratchett's series, spanning an entire shelf on its own and part of the one below it. I am pretty sure Pratchett is the reason that the bookstore had a separate section for authors with the last name "Pr" instead of lumping them in with the 'P's. Over the following months, I went back to the bookstore frequently to collect more and more of the books. I could not get enough.

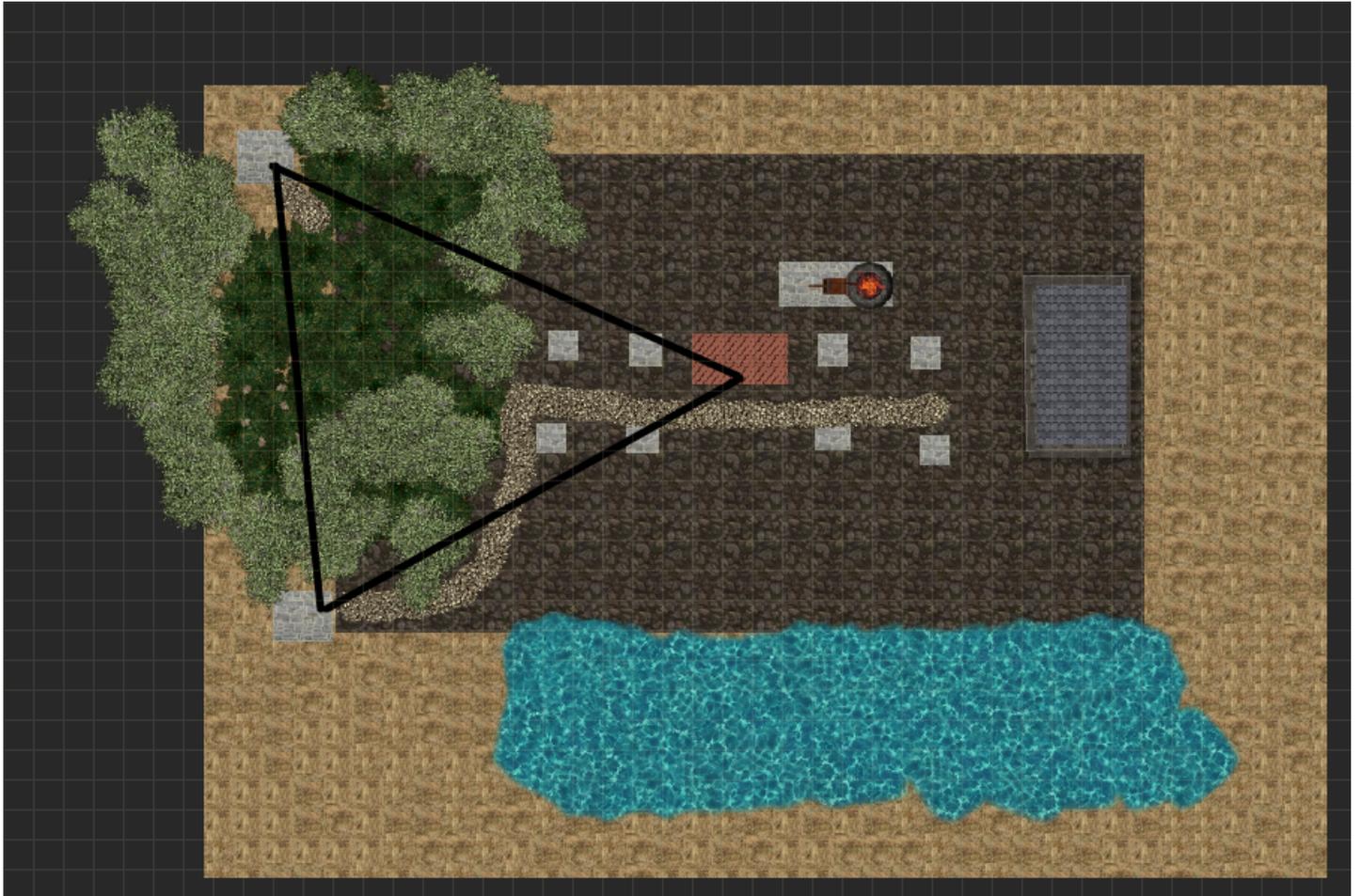
There is an ongoing debate amongst fans as to the best way to read the series, either publication order or some other manner that usually involves starting with books that star the same characters read chronologically from that one storyline. I did not know anything about the fandom or about Pratchett, I selected the books at random by reading the summaries on the back and picking up ones that sounded interesting. Within a few years, I had amassed a collection of nearly all of the Discworld novels. Half of my bookshelf is Pratchett, and when I came to college they were the first books I packed.

I cannot explain the impact that these books have had on my life. They were what I exclusively read for nearly four years, and when I'd run out of books to buy at the bookstore I read them again in varying orders and combinations. They have the bent spines, soft edges, and dog-eared pages of the best-loved books. When I thought I'd lost my first copy of *Unseen Academicals*, the one with the missing front cover and the bloated, crinkled pages from the time I

dropped it in the bath, I went and purchased a new one immediately. Once I found it, I started reading it from the beginning at once, even though I had been halfway through the new copy.

When I heard about Pratchett's death in 2015, I cried as hard as I'd cried when my grandfather died. I still have yet to buy the last book he wrote, *The Shepherd's Crown* (2015). I suppose I feel that if I purchase and read that book, it will really be over. An entire chapter of my life will come to an end. These books not only meant the world to me, they had saved me in some way. When I was a teenager, lost and confused and feeling alone in the world, I could turn to my books for comfort. If I did not fit in exactly, it was okay, because Pratchett's characters never quite fit in either. Many of them struggled with becoming themselves long into adulthood. His books made it okay for me to question myself, everyone around me, and the entire world. I would not be who I am today without Sir Terry Pratchett and his Discworld novels.

I felt it necessary to include this as way of explanation for my topic. When I was deciding what I wanted to do my thesis on, I realized that I wanted it to be personal. I wanted to write about something that I loved, something that was important to me, even if it seemed a little out of left field. I want to thank my thesis director, Dr. Susan Vanderborg, for agreeing to take me on even though we had never met and she had never read the Discworld novels. I want to thank my second reader, Dr. Michael McCall, for being understanding when I changed my plans and for always providing good advice. Above all else, I would like to thank the late Sir Terry Pratchett, who once wrote that as long as a man's name was remembered, he would live on (*Going Postal*).



Map showing a basic outline of Lancre, including the witch's houses.

## Introduction

From 1983 to 2015, Sir Terry Pratchett wrote a series of forty-one novels, several short stories, and companion works set on the Discworld. The Discworld is a flat world that rides through space on the backs of four giant elephants that stand themselves on the back of the Great A'tuin, a world turtle. The Disc is based around the Hub, or central point, and the Rim, or the circumference of the world. There is a waterfall all around the Rim of the world that falls into space itself. The Hub compares to the Earth's poles in that it is the central part of the Disc, made up of the Ramtop Mountain chain. The Ramtops are home to numerous small kingdoms that rest mainly on the flat plateaus between mountains, including the kingdom of Lancre.

Pratchett uses the Discworld as a parallel of Earth to create commentary on human culture and social ideologies. While the work itself is fictional, many of his points are meant to apply to our own world and the social climate Pratchett experienced during his life. Different series within the greater Discworld setting look at ideas or aspects of life in greater detail. In this paper, I will look at the witch novels and aim to explain how Pratchett uses the witches and different genre expectations to argue about agency and autonomy. Personal autonomy is defined as the ability of an individual to make decisions about their lives and their future without interference from an outside force. Pratchett argues that personal autonomy is the most important defining characteristic in a human being. Opposing this are stories, which feed on people and attempt to turn them into stock characters, taking away human agency and personal autonomy. This can be seen specifically with the witches through the subversion of genre expectations and the relationship that stories and genre have with the characters and witches within them.

Pratchett's witches are not Shakespeare's witches or witches from modern media. They are typically local women whose jobs range from treating back pain to delivering babies and

sitting up with the sick or dying. Within the Discworld, there is a superstition that there should always be three witches in a coven; the maiden, the mother, and the crone (often referred to simply as “the other one”). The roles of maiden, mother, and crone come out of the social life cycle of a typical woman. The maiden is the young, inexperienced girl; the mother is nurturing and calm adult woman; the crone is the old woman at the end of her life after childbearing years; old, possibly wise, maybe mean, a little crazy. The witches featured *Wyrd Sisters*, *Witches Abroad*, and *Lords and Ladies* fall into these dynamic while also expanding beyond the stereotypes associated with the groups.

Maiden is the term used to describe the junior witch in a trio or group, symbolic of the girlhood that every woman goes through in the first part of her life. The maiden in the witch trio is also understood to still be learning witchcraft, although she is a fully qualified witch in her own right with her own steading and responsibilities. The maiden in this selection of books is Magrat, a young romantic with a heart of sappy gold and hair that never cooperates. Magrat is frequently described as a “wet hen” with no backbone (*Witches Abroad*) and owns an absurd number of occult knives, jewelry, and other trinkets that supposedly make one a witch (for comparison, the witches use a copper rod, a washboard, and a washtub to summon a demon in *Wyrd Sisters*). As she spends time with Granny Weatherwax, she learns to be more practical in her approach to witchcraft, opting to take a bread knife over an occult knife to free Nanny Ogg from prison.

Magrat marries King Verence at the end of *Lords and Ladies* and temporarily ceases witchcraft in favor of ruling the kingdom. Although Magrat is most often described as sappy and the kind of person that takes in lost baby birds and cries when they die, she is not entirely weak. Throughout *Witches Abroad*, language used to describe Magrat implies that she is a rodent,

probably a mouse. She is timid and meek, she does not stand up for herself or lash out when Granny insults her, she gets pushed around by the other witches and by other characters, even though she is supposed to be the fairy godmother herself. But Magrat is not weak. “The thing about small furry things in a corner is...occasionally, [they’re] a mongoose” (*Witches Abroad*). By associating Magrat with a mongoose, not only does Pratchett invoke the images of mongoose who fight cobras and other venomous snakes, he subverts previous linguistic expectations he provided in the story. Rodents are animals associated with small and furry things in corners, not something like a mongoose. He sets up an expectation of Magrat being like a rodent of some kind and then subverts this by directly comparing her to a mongoose. Magrat acts as a foil to Granny and Nanny in that she looks in on the stories and does not always see the bad within. Nanny and Granny decide if they should tell her why the stories are bad and the ways in which the stories take agency from individuals. Readers encounter the same dilemma, as stories are generally presented in a positive or neutral light in the broader world. This enables Magrat to act as a vehicle for the readers. When the older witches explain something to Magrat, they are explaining it to the audience as well.

Nanny Ogg fulfills the role of mother, as a matriarch of the large tribe-like family sprawled throughout the Ramtops community. She is considered the best midwife not only of her community, but of all time (*Thief of Time*), and she is round and jolly and has a wrinkly face. But she is also overtly sexual, tyrannical to her daughters-in-law, and incredibly sharp. She encourages inter-family drama and has a hierarchy of pictures of her various family members strategically placed in her living room to indicate their current ranking (*Lords and Ladies*). In *Maskerade*, her nastiness is described like being bitten by a friendly dog and all the worse because one did not see it coming. Pratchett uses this funny old woman with a sharp mind to

highlight the dichotomy between expectations based on appearance and reality within a person. Nanny Ogg's mind is hidden behind Nanny Ogg's face, and as such she is underestimated as a person.

She uses this underestimation to work within and around the stories at play as an outside entity. She fits in everywhere, and as such she moves around the stories instead of inside them. This allows Nanny Ogg to change the stories. She embodies the idea that there is a force that can actively go against and disrupt not only the story but the entire notion of predetermination and fate as opposing human autonomy and agency. Since Pratchett portrays the witches as protagonists in a positive light, one can read that he is advocating against these ideas and is in fact promoting the dismantlement of ideas like fate that are so strongly promoted by stories. Nanny Ogg exists outside of the stories in the same way that water flows into any container that it fits in. She insinuates herself into any situation and make it her own. When she gets caught up in a story, she takes and makes it her own by making it work for her. The best example of this is in *Witches Abroad*, when she goes into the mechanisms of the clock to force it to strike twelve. The story called for the clock to strike midnight, and so Nanny forced the clock to literally hit twelve when it suited her best to do so.

Granny Weatherwax is the unofficial head witch in charge and arguably the most important witch in the series because of her deep understanding of human nature and of stories. In the trio of maiden, mother, and crone, Granny falls into the last category.

“Witches are not by nature gregarious, at least not with other witches, and they certainly don't have leaders. Granny Weatherwax was the most highly-regarded of the leaders they didn't have.” (*Wyrd Sisters* 4).”

Witches do not have a strict hierarchy like wizards do. It is up to each individual witch to pick a girl to train as her replacement, and there is usually only one witch per steading. When all other witches would avoid ever asking one another for help, they still respect Granny. The ubiquitous respect for Granny In addition to being highly-regarded, she is one of the most famous witches. She has a certain kind of reputation amongst the different sentient species. The late King Verence calls her the “doyenne of witches” (*Wyrd Sisters*, 131), the trolls of the Discworld call her “*Aaoograha hoa*” (“*She Who Must Be Avoided*”; mentioned in *Maskerade*), while the dwarves call her “*K'ez'rek d'b'duz*” (“*Go Around the Other Side of the Mountain*”; *Maskerade*), and the Nac Mac Feegle call her the Hag O’ Hags, also meaning head witch. She practices headology, which is like modern psychology, but with a few very key differences. Headology is an acute understanding of how humans think, feel, act, and, most importantly, how they believe.

“If a psychiatrist were confronted by a patient who believed he was being chased by a monster, the psychiatrist would try to convince the patient not to believe in the monster. A headologist would give the man a chair and a big stick.” (*Maskerade*).

Granny takes the power behind belief and uses it to make something real. She can make men believe they are frogs without physically changing them into frogs. She can make Magrat believe she is confident. Granny uses belief as a tool to make what people believe a reality. This is because she understands something that Pratchett stresses throughout the witch novels, which is that people cannot be forced into doing, thinking, or feeling anything. But what one can do is act on belief. If someone already believes something to be true, like if someone believed Granny had the power to turn them into a frog, it is not hard to convince them that their belief is true.

Granny Weatherwax is a person who knows her own mind to a fault. She has an iron will, a rigid moral compass and she will always do what she thinks is the right thing to do. This is not to say that she is nice, but that she has a deep understanding of herself and of other people. She goes up against stereotypes of the wicked witch, the foolish old woman, and the fairy godmother and each time she comes away as the same person, herself. This is what allows her to stand up to stereotypes and the power of the narrative. In her rigidity, Granny refuses to bend to narrative convention or cultural expectation. Granny's strength is in her absolute idea of self. It is this strength that allows her to bend and even break the bounds of stories and narratives. Like the other witches, Granny exists outside of the narratives and the stories. This is important because it allows her to change the stories themselves. She serves as Pratchett's voice as the keeper of the truth and his most vocal character insisting on preserving the autonomy of the individuals in the stories.

The witches work outside of the stories and narratives at play as advocates for the autonomy of individual people and other sentient forces present in the stories. In a way, the witches are the only ones capable of enacting change because they are outside of the narrative. Individual people trapped within a story are incapable of freeing themselves because they cannot see the bigger picture while they are living within the story. The witches are the ones who can and do act in ways that bring power back to individuals, bringing them back to a space in which they can take control of their own lives back. The witches suggest that there are times that individuals are incapable of expressing autonomy because they are unaware of the narrative taking place around them. It takes an outside force (the witches) to come in and make people aware of the stories and narratives that are part of life.

## *Wyrld Sisters*

Within the witch novels, Pratchett uses elements of influential Western literary genres to examine ideas of truth, deception and autonomy as necessary for freedom of choice and free will. He uses these genres to establish an understood narrative expectation that he then goes against. The first novel in the witch series is *Wyrld Sisters*. It was first published in 1988 and is the sixth book in the Discworld series. It stars Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg, and Magrat Garlick as three witches of the kingdom of Lancre, and draws heavily on elements and plot points present within William Shakespeare's tragedies, most notably *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. The following are a list of parallels between the Shakespearean works and *Wyrld Sisters*.

- There is a murder, most foul or otherwise, for power
- The murderer attempts to cover it up
- The murderer's wife is the one calling the shots
- Someone cannot get the blood off their hand
- A vengeful ghost insists on revenge
- Three witches play a role
- A play within the story reveals the truth
- The murderer dies because the truth came out

Shakespearean tragedy is the first genre that Pratchett echoes and subverts in this selection of witch novels. One of the main tenants of the genre is that it revolves around the

concept of tragic flaw. In Shakespearean tragedy, the downfall of the hero is almost always caused by hubris or vanity that the hero himself (and it is usually a himself) possesses. In *Wyrd Sisters*, the typical trope of “hero” is not really a hero at all. Tomjon, the son of the former King, grows up to be a successful thespian. He acts on stage, playing all kinds of different roles. When the witches want him to take the throne, he refuses on grounds that he is not actually a hero or a king, he is an actor on stage. When he performs as a king, it is just that- a performance. When faced with the proposition of becoming king, Tomjon and Hwel have this short exchange:

“T: I don’t want to be King

H: ‘Have you really thought about this? Being King is a great role.’

T: ‘But it’s the only one you get to play!’” (*Wyrd Sisters*, 252)

This moment is one that draws attention to another facet of plays which is the illusory idea of performance. For Tomjon and for the land and people of Lancre itself, the title and responsibility of King is a role. For Tomjon, it is a role to be played like any other role. King is a crown you put on for the show, but not who you are after the curtains fall. He is an actor, a performer, someone who could play the role of king and probably play it well, but he wants to play other roles. Through Tomjon, Pratchett presents the argument that individual autonomy means giving individuals the right to refuse some greater destiny that may exist. People cannot be autonomous if their future is planned for them because it takes away the element of choice in that future. Pratchett’s use of the word ‘role’ in the above description is an apt one, and can be taken outside of the context of the novel. Any kind of position or archetype like that of King can be viewed as a role in life. People play roles every single day, the role of the parent, for example, includes the roles of caregiver and disciplinarian in one. Humans are complex beings that cannot be boxed off into one role for the rest of their lives, whether they enjoy that role or not. It is up to

individuals to decide how they best fit into the greater world at large and to determine what will define them in the world. Without the freedom to make those decisions, a person is stuck in a role they do not want to be in and, like Tomjon, find themselves helpless to control their own future.

For Lancre, King is also a role that needs to be filled. The citizens of Lancre do not really care about what the king does or who the king is- they just need a king to exist, to stay in the castle, to “rule” the kingdom. The forest also perceives King as a role, although a much different role than the others do. The kingdom of Lancre itself is a character in this novel, with the forest acting as a focal point.

“It occurred to [Granny Weatherwax] that in addition to being a collection of other things, a forest was a thing in itself. Alive, only not alive in the way that, say, a shrew was alive. And *much slower*.” (*Wyrd Sisters*, 79).

Pratchett is basically saying that the forest is an amalgamation of every living thing within it, which in turn animates the forest. First, there is the matter of contextualizing a living forest. Shakespeare wrote about a living forest in the play *Macbeth*. In that story, moving trees end up being a tricky battle tactic, used by the soldiers to breach Macbeth’s castle. Pratchett takes this idea of the walking forest and makes a variant of it true in the book. By bringing the forest to life, Pratchett then extends his argument about autonomy to the forest. Felmet is using the forest for his own personal gain in the same way the villagers want to use Tomjon to fulfill the role of king. In both cases, choice and autonomy are taken away from the forest and Tomjon. Pratchett argues that since the forest is alive, it can influence action and make certain decisions about its own future. The words used in the description above are critical to understanding this argument. The forest is alive and it is slow, so slow that one single heartbeat would take the

forest an entire year. This is critical in that the forest cannot defend itself. It is too slow to have any immediate impact on the people currently living in the country. But a bad king can sicken the forest and hurt it before it has a chance to retaliate. While the forest is alive, and has autonomy, it is defenseless to assert its own autonomy without outside assistance. It is at the mercy of the king. Pratchett sets this up to allow for Granny Weatehrwax and the other witches to be the main defenders of the forest and its autonomy.

The citizens of Lancre do not care that Felmet murdered their former king, Verence. They generally believe that murder, for kings, is a risk that comes with the job (*Wyrd Sisters*). None of them would have cared, either, until Felmet starts to act in ways that directly affect the kingdom. As Granny Weatherwax says, "...this new man just wants power. He hates the kingdom." (*Wyrd Sisters* 95). Felmet just wants the power. Being King gives him a kind of power he otherwise would not have access to, and the land itself is an afterthought at first and an enemy as time goes on.

"God, [Felmet] 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 unrivaled view of trees. It struck him that the trees were also looking back at him. He could feel the resentment."

(*Wyrd Sisters*, 56).

In the passage above, Felmet can sense that the kingdom is staring back at him, resenting his presence as he resents the trees that surround him. There is an unspoken battle of wills going on between Felmet and the kingdom. Pratchett uses this rich visualization not only to create a

sense of the tension between the two opposing forces, he does it to further his argument about autonomy and choice. If Felmet cannot stand the trees, how is he to feel about the citizens? If Felmet does not care about the kingdom at all, how is he going to be able to rule effectively? He will not, and he knows that, and the land knows it as well. Felmet wants to take away the autonomy of the land and of the people that live there. Even the description of the landscape indicates harsh resistance. The words used to describe the kingdom are hard words, representative of a hard kingdom. The language suggests that Lancre with weather the storm that is Felmet, and that there is nothing the humans can do to it that it will not be able to outlast. In this battle between the land and Felmet, the land brings in backup in the form of Granny Weatherwax.

The land chooses Granny because it knows that she will listen and that she has the power to do something about the situation. As has been previously discussed, Granny is considered the most powerful witch in the Ramtops, if not the world. This is because Granny understands the importance of the truth and she is incredibly difficult to deceive at all. When the land of Lancre itself is in trouble, it comes to her.

“Occupying the patch where the herbs grew in the summer were the wolves...a contingent of bears was crouched behind them, with a platoon of deer beside them. Occupying the metaphorical stalls was a rabble of rabbits, weasels, vermine, badgers, foxes, and miscellaneous creatures....They rested together on the snow...trying to outstare [Granny].” (*Wyrdsisters* 80).

The kingdom compels the animals to go to her and to convey to her that the kingdom itself is unhappy with Felmet as a ruler. If Felmet continues to rule the kingdom, it will sicken and the land itself will suffer (*Wyrdsisters*). This is interesting when compared to the

Shakespearian tragedy genre itself because most of the time, tragedies revolve around the nobility instead of the peasants or the land itself. The kingdom is viewed as a good to be passed around and redistributed through the acts of death and succession. Pratchett's use of military language in the above description is critical to the understanding of the forest as a living entity. The words 'occupying', 'contingent', and 'platoon' evoke military images. The animals are the army for the forest, they will defend the kingdom if the humans cannot. This is what brings the witches into the fight.

Even with the army of animals, Lancre is aware of the ruler and that the kingdom itself needs someone to care for it. This care does not even have to be physical, the king does not need to personally tend the soil or plant trees. The king must care about the land as more than a token of power. The unease of the land is what causes the witches to get involved and be concerned, because the land itself has a deep power. The land senses the true desires and ambitions of Felmet and it knows that Felmet does not care how he gets power if he has power. The land, then, will use whatever it can to get rid of Felmet, and one of the tools the kingdom has is the truth. The truth here is only powerful because Felmet is in denial over the truth. It is not the murder as much as the lie that matters, and that Felmet is willing to create an entire performance to ensure that the lie is perceived as true.

Felmet orders his Fool to hire a theater troupe to perform a play about his rise to power, notably by insisting that Verence's death was natural, accidental or in any way not homicidal. Shakespeare himself uses the play-with-a-play in *Hamlet* to expose the truth of Hamlet's father's death (*Hamlet*). Pratchett uses this same structure, a play within a novel, to bring out the truth of Verence's death. Part of this is the land, and part of it is the power of stories. In the Discworld, stories and narratives have power in much the same way that the land has power. The truth of

Verence's death is a story that wants to tell itself- it is tied up in matters of revenge and deceit that complicate the succession. While the players are performing the show on tour as they head for Lancre, they notice that it never really feels right and that it does not get the reaction from the audience that it should. Something feels off. That feeling is the play itself struggling to show the truth of the murder that took place. Felmet tried to rewrite the truth, but the truth refuses to stay hidden and instead warps the story of the play to tell the right narrative. Pratchett is using this to show audiences that narratives have power, and truth has power.

In this book, Pratchett uses this power in conjunction with the witches to uncover and expose the capital-T Truth. This is distinct from any other lower-case truth in that it is used to describe what could be called the ultimate Truth. This kind of Truth is one that resists narrative manipulation. The witches are at odds with the narrative, which portrays them as evil and scheming over a cauldron. The power of the performance is such that even though the audience knows who the witches are, after the play they will only think of them as the players on the stage made them out to be. Pratchett here is arguing not only the power of performance, but that the Truth can be distorted and an entire reputation ruined in less than ten minutes. After she realizes this, Granny Weatherwax takes control of the performance and turns it into the Truth. This is something that she does throughout the other witch novels as well. Granny takes an expected narrative, like that of the witches being evil, and through power or belief changes it into the Truth. In the case of the witches in the play, Granny and the others end up on stage to literally disrupt the performance before the Truth is told.

“One of the witches was taking the fire to bits. Another one was trying to clean the cauldron. The third one was sitting with her arms folded, glaring at [Tomjon].” (*Wyrd Sisters*, 234)

The third one is, of course, Granny Weatherwax. In normalizing the performance and turning it into something other than expected, the witches break the spell of the performance. By interrupting the performance of the evil witches, the actual witches of Lancre reverse the narrative trap. The audience sees them for who they are. Pratchett's argument here is that Truth will fight to be seen and heard much as narrative itself is warping to fit some version of truth. In the climax of the story, halfway through the final production of the play Granny Weatherwax bids the Truth to come forth. After she does so, the Truth comes over the players as if they were possessed.

“Up from out of the depths of their blank minds new words rushed; words red with blood and revenge, words that had echoed among the castle's stones, words stored in silicon, words that would have themselves heard, words that gripped their mouths so tightly that an attempt not to say them would result in a broken jaw.” (*Wyrd Sisters*, 236.)

Pratchett's use of dark and violent language serves not only to indicate the irresistible nature of the Truth, but also to further humanize the castle as part of the land of Lancre. As in the earlier description of the landscape of Lancre itself, the words here are harsh and punishing. The words red with blood and revenge reference not only the murder of King Verence, but the mistreatment of the land. Felmet cut down trees from the forests, he took away from the kingdom without giving anything in return. The words are linked to the literal foundations of the castle, something as old as the kingdom itself. The castle is as much a part of Lancre as the mountains and the forests, and when it comes time for the Truth to be told, the literal foundations and stones of the castle force the truth of the act upon the actors. Trying to resist, as Pratchett writes, would be risking a broken jaw because the Truth has the combined power of Granny Weatherwax and the entirety of Lancre behind it.

Granny waited until the apex of the play, the performance to cement Felmet's lie, to make her move. It had the maximum impact it could have had, as the audience was already invested in the performance itself. This was made more powerful by the appearance of the Truth. Granny's ability to bid the Truth to come cements her position as Pratchett's voice in these novels. She calls upon the Truth because of her connection to Pratchett, and her connection to the land. The land itself has power and has a voice, and that it will use the power of a narrative to protect itself. The kingdom used Granny and the witches to set up the stage, so to speak, for the Truth to be broadcast on.

This is directly opposite the famous Shakespeare quote from *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players". On Pratchett's actual stage, the people are not players. They are vessels for the Truth. While the rest of the world may be full of players acting in certain roles in their lives, on this stage in a moment in which individuals should be acting in roles the Truth is heard. In the most unlikely setting, at the most unlikely time, the Truth comes out for the world to hear, by brute force if necessary.

In this final section, Pratchett uses Granny to manipulate Truth to restore autonomy and stability to the land. He is arguing that autonomy is the most defining factor not only of personhood, but of existence itself. Opposing the witches in this section is the power of words and the staged play narrative. Throughout the remaining books, the opposition becomes stronger and more clearly defined.

### ***Witches Abroad***

If *Wyrd Sisters* is a story about the conflict of words, Truth, and autonomy, *Witches Abroad* is a story about the conflict of stories and personal autonomy. *Witches Abroad* is the twelfth novel in the Discworld series, first published in 1991. It follows Magrat Garlick, Granny Weatherwax, and Nanny Ogg across the continent from Lancre to the kingdom of Genua with instructions on insuring that a young woman does not marry a prince. The main antagonist of this book, Lily Weatherwax, has been harnessing the power of stories to increase her own power. She manipulates people and situations to create a story that she then places herself in the center of to gain power. The main problem with this, Pratchett suggests, is that Lily is robbing the people she manipulates of their autonomy. Moving on from Shakespearian tradition, the next book in this selection pulls from the genre of the classic and modern Western fairy tale. Fairy tales in our world come from oral tradition, typically involve supernatural characters like elves, fairies, and witches, and are generally used to teach children lessons about the world. Fairy tales are constantly being adapted in film and TV media aimed at a wide audience.

Pratchett's use of genre and his ideas of stories evolve throughout the witch novels. In this book, his focus is mainly on the story itself. Fairy tales work very well for this intensive focus because the basic plots of most fairy tales are well-known and frequently retold and adapted in various media forms. It is as if the story is an outline with a series of events that need to occur; that an ordinary girl needs to show up to a ball and leave something behind at midnight for the prince to use to find her. Everything else, however, is somewhat extraneous. It does not matter if the girl is actual royalty or just from a wealthy family if she is mistreated by stepfamily.

It does not really matter what her name is or if she enjoys reading or poetry or archery; who she is as a person is irrelevant so long as she shows up to the ball at a certain time and dances with the prince. The story does not need specific people. Fairy tales do not need well-rounded individuals, stories need characters to do things. They do not really need the characters to *be* anything at all.

Stories exist as more than oral lessons or wives' tales on the Disc; they are part of a force termed narrativium. Narrativium is an element of the Discworld, the other five elements of the are Earth, Water, Fire, and Surprise (*Thief of Time*). Defined by the L-space Wikipedia as "the most common element on the Disc...it ensures that everything runs properly as a story", narrativium is an active force in the world that shapes and crafts situations and events to fit certain kinds of stories. The stories then derive their power from being repeated and replicated throughout the world not only by word of mouth but by actual events.

This notion that stories have evolved to manipulate and influence human action and perception is pervasive in the Disc, and Pratchett argues that it is prevalent to our own world as well. In literature and other media, especially Western media, there are hundreds of different tropes and archetypes used. Western audiences know what to expect when certain elements of a story are there. In *Witches Abroad* Pratchett notes that on the Disc "It is now *impossible* for the third and youngest son of any king, if he should embark on a quest which has so far claimed his older brothers, *not* to succeed." (1991, 3). This story narrative is so pervasive that it has become the normal progression of events. The story has made something impossible, so in a way it has manipulated truth and order on the Disc. In fairy tales, the good guys usually win in the end and the villain gets what they deserve, no matter how underpowered or outmatched the good guy is going into the fight. In *Mort*, a separate Discworld novel, Pratchett says "magicians have

calculated that million-to-one chances crop up nine times out of ten.” (*Mort*). Stories would be boring if the outcome was realistic. They would not be told over and over if the ending was average or unsatisfying. In a story, a million-to-one chance working is what makes the story memorable. It gives the story something different than everyday life. The more memorable the story, the more it is told. The more that stories are told, the more power they gain. If someone learns how to manipulate the stories, then they themselves can harness that power.

Stories, like the kingdom of Lancre in *Wyrd Sisters*, are alive. They are parasitic beings that latch onto people and situations to grow. The stories that end up getting repeated, the ones that survive, are described in very life-like terms.

“Stories are important. People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way round. Stories... have evolved... The strongest have survived, and they have grown fat... Stories etch grooves deep enough for people to follow... A thousand wolves have eaten grandmothers, a thousand princesses have been kissed... Stories don't care who takes part in them. All that matters is that the story gets told, that the story repeats.”

(*Witches Abroad*, 3)

Living creatures get fat when they have more than enough nourishment to sustain themselves, like these stories are getting fat off manipulating humans. The stories themselves influence humans, they create pathways described as etched grooves that people fall into and continue following along because they have no idea that they're in them. The stories are parasites, using human lives and experiences to feed and exist, to grow fat and to entrench themselves not only in human mind but in the Discworld itself. Stories manipulate people and create scenarios in which the outcome is predictable, regardless of the individual feelings involved. This is where the conflict occurs. When a story is in motion, manipulating the

characters to fit the story, what happens to human autonomy? Are individuals involved in stories robbed of their ability to choose their own paths? How can individuals resist these stories, and what happens when an individual decides to go against the story? Granny Weatherwax is a character that goes up against the stories. Much in the same way she disrupted the performance of the witches in *Wyrd Sisters*, she does not allow herself to be swept up in the story. Granny looks for the truth.

While the stories, as previously discussed, are parasitic and somewhat alive, it takes a human to recognize that power and try to use it to gain more power for themselves. Stories manipulate people and Lily manipulates stories. Lily Weatherwax takes these stories and works them around herself and others to create a system of power for herself. She manipulates people, animals, and whole kingdoms to fit a specific story, and she places herself at the center of it all in order to gain power. She then uses a series of mirrors to magnify and reflect her power off itself and back into her to make herself even more powerful. Lily in this story serves as a foil to Granny Weatherwax, her sister. Lily had spent her childhood and adolescents experimenting with spells and power, trying to increase her own ability no matter the cost to other. She left when Granny was young, after a final argument with their parents. Granny sees this action as one that cemented her own future. After Lily went off to be the bad one, Granny felt as if she had no choice but to be good. Esme Weatherwax is a good witch because she had to be a good witch. The result of this is that Granny is the one finding the truth and advocating against using people as fodder for stories.

Throughout this novel, Granny is the one arguing for the autonomy of the others present. She is the one that notices when things are wrong, and she thinks outside of stories and fairy tales. Most significantly, she continuously argues for individual choice and personal autonomy.

She does not think that she could fix the world by forcing everyone to behave as she thinks they should. One thing Granny most emphatically argues for is the idea that there are no happy or sad endings to stories, but simply endings.

“No. Things have to come to an end, see...That’s how it works when you turn the world into stories...You shouldn’t turn the world into stories. You shouldn’t treat people like they was *characters*, like they was *things*. But if you *do*, then you’ve got to know when the story ends. (*Witches Abroad*, 330.)

Pratchett is making the argument through Granny that treating people like characters in a story or things to be played with is wrong. The irony here is that Pratchett uses a character in a story to argue against people being treated like characters in a story, but it makes the characters in his story seem all the more real. He argues through this that stories have power, but stories do not care what happens after the ending, or even if that ending is considered good, bad, happy, sad, or unremarkable. Once the story is over, once there is an ending, the story does not care about the follow-up. Granny knows this. She recognizes that while stories do occur and have power, that they also are not unlimited resources of power. This is the strongest argument for autonomy in this book, that since people are individuals with thoughts, feeling, and ideas of their own, that they cannot be forced into a story like a two-dimensional object. Throughout the book, Granny is first uncomfortable and then downright angry with the various story remnants that she and the other witches find. As they travel the continent, they run into forgotten and fragmented stories. Granny is the one who ends them. Firstly, Magrat, Nanny, and Granny stumble upon a castle which has been placed under a sleeping curse. Upon waking the princess up, Magrat comments on how it seems like a job fit for a prince. Granny immediately tells her off for thinking of the real world in terms of stories and happy endings, because “happy endings is fine

if they *turn out* happy...but you can't make 'em for other people" (*Witches Abroad*, 139). Other people cannot be controlled. Pratchett here is using Granny to argue that people are individual and autonomous, and that they cannot be truly happy without that autonomy. There must be choice involved, because forcing someone to be happy will pretty much ensure that they never actually are. Granny and Pratchett share this perspective throughout the novel, the idea that there is no making good endings or bad endings; the only thing someone can do is make an ending. In this way, Granny goes against traditional narrative styles and concepts. Acting as a foil to fairy godmothers, Granny rejects the idea that happy endings can be manufactured at all.

The main fairy tale in this novel is the classic Cinderella story. It is one of the most recognizable stories not only in Western canon, but in the entire world. In China, the story of Ye Xian was first published somewhere in the 9th century, making it one of the oldest Cinderella-type stories in the world (Waley 2012). It is this ubiquitousness that makes it the perfect story for Pratchett to use when studying the power of stories. Cinderella-type stories existed all over the world, proving Pratchett's point about stories as parasites. The story in *Witches Abroad* involves an entire kingdom. Lily Weatherwax manipulated an entire generation of individuals to fit her story. She killed the ruler of the kingdom, created an orphan servant girl, and set up her own puppet ruler so the story could play out over the years. She went beyond the ruling class, controlling everyone in the kingdom. When Granny arrives, she immediately senses the multiple levels of the story at play. The stories are robbing people of their autonomy and their ability to be human. People were imprisoned or punished for failing to fit into stereotypical archetypes. A toymaker was imprisoned for failing to whistle and tell stories to children (*Witches Abroad*). The town itself is a clean and sparkling dystopia, but no one there is actually able to make their own decisions.

As previously discussed, the witches live within and around the stories. Granny is then able to take control of the story by going into her own mind and finding the thread of the story she became part of.

“[Granny] was good at getting into other people’s minds, but now she had to get into hers...there...the silver thread of the story. She’d been part of it, was part of it, so it had to be part of her...she hated everything that predestined people, that fooled them, that made them slightly less than human...the story whipped along like a steel hawser. She gripped it.” (*Witches Abroad*, 291)

The language Pratchett uses to describe the loose story is indicative of how powerful and out of control the story is. A steel hawser is heavy, sturdy, and nearly impossible to break. Granny is still able to reach out and grab hold of this story, rushing past fast and hard and firm. Her nerves could also be described as steel in this moment. This is a direct contribution to Pratchett’s argument that autonomy is the defining characteristic of a human. When stories take this away, the people become “slightly less than human” in a way that seems to be personally offensive to Granny Weatherwax. She is taking back control over her own autonomy and giving the rest of the citizens back control over their own lives as well. This sends a direct message to the reader; that there is a way to reclaim autonomy after it has been taken away. One is not entirely bound up by a story or a narrative, whether that narrative be something like a fairy tale or something like a social expectation or role.

In one other example, the witches discover a Big Bad Wolf archetype. Lily Weatherwax bewitched a wolf into thinking that he was human. The wolf went crazy trying to think like a human and act like a wolf. Lily took away the wolf’s autonomy, and as a result he was stuck

between two different worlds. He was desperate and starving to death, the result being that when Granny shows up he asks her for an ending. This ending is the wolf's death. The wolf's mind is

“a hungry carnivore's mind...hot purple and sharp as an arrow...this was cracked and crippled attempt at cogitation peeling away from the sleek arrowhead of predatory intent. This was a predatory mind trying to *think*.” (*Witches Abroad*, 151).

The wolf is made to be something it is not, and the result is that the wolf is going mad. When people (and animals, in this case) are treated as things or toys to be played with, they lose themselves in the process. Pratchett argues against this treatment of individuals as things. When Lily takes over the wolf, he goes mad. When Granny probes the wolf's mind, she realizes that there is no cure. The only release for the wolf is going to be death. But the wolf's death is not the death of stories. The wolf willingly gives himself up to be killed by the woodsman, and in return Granny sees to it that he is properly buried.

The ending for the wolf matches the ending of the story. The wolf is killed by a woodsman. But the way in which the events unfolded matter to Granny. The wolf may have been caught up in Lily's story, but the story itself did not care what happened to the wolf so long as the conditions for the story were met. The wolf attacks the old grandmother and is killed by the woodsman. In this case, the wolf was given a dignified ending. Granny Weatherwax took the time and the care to explore the wolf's mind and uncover the truth behind his actions. The scene is sad because the wolf is skinny and starving; he cannot live as a wolf or as a human. He is between two worlds, “other” like Granny Weatherwax and the witches are other. The difference is that the wolf did not choose to live this way. This “otherness” was forced on him for the specific purposes of crafting Lily's story. Therefore, when Granny grants the wolf his death,

ending that story, she gives the wolf back the autonomy that Lily took from him. Granny Weatherwax respects the wolf's choice, and by doing so she helps to give him an ending.

Pratchett uses this unexpected humanization of the wolf to highlight his ideas on autonomy through Granny Weatherwax. Granny is the one who takes the time to go inside the wolf's mind and understand him and his suffering. Although he is a wolf, he is given more consideration and empathy from Granny than many of the actual humans in the novel. For example, Granny is much more positively inclined towards the wolf than to the woodsman she later encounters. Pratchett uses her to scold the woodsman for not helping the old woman on her own and for ignoring the wolf although his suffering was obvious. In the traditional fairy tales, the woodsman would be the hero and the wolf the villain. Pratchett flips that story around, causing audiences to take a step back and think about the purpose of the story narrative and why we expect certain aspects in those narratives.

Pratchett uses fairy tales and stories to establish a commonly used structure within the Western tradition that relies on similar tropes and situations repeating themselves in new areas with new characters. He uses these stories to argue that by becoming enveloped within a narrative, humans lose their autonomy and become characters in a story instead of humans with agency. In *Wyrd Sisters*, he argues that the forest and Lancre is alive and has autonomy and agency of its own, but in *Witches Abroad*, the parasitic stories are not granted agency or autonomy because they are parasitic and mindless beings who exist only to be fed by repetition. The difference lies within the nature of the alive-yet-not-alive entity. The forest has a symbiotic relationship with the residence of Lancre, while the stories are parasites, feeding without giving anything in return. Not only does Pratchett imply that there are different hierarchies for what constitutes as 'living', he also sets up the idea that the worst kind of opposition to autonomy and

humanity in general exist in parasitic entities whose sole purpose is to feed off human autonomy and ingenuity.

### ***Lords and Ladies***

So far, I have argued that Granny Weatherwax and the other witches act within and outside of stories to restore autonomy and freedom to the individuals that narratives and stories attempt to manipulate and control. They continue to fulfill this role in the next book in Pratchett's witch collection, *Lords and Ladies*, the last book I will look at for this paper. It was first published in 1992 and is the 14<sup>th</sup> book in the broader Discworld series. Picking up where *Witches Abroad* left off, the witches return to Lancre from their travels in Genua whereupon Magrat gets engaged to be married to King Verence II on Midsummer's Day. *Lords and Ladies* builds off of the first two novels in this selection, combining elements of Shakespearean comedy and elements of fairy tales, ceremony, and folklore to further cement the commentary, ideas, and thoughts first created and touched on in the first two books that argue for the autonomy and agency of humans and other sentient existences.

For this third novel, Pratchett returns to Shakespearean work, specifically *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A major plot point Shakespeare's *Midsummer* is that the fairies use their magic to manipulate the emotions of the humans in the play, causing each character to fall in love with the wrong person. In a parallel to this, fairies in Pratchett's work use glamor to manipulate human's perceptions and thoughts, effectively taking away autonomy and agency. Pratchett describes his elves as a kind of parasite, moving from one world to the next and destroying it as they go. Having already described stories in *Witches Abroad* as parasites, Pratchett connects the two together as opposition for autonomy. The major difference between them is that the stories

themselves are mindless, using humans as characters in order to grow more and more powerful. But the story itself does not have intelligence like the elves do. The elves are fully sentient autonomous beings, using humans for their own pleasure. The elves in this novel are a primary opposition force that Granny and the witches go up against, not only because they're trying to take over Lancre, but because they are the ones actively robbing individuals of their autonomy.

Shakespearean plays are defined by their endings. To be very brief, a tragedy ends in death caused by a tragic flaw, and a comedy ends with a wedding. *Wyrd Sisters* ended in the death of Felmet, who while arguably not a protagonist, was a major character and did in fact die due to his own paranoia and the mistaken belief he could fly. It also arguably ended in the death of the first King Verence's line, as it is implied that Verence II is not his biological son. *Lords and Ladies*, on the other hand, ends in Magrat and Verence's wedding. So while it is not a comedy in the sense of modern comedy, it does have more in common with the traditional Shakespearean comedy than meets the eye, especially when it comes to the ending.

These darker elements stand in direct contrast to the comedy elements of *Midsummer*, a play about romance and mistaken identity. The point of referencing and using a comedic play is that Pratchett completely subverts the expectation of the genre by its tone. In a similar way to how *Wyrd Sisters* is less somber and serious than *Macbeth*, *Lords and Ladies* is much more somber and serious than *Midsummer*. *Lords and Ladies* is very nearly a war story and it is more violent and serious than a typical Shakespearean comedy play. Pratchett takes these elements that we as an audience expect to see in some light or comedic way and he turns them darker and more sinister. This serves to create a sense of unease in an audience that expects one thing and gets another. It is very similar to the glamour used by the elves and the other dualities created within the story. The elves appear to be tall and beautiful and glamorous, but that itself is only a

projection. Pratchett's obvious point is that things are not always as they appear to be, but there is another argument he is making. Humans themselves have a tendency to fall for the deceptions within the stories themselves. They believe the glamorous stories about the fairies and doubt their hostility. But when the fairies come to take away children and freedom and choice, they run into what Pratchett refers to as "iron in the head". This iron keeps the fairies away because it is the core tenant of humanity: autonomy. Humans with their free will resist the fairies who want to take it away. That is the defining characteristic of humanity- autonomy.

Within this novel, Pratchett uses the idea of the elves as a point of genre subversion and as a point about the power behind preconceived ideation as it relates to common story elements. Pratchett draws from Shakespeare for this book because Shakespeare is widely regarded as one of the best English writers of all time. Shakespeare is a master at using the English language in his works, and especially in *Lords and Ladies* Pratchett is emphasizing the importance of language and double meaning of words.

"Elves are wonderful. They provoke wonders.

Elves are marvelous. They cause marvels.

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*." -(*Lords and Ladies*, 163).

Firstly, the description itself is structured differently than the rest of the text around it, appearing visually like poetry. As Shakespeare was a noted poet, this could be another tribute by Pratchett, although the words lack the rhythmic structure and rhyme scheme of iambic pentameter, his most well-known poetry form. The major descriptive words used are first presented as adjectives and then used as nouns in the second sentences. The two-sentence structure places the adjective first and then the noun, thereby associating the noun with the adjective. The separation of the sentences serves to separate the two sentences in tone, although they appear on the same line. Each section break draws the eyes down towards the next set of sentences, and the sentences become more sinister as the reader approaches the conclusion.

Then there are the words themselves. Each adjective/noun is clearly selected specifically for its double meaning, but Pratchett's verbs are critical in cementing which meaning is being used and where. The verb in the first sentences is the same throughout, "are". The "are"s are ambiguous, leaving the reader to determine the exact definition of the adjective they are describing, and almost certainly ensuring that the most common definition would come to mind for most readers. The 'are's provide symmetry within the section and establish a pattern where the first sentence is a description of something that the elves are, and the second sentence provides the action behind the description of the first sentence. These "are"s allows Pratchett to slowly begin shifting the meanings of the nouns he uses, which then influence the adjective paired with the noun and changes the description of the elves.

The verbs in the second sentences cement the meaning of the adjective in the first. 'Provoke' is a harsh word with two rough consonant sounds, the v and the k. Generally, 'provoke' has a negative connotation, so when it is paired with wonderful/wonder, it makes one a little wary of the section. The verb 'cause' is more neutral in meaning, but implies a direct

action- someone needs to cause something to happen, things do not generally cause themselves to happen. This leads the reader to question of what kinds of marvels need be 'caused' by anything. 'Create' is another more neutral word, but similarly to 'cause', something must be manufactured to be created in the first place. 'Project' can be taken metaphorically here, but Pratchett means it literally in that the elves project glammers of themselves to the humans, as is established later in the book. When Pratchett gets to the word 'weave', a distinct pattern has emerged where each of these middle verbs, 'cause', 'create', 'project', and 'weave' could be replaced with the word 'manipulate' or 'manufacture'. Each of these verbs require direct and conscious effort on behalf of the elves. This argues that not only is it in the elves' nature to do these things, but that it is their own choice to do so. They knowingly and willingly deceive, just as the words used to describe them knowingly deceive.

Pratchett becomes extremely clear in the last of those lines, when he directly states that the elves beget or bring about terror. Pratchett uses these two sentence pairs to build a case for his last claim, that words themselves cannot be trusted because they can change their definitions without notice. He has already proven his own argument. This is important because not only does it establish elves as primary manipulators, it serves as a caution to never take a word at its face value. This can be expanded out from simply *Lords and Ladies* and back into his use of the capital-T Truth from *Wyrd Sisters*. Truth is what hides behind and within the words and their multiple meanings, and it is Truth should be watched for like the snake in the grass.

At the end of this section, Pratchett comes out and says that the elves are bad. What is interesting is that he uses the word 'nice' to describe what the elves are not. The words used to describe elves, 'wonderful', 'marvelous', 'glamorous', 'enchanted', and 'terrific' are all grand words. 'Nice' is not a grand word, it is a simple one. Nice has two meanings as well, the first

being related to a person or thing that is pleasant, while the second is something exact and specific (this definition specifically is used in another book co-authored by Pratchett and his friend Neil Gaimen, *Good Omens*). Nice cannot be twisted in the same way that the other words can be, and because of that the elves (and the Truth) cannot hide behind the simple word ‘nice’ in the same way they hide behind other words. In a world in which young writers are encouraged to use bigger, bolder words in place of boring or simple ones, Pratchett reminds readers that sometimes simplicity is best. This is significant because Pratchett is arguing that autonomy is not always forcibly taken or stolen, but that humans will be tricked into giving up their autonomy. Humans are fooled by the magic behind fancy words they create, and the false promises they have made before. Even then, he argues, as much as the falsehood is lying in wait in the words, the truth is also there. If we are to have full autonomy and personal agency, we must be constantly on guard to defend from not only from outside forces but from the very things that we create; and some, like stories and elves, are both.

The two major players in this story are Granny Weatherwax and Magrat Garlick. They represent the greatest dichotomy in witchcraft, as previously discussed; Granny is the crone, Magrat is the maiden. In the novel, Granny prepares for her death and Magrat prepares for her wedding. Magrat’s impending marriage will mark her death as a maiden and move her into a different category of pre-motherhood. They both go up against the Elven Queen as champions of Lancre, similarly to how Granny acted as the calvary for Lancre in *Wyrd Sisters*. As previously discussed, the elves are the primary opposition to human autonomy in this book. In their battle against the Queen, Granny and Magrat act as the primary champions for autonomy.

Pratchett uses Granny and Magrat as foils for one another in this book in order to examine the two ends of life. Magrat’s adult life is about to begin, as she marries and transitions

into a fully realized woman. Granny believes her life is about to end, as most people assume when they see an older individual. The stereotype here is that Magrat is going to be the more powerful one in the end, and that Magrat will take over and gain power as Granny Weatherwax's power wanes.

This is interesting because it brings about the idea that only one of them can be powerful at a time. They are not both allowed to grow and remain powerful independent of one another. If Magrat is to become powerful, it must be at the expense of Granny's own strength. In the book, the Queen of the Elves has captured Granny and Magrat comes to rescue her. This scenario illustrates the point that Granny's weakness is tied to Magrat's power. The old get weak and die while the young come riding out to conquer. Yet this is not what happens in the book. Magrat does come out to save Granny, but Granny ends up controlling a swarm of bees to give Magrat the chance to defeat the Queen. Both Granny and Magrat retain their own power in the struggle, and therefore they maintain their own autonomy. Granny does not give up herself so that Magrat can grow strong. Granny maintains her strength and power even as she ages. Most importantly of all, Granny maintains her autonomy as she ages.

## Conclusion

Terry Pratchett wrote these books in the late 80s and early 90s in England, and that at the time the world was sufficiently connected enough that the global climate had influence over his writings as well. The end of the 80s signified an ending of eras, including Margaret Thatcher's time as Prime Minister and the beginning of the end of the Cold War. In America and the rest of the world, the HIV/AIDS crisis was reaching its height, with an estimated 400,000 cases worldwide (WHO). No author writes novels in a vacuum, and as such the outside world had an influence on Pratchett's writing that can be seen within the books. The biggest thing is the other-the idea that the world can be divided into two categories; 'us' and 'them'. In Pratchett's stories, Lily Weatherwax and the elves see humans as other, as less than, as objects to be used to fulfill a need. They are not part of the group that matters. In *Witches Abroad*, the wolf is treated as other. The villagers know there is something wrong with him, but they will not do anything about it because they are afraid of something different. He is other not only to humans, but to his fellow animals. That place of otherness is nothing but pain and suffering for the wolf, until death is his only escape.

In this setting of fear and uncertainty, ideas of individualism and autonomy are questioned and challenged. How much control should a government have? What is the better economic model, capitalism or communism? What does it mean to be a person in a world in which some people have more than they could ever possibly use but others do not have enough to eat every day? These are the kinds of questions asked not only in the 80s but in the modern era as well. There is not really a complete answer to any of them, but in his books Pratchett answers one question. He argues that autonomy is the defining factor of an independent human being. Without the ability to make our own choices and decisions, humans do not have freedom.

There is an ongoing refugee crisis occurring in Europe as citizens of Syria flee from their homes for their lives. They are living in border refugee camps while nations debate if they should allow the refugees to settle into their country and if so, how many they should allow. The future of human beings is left to various political debates and decisions outside of their own control. These individuals are in a state of in-between. They are not in control of their situation, but they had enough control to leave Syria. Refugees are also forced into certain narratives to push certain political ideologies. Certain groups claim that terrorists will infiltrate refugee groups to be sent to a country they are intent on destroying. Other groups claim that the refugees will take jobs from citizens of that country or damage the social order of that society. I do not think that Pratchett would agree. Based on his writings, I believe that Pratchett would argue that refugees are individual human beings who deserve to be treated with the dignity, respect, and kindness of any other human. I think he would argue that they need to be given authority over their own lives, and that we should be compassionate to those who have sacrificed and lost so much in the past few years. Pratchett would be the Granny Weatherwax of the scenario, championing people's right to choose the ways in which they get to live their lives. Although Pratchett wrote these books decades ago, they are as relevant to our modern world as they were the day they were published.

Even in the developed world, how much autonomy do we really have? In Japan, there are entrance exams required for preschools and kindergartens that can determine a child's entire future. They have to get into a good primary school to get into a good secondary school and so on and so forth until they have to get into a good university because top businesses will only recruit from graduates of certain colleges. Mothers must look fifteen to twenty years into the

future to determine what schools will benefit their children the most, and the children themselves often do not have a say.

In the United States, children operate under their parents' authority until they reach the age of eighteen in the US. After that, there is a high social pressure to attend a four-year university and earn a degree. Doing well in school is generally encouraged and rewarded, but excelling in some academic fields is seen as less prestigious than success in other fields. For example, American culture values STEM fields over humanities, and a degree in chemical engineering is seen as more prestigious than a degree in media arts. There is a lot of pressure on students to choose a major or a career that will be financially stable or lucrative over a 'dream' career. Pressure from parents, counselors, peers, and media can make what should be an independent decision a group affair. I have personally had experience with this.

I entered college undeclared, with an interest in Anthropology. I first became interested in anthropology through primatology in the third grade, when I did a project on chimpanzees and Jane Goodall. I idolized her throughout elementary and middle school. When I first came for college orientation, we saw an assigned Honors advisor. As I was undeclared, I did not see an advisor specifically for a field of study. As an incoming freshman, it did not matter much anyway. Deciding what classes to take as a freshman is another illusion of choice. By the time orientation begins, the spots in classes are fairly limited to a pretty standard array of first-year general education fillers. My advisor asked if I knew what I wanted to study. When I said I was interested in anthropology, she laughed and told me that I was not. She proceeded to select classes for me that were most decidedly not anthropology courses, but that fit general education requirements and worked well as a schedule. The next semester, I had a different advisor who listened to me when I said I was interested in anthropology and who helped place me in the

beginning anthropology courses that would solidify my decision to declare a major. If I had continued to see the first advisor, I do not know if I would have studied anthropology in college. They did not afford me autonomy. At eighteen and with little outside support or experience as an adult, someone much older than me and in a position of authority over me still had the power to take away my ability to decide for myself.

This is what Pratchett illustrates in his stories. When someone or something has the power to take away an individual's ability to make decisions for themselves, then that individual no longer has autonomy. It did not matter that I told my first advisor I was interested in anthropology, because they did not listen to me. They may have thought they were doing me a favor in the long run by discouraging a field they personally valued as less worthy than another. Pratchett's stories are the same way. He argues that autonomy is not something that should be given as a reward or held hostage as a means of control. Autonomy is a basic right all humans have, and that right deserves to be protected.

While Pratchett uses stories and elves and deception as a means of taking away autonomy, it translates over into our own world. People have the power to determine what human rights are and who should be allowed access to those rights. There will always be individuals in positions of authority that abuse their power and try to take away the rights of others. Pratchett argues that there will also be individuals willing to stand up and fight for those rights.

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