Pratchett and Patriarchy:

A 'Masculinity Studies' Reading of Terry Pratchett's City Watch Series

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Abstract

Despite gender being a key focus of academic discussion on *Discworld*, there is minimal scholarly engagement with Pratchett's masculine spheres. The aim of this thesis is to address the gap in scholarship that discusses Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* and apply a 'masculinity studies' lens to *Discworld.* However, this is not an aim easily accomplished.

Masculinity presents a theoretical space that is complicated and difficult to navigate. Although 'masculinity studies' is no longer a new theoretical lens (having been established for more than 30 years at the time of writing), scholarship that seeks to engage with the complexities of masculinity is frequently ineffective. 'Masculinity studies' thrives on decrying patriarchy and critiquing toxic masculinity, but the discipline still struggles to explore more positive readings of masculinity without slipping into conservative rhetoric that calls for a return to more 'traditional' modes of masculinity. I embrace the problems of masculinity in all their complexity. This thesis does not shy away from applying the harshest critiques of men in its analysis of the men of *Discworld*. It takes on the nigh impossible task and attempts to move towards a rhetoric that enables a greater understanding of the tools of transgression available to men that are firmly embedded within the dominant positions of patriarchy.

The first half of the thesis will establish the foundational theories of masculinity and gender. It will then draw these frameworks into conversation with the theoretical composition of genre. This marriage between theoretical frames will reveal that *Discworld* is perfectly situated to identify subversive masculinities, creating a strong foundation for the close readings of Pratchett's work that follow. Despite *Discworld*'s relationship to genre, making it the ideal space for subversive masculinities to thrive, previous scholarship has been unable to effectively apply a 'masculinity studies' perspective to the series. Before I attempt my own

reading of subversive masculinities within *Discworld* it is necessary to unpack why previous *Discworld* scholarship has been so ineffective at engaging with masculinity.

The second half of this thesis will explore how Samuel Vimes of the City Watch sub-series is able to operate as a subversive masculinity. This will be done in two steps. The first will explore how he is able to deliver a subversive performance of masculinity within his personal life, operating within the genres of fantasy and romance. I will demonstrate that these subversions within his personal life are largely enabled by his cynicism. The second step will be testing the limits and sustainability of his subversions. This investigation will find that Vimes' role as a policeman comes with a set of obligations to patriarchal systems that inhibit his ability to be subversive. However, he is still able to deliver a subversive performance of gender in marginal situations where the law is in flux.

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Preface

"We need to celebrate traditional masculinity" (A Lost Friend).

"…celebrate traditional masculinity" (Clúa 192).

Above are two quotes. One comes from a man, who I once considered one of my closest friends, who fell so far down the Andrew Tate pipeline that we are no longer on speaking terms. The other is from the only piece of academic scholarship that directly addresses the connection between *Discworld* (my favourite book series) and masculinity (a constant in my lived experience). The connection is confronting. The conundrum it presents, terrifying. How is it that a piece of scholarship, found in a book titled *Detoxing Masculinity*, published in 2023, —dedicated to finding new and productive ways of talking about masculinity—is so intertwined with the same problematic rhetoric that leads one to embark on a thesis exploring masculinity in the first place? Is the conversation around masculinity so underdeveloped, so twisted, so impossibly broken that even those who attempt more positive, well-meaning contributions inevitably fall into the rhetorical patterns that result in reembracing all that is rotten in masculinity?

Masculinity presents a theoretical space that is complicated and difficult to navigate. Although 'masculinity studies' is no longer a new theoretical lens (having been established for more than 30 years at the time of writing), scholarship that seeks to engage with the complexities of masculinity is frequently ineffective. Other disciplines that emerged out of third wave feminism—such as 'women's studies' or 'gay and lesbian studies'—have shaken such defining labels in favour of more fluid categorization, such as 'queer theory' or 'gender

theory.' However, 'masculinity studies' has remained insistent on maintaining its own label.[1] 'Masculinity studies' thrives on decrying patriarchy and critiquing toxic masculinity, but the discipline still struggles to explore more positive readings of masculinity without slipping into conservative rhetoric that calls for a return to a more "traditional" modes of masculinity. This thesis aims to embrace the problems of masculinity in all of their complexity. It does not shy away from applying the harshest critiques of men in its analysis of the men of *Discworld*. It takes on a nigh impossible task, and attempts to move towards a rhetoric that enables a greater understanding of the tools of transgression available to men that are firmly embedded within the dominant positions of patriarchy.

[1] It is worth mentioning that in this field there is a tendency to talk about multiple "masculinities" rather than just "masculinity." While this nuance stems from Connell's foundational *Masculinities*, there has been no major theoretical framework elaborating on this usage.

Chapter One: Introductions, Genre, this is Gender. Gender, this is Genre. You'll Get Along Famously. [1]

> FABRICATI DIEM, PVNC
>
> It translated — according to Sargent Colon, who had served in foreign parts and considered himself an expert of languages — as 'To Protect and to Serve'.
>
> Yes. Being a guard must have meant something once.
>
> (*Guards! Guards!* 66)

The motto of the Ankh-Morpork City Watch perfectly encapsulates the patriarchal baggage that institutions—such as police forces—carry. Because "being a guard must have meant something once," an implication is generated that this motto, and the institution it is attached to, represents a traditional force for good that has been lost. However, Terry Pratchett leaves us with all the clues to piece together a picture of a more complicated and problematic role that a police force plays within society; he also highlights the role that fiction plays in perpetuating a narrative that praises patriarchal institutions. Those who paid a smidge of attention in an undergraduate Latin class immediately see that Sargent Colon's translation is quite obviously incorrect, a vain trawl through a few Latin dictionaries for the word 'pvnc' leads to the conclusion that the phrase can only be translated to mean "make my day punk." The reality of this meaning writes the City Watch into a canon of police brutality being celebrated in fiction. The motto references Clint Eastwood (as Dirty Harry) in *Sudden Impact*

[1] In keeping with Pratchettian style, this is a thesis with footnotes. At times they will be used for academic clarification. At other times they will be used for witticism.

(1983), who tells a man who is holding a woman at gunpoint "go ahead, make my day." He is hoping the man will shoot the woman, giving him a justification to kill him.[2] Colon's own mistranslation of the motto as "To Protect and to Serve" demonstrates how over time the violent function that these patriarchal institutions play in upholding hegemonic systems is obscured and replaced with a more sanitised narrative.[3]

Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series is full of moments such as this one. Moments that engage with the functions of patriarchal institutions and how distorted 'tradition' shapes the lives and expectations of men in their everyday experience. However, despite Pratchett's works garnering much attention from scholarship since his death in 2015, there has been minimal engagement with representations of patriarchy or masculinity within Pratchett's work. Indeed, there is only one academic piece of writing that engages with masculinity: Isabel Clúa's chapter "Masculinity and Heroism in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*: The Case of Good Captain Carrot" (2023). Approaches to *Discworld* range from the more traditional literary studies focuses on genre (Lüthi 2014) to heroism (Leverett 2020; Leverett 2018). There have also been many theorists who draw on a more interdisciplinary approach, ranging from discussions of science (Mellor 2003), to politics (Bach 2023), to power (Breton 2025), to philosophy (Michaud 2016). Unsurprisingly, there has also been a significant focus on gender in *Discworld*. Yet, this has been almost exclusively from a feminist perspective, with the Witches series receiving the most attention (Sinclair 2015; Hutchings-Blud 2023; Croft 2009; Santaulària i Capdevila 2018). Given that Pratchett's work has received so much feminist

[2] Four minutes and 10 seconds earlier Eastwood has also grabbed a man threateningly by the tie and said "listen punk, to me you are nothing but dogshit" after Eastwood's case against the man has been thrown out by a judge for insufficient evidence.

[3] A narrative that we see all too frequently in the real world. "To Protect and to Serve" is the Los Angeles Police Department's own motto.

attention over the span of almost two decades it is perplexing that the masculine sphere has been so neglected.

The aim of this thesis is to address this gap in the scholarship and apply a 'masculinity studies'[4] lens to *Discworld*. As I will demonstrate with further detail in due course, this is not an aim easily accomplished. 'Masculinity studies' presents a minefield of theoretical conundrums that must first be unpacked before it can be effectively applied to Pratchett's work. This introductory chapter will establish the foundational theories of masculinity and gender. It will then draw these frameworks into conversation with the theoretical composition of genre. This marriage between theoretical frames will reveal that Discworld[5] is perfectly situated to develop productive conversations around masculinity, creating a strong foundation for the close readings of Pratchett's work that follow.

Masculinity and Gender Theory

Modern theoretical understandings of gender and masculinity pivot around two key theories—laid out by R.W Connell in *Masculinities* and by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*—that were proposed in the 1990s. These theories have since been interrogated, reaffirmed, and clarified in the subsequent decades, and are now frequently applied to a wide array of interdisciplinary contexts. Many scholars have taken issue with the intricacies and nuances of Butler and Connell's theories, such as Chris Brickell's argument that Butler paints "a rather impressionistic picture, which lacks conceptual clarity" (34). However, the foundations of the

[4] 'Masculinity studies' is a term I find so terrifying that I dare not let it outside of 'scare quotes' within the confines of my thesis. This dynamic will be explored in greater detail in "Chapter Two: Conundrums and Failures".

[5] Until this point "Discworld" has been italicised. In this instance it is not. Throughout this thesis it will at times be italicised, when used to refer to the series of books itself, and at times not italicised, when it is being used to refer to the story world in which the series takes place.

theories have been widely accepted. Due to the complex nature of these ideas, Connell and Butler have both spent a significant part of their careers refining their foundational theories and reaffirming and clarifying what was meant by key terms such as gender "performativity" or "hegemonic masculinity". In the second edition of *Masculinities*, published in 2005. Connell acknowledges that the term "hegemonic masculinity" has "come under challenge from several directions," directing readers to works that both criticise the term, and her own later work that reaffirms and reconstructs the term (xviii). Similarly, in the preface to the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble,* Butler explains that much of their "work in recent years has been devoted to clarifying and revising the theory of performativity that is outlined in *Gender Trouble*" (xiv). This introduction will later delve into the interrogation of these concepts, but argues that an initial "impressionistic" understanding has benefits when it comes to understanding a topic as fluid and dynamic as gender.

This thesis' treatment of gender begins its review of gender studies with Connell's *Masculinities*, originally published in 1995*,* which is regarded as the foundational pillar of modern 'masculinity studies.' Connell constructs her theory of multiple masculinities around the relations of power between different men. She welcomes theories of multiple masculinities, but also fears the risk that an oversimplification—where there becomes "*a* black masculinity or *a* working-class masculinity"—could limit masculinity to being defined by circumstance and external forces (76). Connell claims that a "focus on the gender relations among men is necessary to keep the analysis dynamic, to prevent the acknowledgement of multiple masculinities collapsing into a character typology" (76). To maintain the plurality of masculinities, whilst also avoiding this oversimplification of said plurality, Connell suggests a

new way of theorising masculinity: categorising masculinities based on the relationships of power between men rather than attributes of class, race, or gender.

At the top of the hierarchy of power within this structure is hegemonic masculinity that Connell claims can

> be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (77)

Connell then outlines several other dynamics of power that exist in relation to the hegemonic position. Subordinate masculinities exist in a relationship of dominance and *subordination* to the hegemonic position; Connell's key example of *subordination* is the "dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men" (78). Then, Connell claims there is the dynamic of *complicity* to account for the "large number of men [who] have some connection with the hegemonic project but do not embody hegemonic masculinity" (79). These are men who may not be "rigorously" or actively and constantly participating in the hegemonic masculinity, but still benefit from the "patriarchal dividend" that is generated through its processes (79). Connell's final power relation is *marginalization*, which refers to masculinities that belong to a subordinate grouping but receive a sense of "authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group" (80-1). The example that Connell gives is that in

> the United States, particular black athletes may be exemplars for hegemonic masculinity. But the fame and wealth of individual stars has no trickle-down effect; it does not yield social authority to black men generally. (80-81)

Marginalisation is the most difficult of Connell's terms to pin down and as a result even Connell themself finds that the term "marginalisation" to be "not ideal", highlighting that even at the time of writing *Masculinities* Connell saw potential for this term to be expanded on and refined.

There can be no doubt that Connell's theories on the structures of masculinity have been hugely influential and has opened the discussions around masculinity, allowing for a greater dynamism in the construction of masculinity. This is achieved through structuring masculinity as a set of relationships of power, rather than attributes held by men. Despite Connell's insistence that the "structures of gender relations are formed and transformed over time," there seems little space within this proposed structure for *internally* guided change to reshape masculinity progressively (82). To my eye, there is both room for, and the need for, an additional dynamic of *subversion* to be added into Connell's structure allowing for types of masculinity that disrupt hegemonic structures of masculinity.[6]

In a search for an understanding of what a subversive masculinity might look like, and where it might be found I turn to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* as a natural starting point. Reflecting on writing *Gender Trouble* in 1990, Butler sees themselves in "oppositional relation to certain forms of feminism" (vii). Yet, instead of being perceived as oppositional, Butler became an integral pillar of what came to be known as 'third wave feminism,' as well as being central to founding queer theory. *Gender Trouble*'s primary ethos, which has garnered the most attention in terms of future discussion, is that gender is performative:

[6] I, of course, am not the first to think of subversive masculinities, as will be explored in more detail in subsequent sections.

> *gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed (33).

Although "impressionistic," Butler's concept of performativity gives us the ability to discuss gender from a more dynamic position. Indeed, it is precisely what Brickell terms as "impressionistic" that opens up space for a more fluid discussion. Butler pivots the conversation away from one that defines the "attributes" of gender towards considering what "doing" gender entails; the results of this allow gender to be discussed as a process rather than a set ideal. Just as sex is biological attributes in the form of genitalia and chromosomes, it is also an act that can contain a reproductive dimension that individuals partake in. Therefore, it seems beneficial to consider that gender too can be a set of (performed) attributes as well as the doing of a performance that socially reproduces gender.

Masculinity in Crisis

In July 2025 Radio New Zealand published a segment titled "What Michael Douglas' films say about the crisis of masculinity." In May 2025 Pip Adam published a review for Dominic Hoey's *1985* titled "Book of the Week: On the crisis of masculinity." The way that masculinity is being read into the analysis of texts in 2025 (the contemporary moment of writing this thesis) is

from a moment of crisis. Despite this tendency to view masculinity as existing in contemporary crisis, the terminology is generally met with dissatisfaction in a scholarly setting. Furthermore, there is a lack of research connecting these moments of crisis into a wider framework of gender relations. I contend that the concept of masculinity in crisis that defines modern conversations around masculinity is not a new or solely contemporary event. Nor can it even be wholly attributed as a cultural response to feminist movement. It cannot be thought of as an event at all, but rather a process that is constantly perpetuating itself.

Sara Martín and M. Isabel Santaulàri claim that contemporary scholarship aids in generating an idea that masculinity is in crisis through problematising masculinity. They claim that

> the concept of masculinity in crisis is activated as a knee-jerk reaction to prevent change and to go back to traditional forms of masculinity […] The combination of enfolding palatable progressive elements and resistance to unpalatable change means that hegemonic masculinity continually regenerates itself, only to perpetuate its old archetypes and gender roles. (5)

Crisis then becomes both a process and defence mechanism; one that is built into the relationships of power that construct masculinity to maintain the hegemonic position. Through this "knee-jerk reaction" masculinity incorporates the change as it sees fit, ensuring that hegemonic forces maintain control over changes occurring within the power relations masculinity changes when they are faced with critique. Through incorporating change into its functions, patriarchy has managed to turn critique into a process for its own perpetuation.

Connell, in her treatment of crisis, forms her own critique of the usefulness of the term "crisis" in relation to masculinity; she argues that it is more productive to think of "crisis

tendencies" (84). She argues that because masculinity is a "a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations" we cannot speak of it being in crisis because crisis "presupposes a coherent system [that is] destroyed by the outcome of crisis" and masculinity is not a coherent system that is destroyed by these crises (84). Rather than reject the term "crisis" I find it necessary to embrace the self-defeating nature of a 'crisis of masculinity' and view that process as a function of patriarchy.

Addressing a crisis of masculinity involves the dismantlement of a pre-existing "coherent system" that, as Connell points out, does not exist. This impossibility makes 'crisis' an effective tool for patriarchal systems to perpetuate themselves. Since the crisis can never be addressed in full, but the drive and expectation to address it still exists, men take actions in attempt to return to a state before crisis that cannot truly be attained. This generates a constant expectation to return to more 'traditional' modes of masculinity. Furthermore, academia participates in generating this sense of crisis. Because the dominant way that masculinity appears in (literary theory) scholarship comes in the form of critiques of patriarchy, academia itself partakes in generating a sense that masculinity is in crisis. Therefore, a call for a 'crisis of masculinity' in both colloquial and academic discussions of masculinity has inadvertently fallen into participating in the processes that drive the reproduction of hegemonic masculinities.

The first steps in understanding how crisis operates as a process rather than being an event that occurs, revolve around mapping the history of the crisis of masculinity. Michael Kimmel finds moments of crisis in "Restoration England, 1688 – 1714" and in the "United States two centuries later, 1880 – 1914" (123). Kimmel argues that "these crises occur at specific historical junctures, when structural changes transform the institutions of personal

life such as marriage and the family, which are sources of gender identity" (123). However, to extend Kimmel's claim that the crisis of masculinity is nothing new and that evidence can be found in moments of history, I claim that (western) masculinity has always been in crisis and any historical moment placed under close interrogation would present evidence of crisis.

From the earliest written sources in the western canon there are examples of complaints that men are not living up to the expectations of a traditional masculinity that once existed. In Homer's *Iliad* Nestor, and elderly warrior, says to some younger Greek warriors:

> Now listen to me. You are both my juniors. What's more, I have mixed in the past with even better men than you and never failed to carry conviction with them, the finest men I have ever seen or shall see [...] Not a soul on earth today could live with those men in battle — and they listened to what I said and followed my advice. (bk. 1, lines 260-80)

Already here, at the beginnings of the western literary canon, we can already see examples of men like Nestor using a crisis of masculinity among his male peers to call for a return to more traditional (and more violent) modes of masculinity. This carries an assumption that these more traditional modes of masculinity are better suited to the contemporary setting that the men currently live in. Between Nestor's call for a return to a more traditional masculinity at the beginning of the western canon of literature, Kimmel's work on masculinity across the 17th to 20th centuries, and the current sense of crisis, I claim that there is a continuum that spans the entirety of western history in which masculinity is in crisis. In short western masculinity has always been in crisis.

The false pretence that results in the self-defeating crisis of masculinity is best demonstrated through Butler's ideas of gender perpetuating itself through false copies. Butler claims that

> gay is to straight not as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy. The parodic repetition of 'the original,' […], reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the idea of the natural and the original (41).

If there is no true original model of gender or masculinity, then the copying of the original is a phantasm. Therefore, the crisis of masculinity generated by the expectation that men should behave like the generation of men who came before them guarantees a failure to live up to those expectations because the original version does not really exist. The men of superior masculinity that Nestor remembers were, in reality, not of superior calibre to the men of his current generation, but the summoning of the idea of crisis establishes a status quo masculinity that the next generation must aim for, but cannot ever be genuinely replicated. The result is that the reproduction of masculinities is predicated on an emasculation and denial of the very identity that it is reproducing. It allows for an older generation of men—such as Nestor—to emasculate their contemporary generation(s) through evoking a sense of crisis to spur younger generations on to perform in violent masculine settings, such as war.

Subversions of Gender

The impression that masculinity is in crisis generates a difficult situation for 'masculinity studies' to navigate. If the masculinity crisis is a continuous process that perpetuates the hegemonic position—and scholarship has played a role in that perpetuation—how can the field now adapt to offer solutions and create space to disrupt the procedural nature of crisis?

Gender studies is not unaccustomed to contemplating ways of subverting, disrupting, and transgressing the hegemonic models. However, as is the case in *Gender Trouble,* these are often focalised on how queer and female identities navigate the patriarchal systems of gender. This asks: is it also possible for cisgendered heterosexual men to subvert hegemonic systems of gender internally?

In "Masculinities, Performativity, and Subversion: A Sociological Reappraisal," Chris Brickell points out that to "do gender is often to do power" (38). Fusing the 'doing' of gender and power enfolds Connell's power centric framework of masculinity into Butler's theories of gender performativity. Brickell expands Butler's positioning of subversion from just pertaining to queer and female identities. He claims that expanding subversion onto masculine identities "would open up possibilities for new means of understanding and enacting masculinity […] both individually and collectively" (37). Brickell then argues that implementing subversion into this framework provides

> inspiration for resistance, struggle, and changes to the ways power is done in everyday life, microlevel change may filter upwards in a set of capillary movements. Subversive performances of masculinity, then, may involve sets of actions that refuse or challenge the dominance/deference pattern that West and Zimmerman identify. (38)

By drawing Connell and Butler together, Brickell finds that small acts of subversion done by subordinate/dominated masculinities lower down in the hegemonic order have the potential to create disruptive ripples throughout the hegemony.

The absence of subversive masculinities from Connell's theories does not mean that they do not exist. Historically, I find an abundance of evidence for the existence of subversive

masculinities. Mythology and folklore have long been seen as a cultural space housing sociological theories (Cohen 343). Carl Jung theorised that myth and fairy tales carry representations of 'archetypes' that are recognisable to a collective unconscious (5). These mythological structures have some semblance to sociological theories such as Connell's which categorise different types of people. In the pantheon of the Greek gods, parallels can be drawn between Connell's relations of masculinity. Zeus, as king of the gods, represents a hegemonic force. Hephaestus, who is cast out of Olympus and is physically disabled, could be labelled as a *marginalised* or *subordinate* masculinity. Alongside these masculinities, that fit neatly into Connell's framework, there are also subversive trickster figures who appear in myth across the world, such as Hermes/Mercury (Greek/Roman), Māui (Māori), Loki (Norse), and Nanabush (Anishinaabe).

These trickster figures, despite being accepted into cultural models and stories, do not hold traditional hegemonic power. However, they still generate change within a social system. In the fourth Homeric Hymn, Hermēs steals Apollo's cattle through a cunning trick, making the cattle walk backwards so it looks as though they were walking the other way ("Hermēs"). Although he is subsequently commanded by Zeus—a clear hegemonic figure—to return the cattle, Hermēs opts to invent and then gift a lyre to Apollo instead. Hermēs chooses to steal from a hegemonic figure. Apollo holds hegemonic power over Hermēs, who is only a few hours old and plays a subservient role as messenger of the gods. Hermes then ignores Zeus's command and takes things into his own hands when dealing with any subsequent punishments, disrupting, and thus subverting, the hegemonic powers that are at play.

Despite the need for subversive masculinities to be accommodated within sociological understanding of masculinity, patriarchy often appropriates these subversive actions, re-

performing them insincerely. In “Connell’s Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique,” published in 2005, Demetrakis Z. Demetriou aims to “deconstruct” the binary between non-hegemonic masculinities and hegemonic masculinity” (347-8). He seeks to re-conceptualise the hegemonic “as a hybrid bloc that unites various and diverse practices in order to construct the best possible strategy for the reproduction of patriarchy” (347-8). This repositions the structures of masculinity to make patriarchy into a force that is working behind the scenes to constantly reposition and reorganise the construction of masculinity to maintain the dominant position. To exemplify this Demetriou claims that

> some rock stars have worn skirts on the stage, while others pretend to be gay. Furthermore, this appropriation of queer elements blurs sexual difference, enables some masculinities to appear less rigid and thus conceals patriarchal domination. (353)

Essentially, elements of queer and subordinate masculinities, which are typically and innately subversive, are now assimilated into a hegemonic position to perform what is *perceived* as a ‘safe’ masculinity without destabilising or subverting the hegemonic systems.

Whilst Demetriou positions their argument as an outright critique of Connell’s framework, I see their argument as a fleshing out of the concepts of marginalization that Connell already terms as “not ideal” (80). The appropriation of queer elements into mainstream masculinity is an authorisation of the identity as a hybrid hegemonic masculinity, but that authorisation does not necessarily have a trickle-down effect. The rest of the subordinated/dominated group, whose identities share attributes that are being appropriated into the hegemonic position, are not granted any access to the hegemonic position themselves.

Similar dynamics to Demetriou's theories have been applied in the twenty-first century. Michael Mario Albrecht coins the term "Both/And Masculinity" for describing masculinity in contemporary television. Albrecht claims this is a "version of masculinity on offer to simultaneously reaffirm traditional gendered performances while also offering the possibility that those performances might exceed the logic of traditional masculinity" (8). This appropriation of transient elements into modern masculinities ensures that traditional tropes of masculinity remain prevalent within the 21st century (8).

Albrecht's discussion of "Both/And Masculinity" and Demetriou's theorisation of the "hybrid bloc" demonstrate that despite my theorised existence of subversive masculinities, they are often co-opted by patriarchal processes, resulting in a reversion to traditional modes of masculinity. This leaves 'masculinity studies' in a self-defeating position that contains little room for men to act in ways that genuinely subvert the hegemonic position that they inadvertently participate in. Subsequently, any deviant masculinity that exists tends to be moved into the category of the hybrid-bloc once it attains any power, and any masculinity that does not attain power whilst being deviant is subordinate. So, the guiding question for this thesis then becomes: can there be a genuinely subversive masculinity that still holds social power, but is resistant to being appropriated into the hegemonic bloc?[7]

Don't Assume My Genre

As the theoretical landscape presented by 'masculinity studies' presents this self-defeating conundrum, I find the most productive way to begin the search for genuinely subversive

[7] "Hegemonic bloc is a term of my own divising. It is inspired by Demetriou's terminology: "hybrid bloc." I use it to denote members of the hegemonic postition whilst still including the possibility of elements of *complicity*, *subordination*, or *marginalisation.* I opt for the term "hegemonic bloc" to avoid attributing labels such as "straight" or "white" as these labels may not necessarily be appropriate for the setting of Discworld.

masculinities is a tangential movement to genre theory. I claim that Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels occupy a unique position in their relationship to genre that enables a process of subversion of genre that is transferred into a subversion of gender. There is a deep running etymological connection towards genre and gender; both words come to English—through Latin and French—from the Greek word *γένος* [genos], which translates to "family" ("γένος [genos]."). Gender has the primary meaning in a theoretical setting of the "state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and differences, rather than biological ones" ("Gender, N., Sense 3.b."); however, it also has an obsolete meaning of "class of things or beings distinguished by having certain characteristics in common," ("Gender, N., Sense 2.a."). Genre, on the other hand, is described as "A particular style or category of works of art; esp. a type of literary work characterized by a particular form, style, or purpose" ("Genre, N., Sense 1.b."). Both genre and gender are therefore modes of classification.[8] Therefore, to ensure that discussion does not unproductively delve too deep into the ever-expanding debate of genre, the discussion of genre will be largely guided by elements relevant to gender theory, such as: subversion, mimesis, and parody.

Science Fiction or Fantasy?

Discworld presents a slippery and convoluted performance of genre. The books can be most frequently found in the "fantasy" section of bookshops. Yet, their relationship to fantasy is easily complicated. Here I demonstrate that Discworld exists in a paradoxical position within genre and resists many of the more traditional definitions of both fantasy and science fiction.

[8] And they both seem to have a concerning obsession with defining ideas as fluid and dynamic as people and stories,

Early definitions of fantasy were built from an assumption that fantasy is fundamentally defined by simply being 'not reality'. Kathryn Hume in *Fantasy and Mimesis*, first published in 1984, states that fantasy "is any departure from consensus reality" (21; emphasis removed). This is a useful starting point for understanding Discworld, which by merit of being a flat world floating through space on the back of four elephants, who are standing on the back of giant turtle, contains a deliberate departure from "consensus reality" or what is likely "accepted as real and normal" (xii). However, despite *Discworld*'s fantastical absurdism, connections to consensus reality are carefully reconstructed. *The Science of Discworld*[9] co-authored by Pratchett, Ian Stewart (geologist), and Jack Cohen (biologist). Here Pratchett writes a story where Wizards of Discworld's Unseen University accidently create a "round world" (Earth) in an experiment and Stewart and Cohen explore the scientific principles at play within the story. This places Discworld in a paradoxical position between science-fiction and fantasy. *Discworld* simultaneously presents a complete rejection of, and separation from, reality. Nonetheless, it is still dictated by the laws of science.

This could prompt us to think of *Discworld* through Rosemary Jackson's ideas of fantasy and subversion. For Jackson, this contradiction at the heart of *Discworld* is an indicator of fantasy in itself. In *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, first published in 1981, she claims that the "structure of fantastic narrative is one founded upon contradictions" (21). In addition, Jackson argues that the purpose of fantasy is "[p]resenting that which cannot be, but is, fantasy exposes a culture's definitions of that which can be: it traces the limits of its epistemological and ontological frame" (23). The existence of *The Science of Discworld*

[9] And its 3 sequels.

demonstrates Discworld is invested in testing the limits of is science itself, suggesting that Discworld might be better defined by science fiction.

Despite *Discworld*'s engagement with science, it is difficult to fit Discworld into more traditional definitions of science fiction. Drako Suvin argues "for an understanding of SF as the *literature of cognitive estrangement*" (15). Suvin's understanding of cognitive estrangement relies on the introduction of a *"novum*" (17). This newness generates a sense of estrangement within the reader, forcing them to grapple with ideas that are possible, but outside of their perceived reality. We find a "novum" in many *Discworld* novels, but they tend to be cognitively estranging for the characters themselves, rather than readers. In *Men at Arms* a "gonne" is introduced. To the reader, this is clearly a firearm, but it is unrecognisable to the characters in the story. Pratchett uses the "gonne" to comment on real world firearms laws. Through *Men at Arms* Pratchett demonstrates that "advances in technology frequently outpace humans' ability to use technology in a sensible manner" (Bach 46). To make this point Pratchett utilises an object familiar to the reader rather than a completely new technology or magical object.

As a final note, it is necessary to mention that *Discworld*'s resistance to the labels of fantasy and science fiction could be easily reconciled with more modern, more fluid, definitions. A scholar such as Seo-Young Chu, who in *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep* situates science-fiction within both the lyric and mimetic tradition, could be drawn into conversation with Hume's ideas of fantasy's relationship to mimesis. This could potentially even allow for a collapse between the genre divide entirely. However, for the purposes of this thesis it is more useful to draw on the definitions of fantasy and science-fiction as they existed when *Discworld* was first conceived in the 1980s and explore how Pratchett resisted the binary between the genres.

Mimesis, Subversion, and Parody

Now that it has been established that *Discworld* seems to resist definitions of both science fiction and fantasy, I move to demonstrate that this dynamic positions *Discworld* to generate an environment that also resists and disrupts presumptions about gender. Subversion and mimesis have been foundational principles in both theories of fantasy and gender; by understanding how *Discworld* operates in relation to both subversion and mimesis I claim that an understanding of *Discworld*'s resistance to essentialist frameworks of genre can be used to also generate a resistance to essentialist frameworks of gender.

In *Fantasy and Mimesis* Kathryn Hume, in constructing her own methodology for defining fantasy, states that:

> literature is the product of two impulses. These are mimesis, felt as the desire to imitate, to describe events, people, situations, and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience; and fantasy, the desire to change givens and alter reality - out of boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking, or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience's verbal defences. (20)

Hume's theory seeks to separate the fantastic and the mimetic into two clean categories that relate back to reality. The impulses of the fantastical and the mimetic *should* easily map onto Discworld. I find the relationship to be more complex. For instance, an approaching reader is met with two key reactions to the wizards living and working in the Unseen University within Discworld. The first likely being "I don't have wizards in my world" and the second being that

"I have universities in my world". Of course, the reality of the reactions is more complicated and blurred than this. Famously, the city of Christchurch in New Zealand did in fact have an official Wizard on the city council's payroll, showing that there is always going to be a blurring of reality and fantasy even in the real world.[10]

The example of the wizards is one that would function for many fantasy narratives. However, Discworld is a space that deliberately aims to expose the complexity of story world's relationship to reality due to the series' roots in absurdism. In the previous section's exploration of Discworld's relationship to science we have seen that *Discworld* is constantly trying to re-establish a connection to reality, and therefore, it is always renegotiating the status of the impossible. *Discworld* does not deploy a turtle flying through space in order to create a fantastic space completely outside of the realm of existence, but rather to ask the question of *how far* we have to push our understanding of reality for it to include a turtle flying through space within the realm of the possible.

Due to the convolution of this relationship between the mimetic and the fantastic I propose an adjustment to Hume's framework for the purposes of analysing *Discworld*: fantasy is made of two impulses, the mimetic and the anti-mimetic. Rather than defining fantasy as a desire to "alter reality" out of "boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking," an anti-mimetic approach seeks to destabilise the very conception of reality by working outside of its framework (20). Anti-mimesis challenges the presumptions of how reality functions rather than a 'fantastical' desire to exist outside of those presumptions. Pivoting Hume's structure in this way accommodates for the relationship that Discworld has to science, whilst still situating Discworld within fantasy frameworks. As *Discworld* undergoes a project to re-establish the

[10] N.B. They also have a university.

connections between the impossible world it represents and real-world science it is participating in a constant project to destabilise the presumed relationship that fantasy must represent a "departure from consensus reality" (Hume 21; emphasis removed).

The anti-mimetic project that *Discworld* undergoes is relevant to Butler's claims around gender and mimesis:

> The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorised as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body just as easily as a female one. (10).

In the sphere of gender Butler demonstrates how mimetic relationship between sex and gender are not as clean cut as they are often assumed to be. If we consider *Discworld* to be participating in an anti-mimetic impulse that breaks down presumed mimetic realities in the movements of genre, it naturally follows that it is well positioned to break down the presumed mimetic relationships that construct an essentialist definition of gender. Pertaining to masculinity, I find that this allows *Discworld* to imagine individual masculinities outside of their typical presumed form, whilst also positions *Discworld* to imagine entire hegemonies outside of their typical presumed form.

In the 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble,* Butler reminisces on how the 1990 publication was invested in countering the "heterosexual assumption in feminist literary theory" (vii). I contend that this "heterosexual assumption" of a gender binary can be mapped onto a similar

"heterosexual assumption" of a genre binary within literary criticism that dominates early scholarship on the genres of science fiction and fantasy. Texts that test the limits of reality are expected to be one or the other. One of the central questions of *Gender Trouble* is: "What kinds of cultural practices produce subversive discontinuity and dissonance among sex, gender, and desire and call into question their alleged relations?" (xxx). In much the same way, one of the central driving questions for understanding Discworld's relationship to genre becomes: "What kinds of textual practices produce subversive discontinuity and dissonance between reality and narrative, calling their alleged relation into question?"

Participating in subversive textual practices is not a new concept in fantasy scholarship. Rosemary Jackson claims that fantasy oscillates between the real and not real to subvert dominant viewpoints:

> Fantasy establishes, or discovers, an absence of separating distinctions, violating a 'normal', or common-sense perspective which represents reality as constituted by discrete but connected units. Fantasy is preoccupied with limits, with limiting categories, and with their projected dissolution. It subverts dominant philosophical assumptions which uphold as 'reality' a coherent, single-viewed entity. (48)

This idea of subversion becomes particularly relevant to *Discworl*d, where the tone of the prose is constantly subversive through Pratchett's ironic—and cynical—style. The *Discworld* novels, because they are testing the limits of the genre of fantasy, redeploy the tropes of fantasy in subversive orientations. The first two *Discworld* novels are pure satire. They collect as many fantasy tropes as possible, to make fun of and subvert the genre. This means that one of the key realities that *Discworl*d is testing the limits of is the limits of the fantasy genre itself,

as it seeks to subvert not only reality in its humour but also the suspense of disbelief that fantasy requires. In *The Colour of Magic*, the protagonists come to the "Wyrmberg" where dragons exist, but their existence is dependent on their master's belief in them. Riders who do not believe in their dragons enough will have them "fade" after only flying a few miles (187). Both *Discworld* and fantasy's relationship with subversion makes it an ideal place for the search for examples of subversive masculinities. Because the very construction of Discworld as a space is built upon a foundation of subversion. Everything in Discworld is working to be subversive in some shape or form, including representations of masculinity.

It then becomes pertinent to find the links between how this deployment of parody through satire can be mapped onto the functions of gender. For this I once again turn to Judith Butler, who finds that the

> parodic repetition of gender exposes as well the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance. As the effects of a subtle and politically enforced performativity, gender is an 'act', as it were, that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural' that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status. (Butler 187)

I argue that, just as Butler claims that the parodic repetition of the gender can reveal the fundamentally phantasmic status of gendered categories, *Discworld*'s parodic repetition of elements of genre reveal the phantasmatic status of the categories of genre. This allows *Discworld* to both expose fantasy as socially constructed meaningless category whilst also actively participating in that category at the same time.

To further flesh out the relationship between genre and parody I turn to Joanna Russ' concepts of genre in "Speculations: The Subjunctivity of Science Fiction." She outlines the unique relationship that satire has with the suspense of disbelief:

> To return to satire, one does not suspend one's disbelief while reading satire—or, more accurately, any suspension of disbelief that occurs is a much more complex matter. The keenest pleasures of satire may be the moments at which one disbelieves—keenly, explicitly, and accurately. Certainly the effect of satire is not to convince a reader that the satirically exaggerated is plausible, accurate, actual, or like the real. To the contrary, one's reaction is more often: this is ridiculous, this is exaggerated, this is impossible (18-19).

This understanding of satire generates a pertinent frame for *Discworld*. Although Pratchett may be writing fantasy, a genre that is often assumed to be reliant on the suspension of disbelief, the fact that he is also writing satire trumps the need for consistent and constant suspense of disbelief. The result is a fantasy world where the reader is encouraged to revel in their disbelief of the story world.

Russ goes on to extrapolate that science-fiction operates with a similar function to satire:

> I would submit here that science fiction stands in some kind of paradoxical relation to fantasy and naturalism in much the same way that satire stands in relation to both fantasy (the exaggeration) and actuality (the model). (19)

Russ's model places both satire and science fiction in a position that negotiates between the more-real (which she defines as the model, naturalism, or actuality) and the more-impossible (which she allocates as fantasy or the exaggerated). Considered alongside this framework,

Discworld exists in a paradoxical position of its own. In considering Discworld as both a fantasy world and *Discworld* as a piece of satire, the result is to drag fantasy away from the completely impossible position, and into a position where it becomes the mediator between actuality and the impossible; a space that the world itself is not so often able to occupy due to fantasy itself usually being relegated completely to the impossible. This means, that although Pratchett is writing into the genre of fantasy, his fantasy—in Russ' definition—fulfils the function of science fiction, allowing *Discworld* to fluidly move between different genres.

Disrupting Hegemonies

Through drawing *Discworld* into conversation with Judith Butler's ideas of gender performativity and subversion I have established that Discworld's unique relationship to genre places it in the ideal position to subvert gender. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler introduces the ground-breaking concept that gender is performative rather than a fixed state of being that comes with biological sex. She claims that "gender proves to be performative" and that "gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (33). Because gender and genre are both modes of categorisation which following similar rules of social construction. I claim that Butler's ideas of gender performativity can then also be mapped onto genre. A text becomes a certain genre through the performing of and doing of that genre. In this sense, *Discworld* (despite at times operating as science fiction) becomes fantasy by the performance of, and the doing of, fantasy. This performance involves the inclusion of token elements of consensus fantasy, such as trolls and dwarves or witches and wizards, and the magic that comes with those characters. Over time, through the constant

repetition of these fantastical elements *Discworld* is fantasy because it presents as fantasy, much in the same way that I am a man because I perform and present masculinity.

Butler's theories are not the only theories of gender that can be mapped onto genre; just as gender has a hegemonic hierarchy that privileges men, genre follows suit. Some genres enjoy a cultural clout that positions them above others. Whereas throughout history the hegemony of gender has historically valued the masculine over the feminine, the hegemony of genre has gone through a series of more obvious restructures of power. Historically, in western writing, the mimetic or realist elements of literature have often been the main focus of academic writing; this dynamic can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy (Hume, 6). This has resulted in realist genres obtaining a higher degree of cultural clout than fantastic genres. Kathryn Hume goes as far as to claim that "to many academics […] 'fantasy' is a subliterature in lurid covers sold in drugstores" (3).[11] However, there have been extended periods of time in the past, such as the medieval period, where this was not the case. One need only think of works such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to see how fantastical elements of fiction may have held equal cultural pull to the mimetic.

By the mid twentieth century, with writers such as Tolkien and C.S. Lewis gaining unprecedented popularity, the hegemonic relationship between fantasy and realism began to be disrupted. In the 1980s—as the first *Discworld* novels appeared—scholars such as Darko Suvin, Rosemary Jackson, and Kathryn Hume were writing science fiction and fantasy into the academic literary canon. Because of this academic movement occurring at the same time as Pratchett was writing the first *Discworld* novels, he was able to draw on the genre hegemonic shift by applying a metafictional angle that took the momentum generated by this changing

[11] So much so that some academics still feel the need to ask if Pratchett is really "serious enough literature" to be subject of a thesis. Just in case you hadn't realized how low brow he really is.

power dynamic and transferred those forces onto themes of gender. I argue that this power of parody, generated within the toppling of the genre hierarchy, can then be harnessed, and potentially transferred into generating an environment where the gender hegemony is also subverted.

Gender, Genre, When Shall We Three Meet Again?

Now that the theoretical pillars have been put into place, it becomes necessary to define the range of this thesis' search for subversive masculinities. Pratchett's *Discworld* novels have very deliberately gendered masculine and feminine spheres. This is, in part, why the Witches novels have lent themselves so well to a feminist perspective. *Discworld* comprised of several sub-series that could lend themselves to a 'masculinity studies' reading: the Wizards novels, the Death novels, the Moist von Lipwig Novels and the City Watch novels. I suggest that a productive investigation of masculinity could be undertaken on any of these sets of novels. However, in the interests of keeping the scope of this thesis manageable I have opted to focus on the City Watch series. The City Watch has been selected over others for several key reasons: There is already an established array of secondary scholarship that does not centre on masculinity to draw from in my own analysis, and the only piece of secondary scholarship that does directly address masculinity in Discworld focuses on the City Watch: Clúa's, "Masculinity and Heroism in Terry Pratchett's Discworld: The Case of Good Captain Carrot,". Furthermore, being focused on a police department the series represents many opportunities to explore obligations to patriarchy that have the potential to be subverted.[12]

[12] It is also my personal favorite and sometimes that is reason enough.

Despite Carrot being the subject of the only piece of scholarship to directly address masculinity in *Discworld,* I take issue with Carrot being used as a role model for healthy masculinity. I instead turn to Samuel Vimes, the head of the City Watch. For the purposes of looking for subversions that occur from within the hegemonic position it is natural to begin with the individual who holds the most hegemonic power within the Watch. Vimes also has a consistent presence across all eight of the City Watch novels, whereas other recurring characters, such as Carrot, feature more in the earlier City Watch novels, and take on smaller roles as time goes on. Vimes' consistent appearances across the series mean that my argument will draw on novels from both early and late in Pratchett's career, allowing for an exploration of how sustainable Vimes' subversions are.

The City Watch sub-series is made up of eight novels (*Guards! Guards!, Men at Arms, Feet of Clay, Jingo, The Fifth Elephant, Night Watch, Thud!, Snuff*). I will touch—at least briefly—on all of these novels. There are many ways that one could group the novels. The first three all feature very traditional murder mystery plots. *Jingo* and *Thud!* both feature wars that the members of the Watch have to navigate their position within. *The Fifth Elephant* and *Snuff* both explore the role of an aristocrat as a diplomat and a landowner respectively, and how those roles intersect with the role as a police officer. To cultivate a common theme across the novels that are going to explored, I have chosen to focus on the novels that are set primarily in the City of Anhk-Morpork (*Guards! Guards!, Men at Arms, Feet of Clay, Night Watch*) rather than the novels that are set away from the city (*Jingo, The Fifth Elephant, Thud![13], Snuff*).

[13] *Thud!* is borderline. Much of the novel does take place in the city but because it ends outside of the city, I have chosen to include it in the latter list.

This introduction has established *why* Discworld *should* be the ideal place for discovering[14] subversive masculinities. However, the next hurdle presents itself. "Chapter Two: Conundrums and Failings" will invest in an analysis of Clúa's reading of Carrot Ironfoundersson, a member of the City Watch, as a subversive masculinity. The pitfalls of Clúa's response will prove foundational to the remainder of the thesis. What will perhaps be the most revealing is the exploration of how the pitfalls of Clúa's response also exist in the wider canon of *Discworld* scholarship that does not directly address masculinity.

From understanding the missteps of those who have trod this path before me[15] I will then seek to offer my own counter model of a subversive masculinity in the form of Samuel Vimes, commander of the City Watch. "Chapter Three: Samuel the Cynic and Vimes the Coward's Subversive Performances" explores how Vimes is able to act subversively within the structures and tropes of romance and fantasy in a way that Carrot was incapable of. It will investigate how Vimes is able to work with the dominant tonal currents of *Discworld*, mainly through cynicism, to generate subversions of the tropes of both fantasy and romance.

"Chapter Four: Samuel Vimes' Guide to Toppling the Patriarchy from the Inside" aims to test the outer limits of Vimes' subversions, to understand how sustainable his subversions are. By moving beyond the personal, and surveying how Vimes' obligations to patriarchy (which come with his role as head of a police force) I explore how his ability to be subversive is complicated. From this process I will demonstrate that Vimes' subversions within his role as a policeman are often limited to the margins. However, I will also focus on Vimes' role as a father to demonstrate that the subversions that he does generate are able to be passed on, to not only his own son, but the men that he trains in law enforcement as well.

[14] Or rather Disc-overing.
[15] Or sought to take the scenic route and avoid the path entirely.

Chapter Two: Conundrums and Failings

> 'Well, I would have thought she'd have the decency to keep it to herself,' Carrot said finally. 'I mean, I've nothing against females. I'm pretty certain my stepmother is one. But I don't think it's very clever, you know, to go around drawing attention to the fact.'
>
> Carrot, I think you've got something wrong with your head,' said Angua.
>
> 'What?'
>
> 'I think you may have got it stuck up your bum.'
>
> (*Feet of Clay* 268-9)

Carrot Ironfounderson, of the City Watch, is considered "direct, honest, good-natured, and honourable in all of his dealings" ("Carrot."). However, as the quote above demonstrates, in his dealings he sometimes also has his head "stuck up [his] bum." It can be all too easy to blindly praise one's heroes. I find that when academia deals with 'popular fiction' it often runs the risk of losing sight of the critical layer integral to scholarship, and facilitates unrestrained praise. Despite the work that has been done by scholars such as Rosemary Jackson to bring fantasy—and by extension authors such as Pratchett—into the academic canon, there is still a tendency for academics to fall short in their attempts to critically engage with texts such as Discworld. This chapter aims to address the ways that Carrot—and to a lesser extent Sam Vimes—have been the subject of scholarship's blind praise. This praise has resulted in some dangerous misreading of *Discworld*'s masculinities which needs to be understood in full before my own analysis can take place.

The focus of my analysis of specific textual evidence will be on Samuel Vimes of the City Watch. Nevertheless, before indulging in detailed character analysis it remains essential to address what has already been written on masculinity in *Discworld*, both directly and indirectly. This chapter thus serves as a necessary foundation. Before an attempt is made to identify a genuinely subversive masculinity it must first be understood why scholarship has not already successfully identified one within *Discworld*. Isabel Clúa's chapter in *Detoxing Masculinity* "Masculinity and Heroism in Terry Pratchett's Discworld: The Case of Good Captain Carrot" (2023) analyses Captain Carrot and concludes that he holds the potential to be both an example of healthy masculinity, and potentially subversive. As this is the *only* piece of scholarship directly addressing masculinity and Discworld it functions as a natural starting point for addressing the difficulties in discussing masculinity.

Beginning with a critique of Clúa, this chapter will then explore how Clúa's stance on masculinity within Discworld fits into a wider body of scholarship on the City Watch. This will be done through an analysis of how Justine Breton's reading of Carrot reaches similar conclusions to Clúa's own argument ("King Carrot and Fantasy Tropes"). Then, in preparation for the pivot into the second half of this thesis (with its focus on Sam Vimes of the City Watch), I will utilise Emily Lavin Leverett's chapter "At Times Like This It's Traditional That a Hero Comes Forth" to explore how scholarship has positioned Vimes similarly to Carrot, and to explore the misreadings that occur when masculinity is ignored entirely. Between Clúa, Breton, and Leverett, this chapter establishes a microcosm that showcases the limitations and ineffectiveness that "masculinity studies" faces in its current form.

The Questionable Case of Captain Carrot

Clúa's chapter stems from similar sentiments to those upon which this thesis is founded. Clúa foregrounds her argument by pointing out that scholarship analysing gender in Pratchett's novels has been almost exclusively focused on depictions of female characters, particularly the eleven witches' novels across two sub-series (the Lancre Witches series and the Tiffany Aching Series). In contrast, Clúa notes that scholarly discussion of Pratchett's male spheres, such as the City Watch, have "been analysed with no regard for gender" (182). However, that is where the overlap between this thesis and Clúa's chapter ends. Clúa's argument lacks the engagement with gender theory that I have identified as key to understanding how masculinity operates in a literary context. This results in Clúa claiming that Carrot is a "rich reformulation of the heroic fantasy archetype which has, however, been barely noted by critics" (192). I find this grossly overstates Carrot's ability to be a masculine role model. This section will problematise this reading of Carrot, demonstrating that Carrot's performance of masculinity is limited by the extent to which he realistically participates in gender, and the ways that his performance of masculinity is intertangled with the patriarchal systems of power. This will be targeted towards two main elements of Clúa's argument: Carrot's relationship to law and order, and the dynamics of his heterosexual relationship with Angua.

Law and Order

Clúa claims that Carrot's willingness to uphold the law through his by-the-book mentality makes him not only "obedient" but also "good and innocent" (182, 184). Supposedly, his "uncomplicated adherence" to the values of law and order enables him to embody such goodness (185). However, because the legal systems that Carrot's allegiance lie with have

been established by patriarchal powers, his strict adherence to these systems implicates him in the perpetuation of hegemonic dynamics of power.

Carrot arrives in Ankh-Morpork armed with a copy of "*The Laws and Ordinances of The Cities of Ankh and Morpork"* (44). Soon after this arrival, Carrot finds himself in the Mended Drum (a bar) where he arrests the landlord, who he claims

> did a) serve or b) did cause to serve alcoholic beverages after the hours of 12 (twelve) midnight, contrary to the previsions of the Public Ale Houses (Opening) Act of 1678 and 1) (ii) on or about the 18th of Grune, at a place called the Mended Drum […]. (*Guards! Guards!* 83)

This leads to a subsequent bar fight in which Carrot incapacitates every participant, leaving "a number of people sprawled across the tables, or what remained of the tables [whilst] those who were still conscious after the brawl looked unhappy about it." (88). Although this scene is intended to be comedic, Carrot's violence is one that to modern sensibilities evokes an image of police brutality. Carrot is a newcomer, with authority granted though systems that were designed to support patriarchy. He arrives in an unfamiliar setting and uses physical violence to inflict pain upon a room full of people going about their everyday life.

The book of laws, from which he quotes, was given to him be Mr Varneshi, a wandering trader who himself had inherited the book from his great grandfather. Legal systems are designed to both define and uphold a status quo, which in western culture is patriarchal and hegemonic. Therefore, law books, such as the one Carrot yields, are guides to maintaining and perpetuating patriarchal systems. The book then, being passed down for at least three generations, represents a lack of change that occurs in legal systems. When Carrot is given the book, he is told he has "to know all the laws […] to be a good officer' (44). Considering this,

we can reposition the concepts of “good and goodness” that Clúa holds in such high regard to be a set of external expectations of how men should act and the implications that those expectations have for their actions. The passage of ownership through the patrilineal lines of Mr Varneshi’s great grandfather, then Mr Varneshi himself, and onto Carrot positions the book as a form of patriarchal dividend that operates as a tool to guarantee the transition of patriarchal power from one generation onto the next. Therefore, Carrot’s “uncomplicated adherence” to these systems does not show that Carrot is “good” and “innocent”, but rather shows that an uncomplicated adherence to these systems results in the transfer of hegemonic power, and the handover of the tools of violence and oppression that work to perpetuate hegemonic systems.

The book also becomes literalised as a weapon at the climax of the novel when Lupine Wonse, the novel’s antagonist, is confronted. Vimes, intending Carrot to arrest Wonse and forgetting “Dwarfs have trouble with metaphors”, tells Carrot to “throw the book” at Wonse (388). Carrot literally throws the book. Upon making impact, the book knocks Wonse off a balcony and he falls to his death. Wonse has been using a stolen book titled *The Summoning of Dragons* to have a dragon attack the city in the hopes of overthrowing the Patrician and reinstating a King in Ankh-Morpork. The University’s librarian then finds both *The Summoning of Dragons* and *The Laws and Ordinances of The Cities of Ankh and Morpork* on Wonse’s body. Vimes tells the Librarian “I’d put that book somewhere safe. And the book of the law with it”—noting that they are both “bloody dangerous” (395). Vimes’ categorisation of both books as dangerous shows that he is aware that law and order represent complicated ideals and cannot simply be considered ‘good’ without interrogation of what ‘good’ represents contextually.

In other places in *Guards! Guards!* the flaws of the Watch are exposed; they are even at one point described as "the most despised group of men in the entire city" (33). We learn that the "Watch jail was just about big enough for six very small people, which were usually the only sort to be put in it" (89). This insinuates that the Watch operate as a group of bullies in the City, who are only willing to assert their authority over people smaller than themselves. They function inside the hegemonic system and only arrest people that exist below them in said social order.

In Ankh-Morpork, there is an awareness of the potential abuse of power by the police (or at least the potential ineffectiveness of policing) that has resulted in the Watch being stripped of much of their power. This power has been redistributed to other, less conventional, organisations, such as the Thieves Guild, who have established a

> complicated arrangement of receipts and vouchers [which] saw to it that, while everyone was eligible for the attentions of the Guild, no-one had too much, and was this was very acceptable—at least to those citizens who were rich enough to afford the quite reasonable premiums the Guild charged for an uninterrupted life (60).

The effectiveness of this system is praised as we learn that the "Watch hadn't liked it, but the plain fact was that the thieves were far better at controlling crime than the Watch had ever been" (60). This redistribution of power could potentially be mapped onto Kraus' reading of *Discworld* as containing "acts of utopian incitements" that encourage "audiences to imagine worlds where those seemingly eternal, oppressive structures might be toppled" (Kraus 65). Through an absurdist lens, this points out that a system—such as policing systems which tend

to incentivise less crime through brute force punishment—might be less efficient than a system that focuses on incentivising less crime through more positive forms of reinforcement.

This political system involves a redistribution of power from the traditional hegemonic systems that are typically entrusted to authorised versions of masculinity—such as the police—to those that are the more typically marginalised and not authorised as 'acceptable' masculinities. This redistribution of power is not completely anti-patriarchal as the Thieves Guild still appears to be a hegemonic, male-led organisation. However, it does present an effective disruption, and potential subversion, of the patriarchal systems that readers are most familiar with, such as the police. Therefore, when Carrot unlawfully arrests the leader of the Thieves Guild, he is working to uphold the systems that are more similar to our own systems of hegemonic power and working against the systems that Discworld offers up as a mode of disruption. Clúa's reading of Carrot's commitment to the pervading systems as a "celebrat[ion] of traditional masculinity" is grotesque given Carrot's opposition to the modes of disruption that *Discworld* presents (192). Clúa's argument fails to engage holistically with Carrot on *Discworld*'s terms, and her reading represents a disconnect between the satirical parodic elements of Pratchett's treatment of law and order and their praise of Carrot's character (192).

The Heterosexual Dynamic

The previous discussion demonstrated that Clúa's praise of Carrot falls apart when considered alongside his positionality in the wider power structures of patriarchy. In this section, I interrogate how Carrot's lack of understanding of the dynamics of gender restricts his agency within a gendered narrative; this, in turn, inhibits him from operating as a subversively

masculine figure. I contend that Clúa, despite opting for a holistic approach that draws from moments across the City Watch series, is selective in her use of evidence to support her claims. This is compounded by a lack of the necessary interrogation of some of the key moments that define Carrot's relationship to gender. Clúa's argument about Carrot's subversive actions centres around his relationship with the female werewolf Angua.

Clúa uses *The Fifth Elephant* as her key text for unpacking how Carrot subverts gendered narratives. Clúa finds that the relationship with Angua offers "moments in which Carrot's heroism and exemplary masculinity are interestingly rewritten and modified" (189). She even goes as far as claiming that

> In *The Fifth Elephant*, the trope of the damsel in distress who has to be saved by her lover is *subverted* when Angua escapes to her native Uberwald and Carrot abandons his responsibility in the city, resigning from the command of the Watch, to follow her. (189; emphasis added)

Clúa argues that this subversion is generated as "the novel […] reverses the cliché" of the damsel in distress narrative. By following Angua when she leaves Ankh-Morpork,[1] it initially appears that Carrot is participating in typical gendered narrative of the male hero chasing after the damsel in distress to save her. Nonetheless, Clúa argues that because Carrot's venture to follow Angua leads to him being "rescued by Angua […] when he is on the verge of collapse" a subversion of the typical gendered narrative is generated (189).

Clúa does not initially attribute the subversion directly to Carrot's actions. Instead, she merely claims that the "trope of the damsel in distress who has to be saved by her lover" is

[1] She is leaving to return to her homeland to deal with a family crisis as her brother Wolfgang (who will be discussed more in the following chapter) is attempting to establish a Nazi-style fascist regime where werewolves rule over other species.

subverted rather than claiming that it is subverted *by* Carrot (189). Yet, the evidence that she supplies for causing the subversion is Carrot's actions, making his agency in the situation foundational to the subversion occurring. Clúa points out[2] that the novel "reverses the cliché and Carrot's foray into Überwald ends with him lost and helpless, needing to be saved by Angua and her company of wolves," which generates a subversive narrative (189). Whilst this is indeed a parody of the typical gendered narrative, it does not necessarily produce a subversive masculinity. Clúa's implication that Carrot himself is subversive then hinges on Carrot's refusal to participate in a love triangle between himself, Angua, and her old 'friend' Gavin in *The Fifth Elephant*. Clúa claims that, because Carrot might be actively refusing to participate in this narrative, he generates the subversion. However, there is an ambiguity in the text (which Clúa herself notes, 190) as to whether Carrot understands the implication that Angua and Gavin have a romantic history.

Clúa' finds "that we do not know whether [Carrot] candidly believes that there is nothing between Angua and Gavin or whether he wants to believe this is the case" (190). To support this point Clúa quotes Carrot relaying the information that Angua and Gavin are "old friends" to Vimes, with Vimes seeing "nothing but the usual completely open honesty anywhere in Carrot's expression" (Clúa 190; The *Fifth Elephant* 359). It is true that a refusal to participate in a heteronormative narrative would represent a genuine subversion of typical gendered roles. I find that despite Clúa acknowledging "we do not know" the extent to which Carrot genuinely believes that there is nothing between Gavin and Angua, she attributes an agency to Carrot that he does not have in the situation (190). In what follows, I propose that a more concrete reading of Carrot is possible when his relationship to gender from across the series

[2] With a lack of textual evidence a Master's student would surely be chastised for.

is considered. This reading demonstrates that he is unable to *actively* participate in gendered narratives and is therefore unable to genuinely subvert masculinity in his refusal of the love triangle.

Tellingly, despite Clúa drawing on moments from across the series, she does not consider the moment in the series that most directly address Carrot's relationship to gender. The key moment for understanding Carrot's relationship to sex and gender comes in a description we are given after he and Angua have slept together for the first time in *Men at Arms*:

> Although he was indeed simple, he wasn't stupid, and he'd always been aware of what might be called *mechanics.* He'd been acquainted with several young ladies, and had taken them on many invigorating walks to see fascinating ironwork and interesting civic buildings until they'd unaccountably lost interest. He'd patrolled the Whore Pits often enough, although Mrs Palm and the Guild of Seamstresses were trying to persuade the Patrician to rename the area The Street of Negotiable Affection. But he'd never seen them in relation to himself, had never been quite sure, as it were, where he fitted in. (311)

To foreground the discussion of this example, it is crucial to stress that—as Butler has pointed out and I have explored in Chapter One—the *mechanics* of sex do not (and should not) have a mimetic relationship to the *mechanics* of gender. This passage is extremely clear. Carrot "is not stupid" and therefore, it is implicit that he has figured out where he 'fits in' to the *mechanics* of biological sex. However, the passage also describes and alludes to another set of *mechanics* that Carrot is unsure where he "fits in" to. He even goes as far as stating that "he'd never seen them in relation to himself". I propose that Carrot's unsureness comes in

relation to his understanding and awareness of the *mechanics* of gender. Carrot has been participating in gender through participation in the narratives of dating. Carrot—by taking "several young ladies on many invigorating walks"—is attempting to engage in a gendered narrative. The word invigorating" gestures towards passion and flirtation. We then learn that he takes them to see "fascinating ironwork and interesting civic buildings" and they all "unaccountably lost interest." Carrot's failure to understand that the narrative of dating requires more than viewing civic buildings disrupts the gendered script. The use of 'unaccountable' tells us that the failure in the flirtation occurs on Carrot's end. Because he cannot see where it is that he "fits in" to these dynamics, he lacks sufficient comprehension of the gendered *mechanics* to actively participate in them in a sustained manner.

Carrot's difficulty in understanding his position in relation to gendered dynamics comes from his cultural perspective. Because he has grown up amongst Dwarfs, Carrot comes from a culture that does not have the same sense of gender that humans do in Discworld, as "they saw no point in distinguishing between the sexes anywhere but in private" (*The Fifth Elephant* 52).[3] Therefore Carrot is to a large extent unable to understand or comprehend human gender. In *Guards! Guards!* Carrot, after saving a "young lady" named Reet from some men who were trying to rob her, accepts her offer when she asks Carrot if he "is interested in Bed" (54). The reader, through the capital 'B', and fact that Reet keeps waking him to ask if he "want[s] anything" are quick to make the connection that the establishment that Carrot has found himself staying in is a brothel (*Guards! Guards!* 54). But Carrot seems completely

[3] Dwarves, no matter their biological sex, all present as male in Discworld.*

* That is until they don't. See: *Feet of Clay, Unseen Academials, Rising Steam, The Fifth Elephant,* and probably some other *Discworld* novels too.

unaware that the space he is staying in is anything but a family's house. Indeed, given that his account comes in a letter to his own mother, his naivety is underscored.

Carrot's agency exists detached from his understanding of gender—effectively making him 'free' from gender. When Angua is abducted by a potential hostile neighbouring state (which Ankh-Morpork is on the verge of going to war with) Vimes feels a sense of discomfort around Carrot's docile reaction to the situation:

> Vimes stopped. There was, if you didn't know Carrot, something wrong with the situation. There were people who, when their girlfriend was spirited away on a foreign ship, would have dived into the Ankh, or at least run briskly along the crust, leapt aboard, and dealt out merry hell on a democratic basis. Of course, at a time like this that would be a dumb thing to do. The sensible approach would be to let people know but even so—
>
> But Carrot really did believe that personal wasn't the same as important. Of course, Vimes believed the same thing. You had to hope that when push came to shove you'd act the right way. But there was something creepy about someone who didn't just believe it, but lived their life by it. (*Jingo* 214)

Clúa suggests that Vimes' nervous feelings about Carrot could be "a suspicion that Carrot is performing a type of masculinity that is too good to be true. Or the other way round: it is hard for them to fully trust his goodness" (189). Clúa is too dismissive of this suspicion; Carrot does indeed appear to be completely free of the—very gendered—expectations around how he should act in his relationship, expectations that Vimes feels quite strongly. Vimes does not find it "creepy" because Carrot believes that he should not run after Angua, but because of the ease with which Carrot is able to calmly apply that belief. Considering that Carrot is so free of

the expectations of his situation and that gender is largely constructed through both internal and external expectations, Carrot is performing a type of masculinity that is 'too good to be true' because he is operating outside of the *mechanics* of gender that construct masculinity. Instead, he functions as a utopian ideal of what might be possible without the constraints and expectations that gender places on people through his inability to see where he "fits in" to the processes of gender.

Vimes is not the only person made uncomfortable by Carrot's ability to detach his agency from social expectations. *Feet of Clay,* the third City Watch novel (and second novel featuring Angua and Carrot's relationship), ends with Angua thinking

> *I'll have to go […] sooner or later he'll see that it can't really work out. Werewolves and humans… we've both got too much to lose. Sooner or later I'll have to leave him.* (415)

Angua situates her feelings of hesitance around their relationship within cultural/species differences rather than dynamics of gender; yet she still links her doubts to the same sense of obliviousness in Carrot makes Vimes uncomfortable, due to their relation to gender. Noticing that Angua seems upset, Carrot offers to take Angua to the Dwarf Bread Museum as he believes it might "cheer [her] up" (414). In making this offer, although well meaning, Carrot has severely misread the situation. Rather than understanding and discussing the troubles in their relationship, he believes that Angua will have an interest in a bread museum—which she certainly does not. In response:

> Angua stared at him. It was the stare that Carrot so often attracted. It roamed every feature of his face, looking for the tinniest clue that he was making some

> kind of joke at the expense of everyone else. Every sinew in her body *knew* that he must be, but there was not a clue, not a twitch to prove it. (414-5)

Angua's expectation that Carrot is secretly aware of all the ironies that his behaviour presents two key relevant implications. One, it does on a level prove Carrot has the potential to subvert the expectation of what male behaviour would look like *if* he had agency in the situation. But two, it also suggests that there is an innate subversive, trickster-like-behaviour that Angua expects of Carrot in some shape or form that he is unable to enact. Therefore, Carrot becomes a subversion and parody of subversive behaviours, rather than actively being genuinely subversive himself.

Closing the Case of the Questionable Captain Carrot

Clúa is correct in diagnosing that a subversion occurs through Pratchett's deployment of the tropes of fantasy and romance and his undermining of the damsel in distress trope through a 'reformulation'. I find it difficult, given the examples Clúa gives and the ones I have discussed, to attribute this subversion to an entity beyond the narrative voice and Pratchett himself as the author. Relative to literary criticism, "to subvert" is "[t]o challenge and undermine (a conventional idea, form, genre, etc.), esp. by using or presenting it in a new or unorthodox way" ("Subvert, V., Sense 6."). This frames subversion as a process that involves participation in a trope with the intention to undermine it, immediately lending the term to parody and satire. Butler's claim that queer identity is subverting gender dynamics and power relations rests on the fact that queer identities still actively participate in the larger system of gender. Therefore, for a masculinity to subvert hegemonic systems of gender it must also be actively participating in gender.

The larger macro movements that Carrot participates in hint towards a more functional world where a fundamental 'goodness' can move beyond the limitations that are created by the hegemonic systems of gender. Yet, the duality of his cultural position means that he is immune to gendered expectations within human dominated society (whilst also being removed from the issues that come with Dwarven ideals of gender). Existing in this state of flux gives us a glimpse of what is possible in a world that moves beyond our familiar construction of gender. It also represents an impossible utopia. Although an abolishment of gender could represent an ideal world where behaviours are not bound by gendered narratives, this is simply impossible in our current time and moment.

Clúa has demonstrated that despite *Discworld* holding all the theoretical foundations necessary within its performance of genre to generate a space where genuinely subversive masculinities *should* thrive, there is a risk of idealising the wrong elements; failing to be attentive to the foundational elements of gender theory can easily lead to a trap wherein the 'traditional' elements of masculinity are 'celebrated' without sufficient breaking down of traditional masculinity into its constituent parts. If Clúa is treated as representative of what a 'masculinity studies' reading brings to interpretations of *Discworld*, their chapter exposes the ineffectiveness/limitations of this approach.

Where Masculinity Isn't

Nine months into writing this thesis a new book titled *Power and Society in Terry Pratchett's Discworld,* edited by Justine Breton*,* was released. My nerves ran high. A book about power and society would unquestionably contain some level of engagement with ideas of patriarchy, which would in turn require engagement with masculinity. Would this book make arguments

that undermine my own claims about Pratchett and patriarchy? Would it simply make claims that are so alike my own that my research would feel redundant? No, not at all. What happened was far more terrifying. The book, dedicated to unravelling and understanding the "larger issues of power and society" in Discworld had not one single mention of patriarchy or masculinity (Breton "Building a fantasy civilization" 2).

As Clúa is the only scholar to directly address masculinity in relation to Discworld, to gain a fuller picture of how masculinity in Discworld is treated by scholarship the scope of this discussion must be expanded to explore what implications exist around masculinity when it is *not* directly discussed. It becomes necessary to not just understand that masculinity is being ignored or swept under the rug, but also to be attentive to the processes by which masculinity becomes side-lined within wider discussion. Only with an understanding of the specific ways and circumstances in which masculinity is being neglected can we begin to establish *why* it is being neglected.

Breton Reopens the Case of Captain Carrot

When Clúa's conclusions about Carrot is compared to other scholars' readings of Carrot I find that her conclusions about Carrot bear a striking similarity with those of scholars who have not engaged with a 'masculinity studies' perspective. This section will explore the relationships between Clúa's chapter and Justine Breton's chapter "King Carrot and fantasy tropes: Refusing power to build a better society" in *Power and Society in Terry Pratchett's*

Discworld. [4] Breton's chapter presents two key points that build on Clúa's. One: there are situations and narratives in which Carrot does have agency, meaning that Clúa's claims about Carrot fail not because they are hinged on Carrot's agency, but rather because she positions his agency in relation to gender.[5] Two: Breton still falls into the same pitfalls as Clúa in praising the patriarchal institutions that Carrot supports throughout the series, highlighting that there is still space for—and perhaps even a necessity—for a 'masculinity studies' reading of Carrot.

The two scholars, although focusing on similar themes and the same character, have different theoretical lenses. Clúa's argument is structured around a 'celebration' of 'traditional masculinity' and that is ultimately its downfall. On the other hand, Breton's argument is structured around power dynamics, which allows the argument to thrive. By considering Carrot's "refusal of power" and interrogating "[w]hat is 'right,'" Breton generates a more effective image of Carrot's character than the one Clúa presents (141, 143). Despite these differing lenses, both chapters make strikingly similar claims around how Pratchett is re-organising the fantasy genre in relation to Carrot's character. Clúa posits that Carrot is a "rich reformulation of the heroic archetype" that carries out a "rethinking of key elements of masculinity" (192). Similarly, Breton suggests the "reinterpretation of traditional fantasy motifs allows Pratchett to construct a reflection of the challenges of power, from a personal point of view and for society" (146). In stressing the "personal" element in the relationship to

[4] Some of the similarities in Breton and Clúa can be attributed to the fact they are both building on Emily Lavin Leverett's chapter "Carrot Ironfoundersson: Medieval Romance, Narrative Causality and the Ethics of Choice in Terry Pratchett's *Guards! Guards!."* Leverett argues that Pratchett "disrupts" the typical narratives of fantasy and medieval romance "in order to challenge narrative causality" (39). However, because there is very little within Leverett's chapter that Clúa and Breton do not also reiterate, Leverett's stance on Carrot has been sidelined to exist only in the footnotes of this section.

[5] Hinging claims on agency is also a trait that is inherited from Leverett, who argues "Pratchett's own manipulation of tropes demonstrates the necessity of not allowing tropes to govern behavior, instead empowering characters to make their own choices." ("Carrot Ironfoundersson" 39). However, despite Carrot being the focus of their chapter, Leverett never makes claims about what the choices are that Carrot makes, *only* that Pratchett empowers his characters to make choices.

power Breton—just as Clúa did—begins to point towards the importance that Carrot's personal agency will play in her argument. However, where the agency that Clúa read into Carrot's relationship to gendered narratives is easily complicated, he clearly has an active role in cultivating his relationship to power.

Carrot actively refuses power on multiple occasions, "reworking" an impending "narrative causality" constantly suggesting that he is the 'rightful' king of Ankh-Morpork (Leverett "Carrot Ironfoundersson," 39). We can find agency within his actions in his refusal of power that is not present in his lack of participation in gendered narratives.[6] Breton claims that

> Carrot gains an active role in his own refusal of the throne. Far from being a passive figure, detached from the power struggles, he openly opposes the restoration of the monarchy. (143)

As evidence of this, Breton cites that Carrot's comment to Vetinari in *Men at Arms*: "there was a King, the best thing he could do would be to get on with a decent day's work"—and that what a king should be doing is "a bit like being a guard really" (373). Breton centres Carrot's refusal of power on his disinterest in becoming King. Whilst Carrot's disinterest in being king is an element in his refusal of power, I find that once again there is too much of a hypothetical nature to Carrot's statement which Breton cites. Carrot's philosophical opinions about what a King *should* do cannot necessarily be mapped on to a direct refusal of power. No one ever explicitly offers Carrot the throne, despite him fitting into all the tropes of an 'rightful heir'

[6] Reading Connell into this dynamic would, of course, lead to the claim that power is one of the most gendered narratives there is. I would concede that Carrot's refusal of power could be evidence for an active refusal to particiapte in a gendered narrative. However, neither of these pieces of scholarship make an explicit connection between power and gender.

narrative. Instead, there is an implicit—yet vague—narrative trajectory towards him becoming King.

However, Carrot is explicitly offered command of the City Watch. When Vetinari says that Carrot should be promoted to this position in the Watch Carrot responds with "I will not command the Watch, if that's what you mean" (*Men at Arms* 371). So, despite Breton's evidence for Carrot's agency in his refusal of power being weak, the claim that there are still moments where Carrot actively rejects power is sound. Furthermore, because Carrot does actively refuse power there is a destabilisation and redistribution of the more traditional and conservative modes of power that are typically found in fantasy. Because there is a clear instance of Carrot's agency in his refusal of power Breton does prove that Carrot is able to use his position to reformulate the typical tropes of fantasy to create a redistribution and destabilisation of more traditional and conservative modes of power.

Although Breton's evaluation of Carrot's agency is more logically sound than Clúa's, her reading still falls into some of the same traps as Clúa. By praising law and order. Breton praises the "dedication and sincerity" that defines Carrot's "relationship to legislation" (140). This appraisal is similar to Clúa's praise of Carrot's adherence to law and order, which has already been complicated earlier in this chapter. Although Breton still acknowledges that Carrot is "deeply problematic," she does not unpack exactly why this is so; Breton also still praises Carrot's relationship with law and order without the appropriate interrogation of what law and order represents (135). Furthermore, she even goes as far as to support Carrot's "selflessness by setting aside his personal vendetta when Angua is gravely injured choosing to uphold the law instead" (133). This occurs without any deeper interrogation of how Carrot's ability to opt out of the personal gendered narratives puts strain on his and Angua's

relationships, and even causes Vimes discomfort at points in the series. A gendered lens is not necessarily obligatory to understand that indiscriminate adherence to dominant power structures must be a flawed endeavour. Yet, enfolding the understanding of the power relations of masculinity, as they are presented by Connell, *should* represent a natural escalation to critique patriarchy that aids in making this connection. Therefore, Breton's lack of a gendered element in her discussion is in turn limiting the extent to which she can accurately address the limitations of Carrot's refusal of power.

This thesis has its own qualms with Connell's theoretical composition of masculinity. Seeing the ways that both Clúa and Breton develop their readings of Carrot and uncritically praise the patriarchal institutions that Carrot operates within demonstrates that engagement with the theoretical material that exposes the flaws and patterns of patriarchy is still essential in developing robust analysis of masculinities. Therefore, in search for subversive masculinities—and the attempt to find more positive dialects around masculinity—there is a necessity for the inclusion of the more traditional and critical elements of 'masculinity studies' to understand where and how the perpetuation of patriarchy occurs to generate robust claims as to what comprises a genuinely subversive masculinity.

The Status Quo-ification of Masculinity

Feminist theory's prevalence when a gendered lens is applied within literary studies has led to its inclusion often feeling obligatory, or even a necessity, even when gender theory is not the primary theoretical lens. Although well meaning, when the same treatment is not extended onto the masculine it re-enforces a treatment of the masculine being the status quo and the feminine being society's 'alien other.' I argue that, within the microcosm of Pratchett

studies, the obligatory inclusion of the feminist viewpoint (utilised without the appropriate nuance), combined with the neglect to address the masculine, perpetuates the hegemonic position of masculinity as the status quo.

This is demonstrated in relation to Emily Lavin Leverett's article "'At Times Like This It's Traditional That a Hero Comes Forth': Romance and Identity in Terry Pratchett's *Guards! Guards!*." Just as power in Breton's work *should* have naturally lent to a focus on gender, Leverett's focus on identity and romance *should* represent a natural intersection for gender to become a key theoretical lens. Nonetheless, Leverett's reading, which focuses on Samuel Vimes, commander of the City Watch, does not situate his character within systems of gender. Furthermore, despite neglecting to situate Vimes in relation to gender Leverett deliberately highlights the gender of his love interest, Sybil.

When introducing Sybil, Leverett discloses the gendered dynamic of the narrative by stating that in "some epic fantasy, female characters are passive objects of accomplishment: defeat the dragon, overthrow the evil king, win the crusade, and get the girl" (162). In contrast, Vimes' gender is not highlighted; there is a gendered element that is assumed of him in his role as a "hero," but Leverett does not explicitly draw attention to it, except for a brief reference stating "Vimes thinks like a man of the law" (169). This places Leverett's discussion into the trend that Clúa and I have both diagnosed as a wider trend in scholarship discussing Pratchett; when *Discworld*'s female characters are analysed gender often becomes a primary lens that guides the analysis, whereas Pratchett's male characters tend to be analysed without any mention of gender. This comes right down to the language that is used when discussing the characters. As mentioned, Leverett constantly refers to Vimes as a "hero". Whilst the term is predominantly used in romance and epic fantasy—borrowing from the Classical tradition—

to refer to a male warrior figure, in contemporary settings 'hero' can also refer to any "central character or protagonist (often but esp. in later use not necessarily male)" ("Hero, N., Sense 4."). [7] In contrast, Sybil is always referred to as a "heroine" which can *only* be used to refer to a woman, meaning that it does not have the same sense of ambiguity and pulls the discussion into a innately gendered dynamic whenever Sybil is discussed.

Leverett, as Clúa does with Carrot, situates Vimes within the tropes of heroism. Leverett argues that in Vimes' character we see the

> values often associated with […] medieval and fantasy tropes (bravery, honesty, self-sacrifice, humility, kindness, generosity) are good—but they are achieved by choice, not thoughtless replication of patterns. (160)

This once again pulls the focus onto the ways that traditional values of heroism are found in *Discworld*, and are achieved through a reorientation or reformulation of those ideas. It also follows the trend established by both Breton and Clúa that stresses the male character's personal agency in achieving the reformulation of genre. This leads Leverett into a similar pitfall that both Clúa and Breton found themselves in, whereby Vimes is praised for being a "man of the law" without any interrogation of what an adherence to law and order represents when being considered in relation to patriarchal structures and systems (169).

Exposing Failures. Embracing Conundrums.

7 It is necessary to note that when Leverett discusses Carrot as a hero they mention a "hero (who is almost universally male)" ("Carrot Ironfoundersson" 35). This chapter, coming two years after the one being unpacked above, suggests that by 2020 there is an increased awareness of the necessity to draw attention to the masculine. However, even when it is mentioned it is still side-lined (through the use of brackets) as a piece of clarification rather than an integral part of the argument as Sybil's gender is.

The three pieces of scholarship considered here represent a failure for 'masculinity studies' to engage with *Discworld*. Breton and Leverett demonstrate an inadvertent—or, terrifyingly, a deliberate—ignorance of a focus on masculinity when engaging with the men of the City Watch. This in turn leads to blindly praising men for their dedication to 'law and order.' Furthermore, when a 'masculinity studies' lens is applied by Clúa the necessary interrogation of man's obligation to systems of 'law and order' is not carried out, resulting in the same blind praise. Reading Clúa alongside Breton and Leverett reveals the behind-the-scenes celebration of 'traditional masculinity' that the scholarship analysing Pratchett's City Watch members has engaged in.

Chapter One diagnosed 'masculinity studies' as being in a self-defeating position whereby the tools to subvert systems of gender are often completely unavailable to members of the hegemonic bloc of masculinities, because they are enfolded into systems that perpetuate patriarchy. This analysis of the scholarship on Pratchett's City Watch has demonstrated a similar self-defeating trap. Clúa's chapter appears in a book that "insist[s]" that it is "patriarchy" that is toxic rather than masculinity itself, yet Clúa's argument is dangerously unreflective about the implications patriarchy presents in the positioning of a healthier non-toxic version of masculinity (S. Martín & M.I. Santaulàri 8). As a new 'masculinity studies' emerges that seeks to "radically undermine the edifice" that "sustains hegemonic masculinity" to accommodate "new freer masculinities" it seems that there is a risk of romanticising the pre-existing ties that masculinities, who seek to make positive change, already have to patriarchy (2).

Given these failures, I propose a radically different approach to 'masculinity studies' needs to be deployed in order to establish genuine subversions. I argue that Clúa's failing

comes from borrowing the movements of a feminist approach in their application of 'masculinity studies,' without the appropriate adaptation for a masculine sphere. Feminism often functions on the premise of celebrating traditional elements of femininity that society has othered and demonised. A feminist reading of Pratchett's Witches novels takes a stance that "the repeated performance of gendered roles by Pratchett's witches provides the basis for a social contract that in turn legitimises their practice of magic" (Hutchings-Budd 7). This position is arguing that the feminine coded magic that witches partake in—and is coded as lesser than the masculine—is uplifted to share a similar cultural reverence to the traditionally respected masculine coded magic performed by wizards. However, because masculinity already occupies the position of the dominant status quo in society, celebrating its 'traditional' elements will always generate a grotesque endorsement of the hegemonic position of patriarchy, albeit an unintentional one.

The conundrums masculinity presents *must* be embraced. In the attempt to generate a *genuine* subversion of problematic systems of gender it is ultimately flawed to look to "goodness as a most potent tool to detox masculinity" (2). Instead, masculinity must be embraced with all its misgivings at the fore in order to construct a model of masculinity that has the appropriate awareness of, and defences against, the tools of hegemonic models that would seek to prey upon pre-existing—often unavoidable and invisible—obligations to patriarchy. For patriarchy to be subverted by men within the hegemonic bloc of masculinities it must be done internally. If patriarchy is only ever subverted by men who exist outside of the hegemonic bloc, then the functions of the hegemonic bloc would never genuinely shift. Instead, I propose that we must search for subversions that come from within the hegemonic

bloc. An overlap between hegemonic, complicit, and subversive relations of power needs to be established in order to generate a sustainable subversion of patriarchy.

Chapter Three: Samuel the Cynic and Vimes the Coward's Subversive Performances

> In fact, she had transferred all the holdings of her family, said family consisting solely of her at that point, to him in the old fashioned but endearing belief that a husband should be the one doing the owning.* She had insisted. (*Snuff* 17-18)
>
> *And thenceforth [Vimes] would be glad to get second place in almost every domestic decision. Lady Sybil took the view that her darling husband's word was law for the City Watch while, in her own case, it was a polite suggestion to be graciously considered (*Snuff* 18).

Samuel Vimes, the central character of the City Watch series of *Discworld* novels, is associated with the most direct tools that *Discworld*'s prose utilises to achieve subversion. One of the most recognisable traits of Pratchett's writing is his use of footnotes, which he deploys more frequently than most other fiction authors.[1] He is not the first to use them in fiction and is likely drawing from metafictional works such as *Pale Fire* by Vladmir Nabokov. The footnote has since been popularised within the fantasy genre with authors such as Suzanna Clarke in *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* and Heather Fawcett in *Emily Wilde's Encyclopaedia of Faeries* embracing the practice.[2] By describing the financial movements of Sybil's wealth to Vimes through their marriage, the footnote quoted above creates an uncomplicated sense of subversion. Initially the main text makes it appear the relationship between Vimes and Sybil follows conventional gendered roles; roles that are outlined by a legal system that perpetuates

[1]This is largely accomplished by using any at all.
[2] Many, including myself, place the sole blame for this on Pratchett.

patriarchy. The word "should" sets an external expectation of how she and Vimes are expected to act, as well as an internalisation of that expectation that results in her transferring "all the holdings of her family" over to Vimes. However, the footnote undercuts, disrupts, and subverts the theoretical power that Vimes has in the role of husband. Although the main body of the text still contains a layer of satire implicated in the tone generated by "old fashioned but endearing," the footnote reinforces the satirical elements of the text, directly spelling them out. What was, in the main body of the text, a solid expectation and belief of how a gendered narrative "should" play out is now adjusted by the footnote to become a mere "polite suggestion." This undermines the power that Vimes *should* have in the relationship and generates a fluidity around the treatment of gendered expectations. The expectations become less absolute, although they might prompt some "consideration," they are not at all binding, and definitely not an absolute imperative on how things *should* play out.

The Vimes we are presented with here, in *Snuff,* is fully formed. Just as every Sam Vimes we meet after his initial introduction in *Guards! Guards!* is. Although his limits are tested throughout the series, and he is put in incredibly difficult situations, the reader knows, beyond any reasonable doubt, that Sam Vimes will do the right thing.[3] He does not always do this in the typical expected way that a fantasy hero does. In *The Fifth Elephant* his wife, Sybil, thinks that Vimes is "[n]ot a gentleman, thank goodness, but a gentle man" (51). In *Men at Arms* he refuses the power of the 'gonne' that many others try to use for themselves. In *Feet of Clay* Vimes demonstrates his solidarity with the people of the city as he thwarts a plot by the City's Elite to reinstate a monarch. In *Jingo* he makes the necessary arrests to stop an international war. In *The Fifth Elephant* (despite a complicated killing that will be discussed in

[3] Except for that one moment in *The Fifth Elephant* that the next chapter spends 3000 words trying to understand…

the next chapter) he serves as an ambassador for Anhk-Morpork and stabilises complex international diplomatic situations. In *Thud!* he once again stops a war, whilst also resisting the Summoning Dark (a supernatural entity that takes over people and makes them do bad things).[4]

Vimes' butler Wilikins seems to attribute this, as many *Discworld* fans also do, to an innate 'vimesyness' quality within Sam. Wilikins tells Vimes: "I think Sam Vimes is at his best when he is confident that he's Sam Vimes" (53). The aim of this chapter is to identify what this 'vimesyness' quality is and link it to a subversive performance of masculinity. To find the origins of this 'vimesyness' I turn to *Guards! Guards!,* the first novel in the series, as the moment when Sam Vimes is not yet confidently Sam Vimes. By following Vimes' first journey from a drunk in the gutter to growing into being confidently Sam Vimes I argue that the innate 'vimesyness' will reveal itself.

Cowardice and Cynicism

The introductory chapter of this thesis identified the movements of genre made by *Discworld* that make it an ideal space to begin a search for subversive masculinities. A key aspect in this process is the paradoxical movements that the genre identity of the series undergoes in order to disrupt traditional narratives. I now argue that these paradoxical movements occur not only on the macro level of genre, but also on the micro level of Pratchett's prose. The footnotes create a perfect initial example of this, where the prose of the text seeks to clarify itself in order to create a direct destabilisation of its content. This chapter focuses on how this use of

[4] This list is getting long and I am feeling lazy. The righteous exploits of Sir Samuel Vimes in the two books not mentioned here (*Night Watch* and *Snuff*) are discussed in detail in the final chapter of this thesis anyway. You can read about them there.

paradox can be mapped onto an individual character's ability to actively navigate, and untimely subvert, a gendered narrative.

In navigating this use of paradox and subversion I hope to avoid the pitfalls identified in Chapter Two, which highlighted the failure of a scholarly attempt to trace subversion through a 'masculinity studies' reading of *Discworld*. Despite *Discworld* being the ideal place to find subversive men, Clúa's analysis of Captain Carrot ultimately slipped into the trap of perpetuating patriarchy. In so doing, Clúa indirectly dismisses Vimes as a site for the search for healthy masculinities. She notes that scholars tend to find that Pratchett has a "preference for heroes paradoxically defined by cowardice or cynicism" (182). She, therefore, opts to select Carrot as a site for subversions of masculinity because he is a hero who falls outside of the trend of cowardice and cynicism. Carrot is even described as "to have not even a trace element of irony in his soul," placing him as far away from cynicism as possible (60). In opposition to Clúa's argument, this chapter focuses on Vimes as a site for subversion precisely *because* he can be defined by his cynicism. Just as Pratchett's footnotes are so recognisable, his writing is well known for its cynical tone. Working with the dominant currents of *Discworld*–such as cynicism—therefore offers the clearest roadmap to uncovering subversive masculinities.

By framing the bulk of their argument around the concept of 'heroism', scholars such as Clúa and Leverett write the men of Discworld into a long-standing dichotomy of acceptable and unacceptable masculinities. They harken back to an ancient concept of a male in the form of a ἥρως (hero), which begins with figures such as Perseus, Hercules, Archilles, and Odysseus ("ἥρως"). On the other hand, cowardice as a concept has always been positioned in opposition to manliness. Looking to the Greek origins, ἀνανδρίᾳ (anandria) translates to "want of manhood" or "cowardice" ("ἀνανδρίᾳ"). The word is formed with a negative particle (ἀν)

being added to ἀνδρεία (andreia), which translates as “manhood” or “courage” (“ἀν-”; “ἀνδρεία”). This establishes a dichotomy where courage—to the ancient Greeks—is synonymous with manhood and cowardice is a literal removal of courage, and by extension manliness. In ancient Greek cynicism, coming from κυνικός (cynic), literally translates to “dog-like” and has a somewhat derogatory usage, which will be unpacked in detail in the coming arguments (“κυνικός”). Either consciously or unconsciously, Clúa is pulling on etymological threads that have been laid out by the ancient Greeks of what constitutes acceptable masculinity. She side-lines characters that exhibit traits that have historically represented socially unacceptable modes of masculinity in favour of characters that represent more typically endorsed modes of masculinity.

Despite Clúa’s misstep by writing Carrot and Vimes into this dichotomy, she inadvertently supplies the terminology to describe what is so distinctive about the masculinities of *Discworld*. I argue that by exploring how Vimes exists in relation to cowardice and cynicism examples of his subversions will be revealed. This chapter will unpack how cowardice and cynicism exist in relation to not only Vimes, but also to the theoretical frameworks that have been established in the first two chapters of this thesis.

Vimes the Coward

This section establishes how Vimes’ displays of cowardice generate a destabilisation of Connell’s framework of masculinities, specifically *complicity*. This destabilisation generates the necessary space and dynamism within Connell’s rigid framework for Vimes to then partake in subversive performances of gender that undermine the hegemonic systems (which will be explored later through cynicism). Despite Vimes not being a character who is typically defined

by cowardice, there are moments in the initial introduction to Vimes' character in *Guards! Guards!* when elements of cowardice present themselves. However, throughout the narrative of *Guards! Guards!* Vimes grows out of this 'cowardice' and by the end of the novel it is no longer a major aspect of his character, nor does it return in the later City Watch novels.

The only moment across the series when Vimes is actively, clearly, and physically 'cowardly'[5] is when he is spectating Carrot's fight in the bar, which the previous chapter of this thesis has already problematised. I claim that this moment is a building block that generates the necessary rejection of patriarchal expectations that functions as a foundation for Vimes' later subversive actions. As the fight ensues, Vimes feels unsure if he should step in or not:

> Conscience said: There's three of you. He's wearing the same uniform. He's one of your *men*. Remember poor old Gaskin.
>
> Another part of his brain, the hated despicable part which had nevertheless enabled him to survive in the Guards these past ten years, said: It's rude to butt in. We'll wait until he's finished, and then ask him if he wants any assistance. Besides it isn't Watch policy to interfere in fights. It's a lot simpler if you go in afterwards and arrest anyone recumbent. (85)

Here, Vimes' actions can—and have been—categorised as cowardly. Leverett is critical of how Vimes acts; she claims that Vimes' "inability to act" means he does not "step in to help people" as it would "put himself at risk" ("At Times Like This" 161). Situating this moment like this enables it to become a jumping off point for Vimes' character to develop and become a better—braver—person in the future. Yet, given that the previous chapter problematised Carrot's bar fight, Vimes opting not to partake can hardly be a negative action. Instead, in my

[5] I could be convinced by an argument that there are times when Vimes is emotionally, figuratively, or indirectly 'cowardly' at times.

reading I find this moment to be an opportunity to reorientate our understanding of not only cowardice, but also Connell's concept of complicit masculinity.

Despite the text's initial implication that Vimes is acting in a cowardly way by labelling the part of him that chooses not to partake in the fight as "despicable," his hesitance to enter the fight could also be the seed of his potential to act subversively. The "embarrassed silence" suggests that the men are aware of an expectation that they should be in the bar, assisting Carrot in his fight (85). The expectations are directly linked to the role the men have as members of the Watch and are constructed through a sense of comradery. The fact that the men are "wearing the same uniform" prefaces the "the hated despicable part" of Vimes that tells him not to step in. Vimes has been trained and socially conditioned to react to the markers of patriarchy—such as a police officer's uniform—and feel an allegiance to those markers. These gendered expectations that Vimes—and his fellow officers—feel in their role as policemen acts as a constant pressure to engage in the same violent actions to perpetuate patriarchy that Carrot enacts in the bar fight.

The 'cowardly' actions of the men come in the form of them *not* acting. They engage in a passivity that does not serve patriarchal interests, with those patriarchal systems deploying an expectation that men should be active participants in their endeavours. Within Connell's frameworks this passivity still functions as a complicit act that, although it does not directly perpetuate patriarchy, enables its perpetuation. However, I aim to reorientate this *complicity*. These men are complicit in that they are not interfering with the perpetuation of patriarchy. Their inaction also makes overt the patriarchal expectation that they *should* be actively assisting Carrot, which functions to both reveal and critique the patriarchal script. In this sense *complicity* not only implies a continued perpetuation of the patriarchy but also has

the potential to disrupt this paradigm through an inability to partake in the assigned role that an individual has been assigned in perpetuation of the patriarchy.

Vimes' ability to opt out of the expectations of how he should be acting and committing violence perhaps do echo a sense of cowardice (or 'unmanliness'). However, Vimes' *complicity* could also be a necessary step in his journey to acknowledging how dangerous *The Laws and Ordinances of The Cities of Ankh and Morpork* that Carrot wields is, and Vimes' eventual decision to destroy it. Connell's framework of masculinity treats *complicity* as a force that serves to perpetuate the patriarchal institutions. I suggest that it is also a necessary intermediatory step in rejecting patriarchal expectations (that might label them as a coward). Vimes' actions here cannot be labelled as a subversion of patriarchy. It would even be a stretch to claim that he is participating in an active rejection of patriarchal expectations. I find that his actions still represent a disruption of patriarchal expectations, and generates space between the agent and those expectations, in turn laying necessary groundwork for a future subversion to occur.

Samuel the Cynic

Samuel Vimes, despite the small moments of 'cowardice' in *Guards! Guards!,* is predominantly defined by his cynicism. Pratchett, whose writing is famed for its cynical tone, uses the word "cynic" and its forms "cynical" and "cynicism" 49 times across the *Discworld* series.[6] Twenty-one (approx. 43%) of these usages occur within the City Watch series, despite the City Watch only making up eight of the 41 novels (20%) of the *Discworld* series. This higher

[6] These statiscis are generated by searching e-books. Because the e-books used were a combination of USA and UK publications simillar searches could potentially yield slightly different results depending on which specific publications are being used due to slight differences between the UK and USA editions.

concentration of "cynic" in the City Watch series makes it a natural place to begin to unpack how cynicism operates within *Discworld*. Vimes himself is also often directly credited with cynicism. In *Guards! Guards!* we learn Vimes "had style. It was cynical, blacknailed style" (301).

The meaning of cynic has shifted since its conception, and "today's connotation of the name Cynicism is radically different from its classical origins" (Schutijer 33). In ancient Greek cynic—literally meaning dog-like in ancient Greek—was originally a (derogatory) nickname given to the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes, whose "flamboyantly disgusting actions and savage repartee earned him the nickname ("Cynics" *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*). Diogenes and his followers were therefore referred to as the "cynics" and their philosophical movement as "cynicism". Modern definitions of cynicism tend to attribute being cynical with a nihilistic perspective, claiming that someone who is cynical might have inclinations "to doubt the value or worth of something, or the likelihood of its success" or "to believe that people are motivated purely by self-interest." ("Cynic, N., Sense 2."; "Cynic, N., Sense 3."). In contrast to this modern definition, the ancient cynics were "dedicated moralists, not nihilists." ("Cynics" *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*). There is very little concrete information know about the ancient Cynics, as most of what is known has "been handed down to us largely though collections of *chreiai,* anecdotes about and sayings by famous persons" (Shea 3). Much of what has survived is derogatory snippets, but there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the Cynics had a "disregard for accepted social norms and materialist matters [that are] translated into theatrical and offensive acts" (Schutijer 40).[7] Alternatively, when attempting to see past the slander, the evidence suggests that the Cynics appear to have believed that

[7] Such as a particularly prevalent story about Diogenes the Cynic—founder of the doctrine—succumbing to lustful bodily urges in the marketplace and proceeding to relieve himself.

people should live a "natural life, devoid of luxury, pride, or malice" and sought to live a life that would be considered shameful by most, whilst frowning on many societal conventions ("Cynics." *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*).

Throughout *Discworld* Pratchett demonstrates a direct awareness of these etymological origins of 'cynicism'. In *Small Gods* there are several references to the ancient Cynics, often alongside other ancient philosophical doctrines such as the "Stoics" and "Epicureans" (146). At one point, alongside the Epicureans and the Stoics the Cynics are mentioned as being "big drinkers" (137). *Small Gods* also features a character by the name of "Didactylos" who lives in a "barrel," making him a clear nod to Diogenes the Cynic who allegedly lived in an amphora on the streets of Athens (147). This creates a direct link between cynicism as a philosophical movement and *Discworld*. Pratchett also demonstrates an awareness of the connection "cynic" has to dogs. In *Men at Arms* 'cynic' is used twice, both times in reference to dogs. Gaspode, who is a talking dog, is described as having a voice "full of withering cynicism" (151).[8] Gaspode has a cynicism that lines up more with the more modern meaning of cynicism, he appears weary and sceptical. However, as a street dog he also channels some of the Greek meaning of the word. In ancient Greek κυνικός (cynic) could mean "doggish" but it can also mean "shameless," as the cynics believed in leading a life that broke free of societal expectations and constraints and did not think one should feel shame as a result ("κυνικός"). Gaspode's decision to live on the streets channels this element of shamelessness. The Cynics were given their name by people who believed that due to the higher cognitive processes of humans, they should not live a shameless life, and do 'dog-like' things such as living on the

[8] in *Moving Pictures* Gaspode is also described as having a "cynical eyebrow"—the only use of the word in the entire novel (156).

streets. Gaspode—a dog that also has those higher cognition processes—represents an irony around that implication.

Pratchett also connects the dog-like cynicism to the more philosophical Cynicism. At another point in *Men at* Arms a poodle says to Angua—who is a werewolf herself—that "all dogs are wolves […] but cynically and cruelly severed from their true destiny by the manipulations of so-called humanity" (293). This philosophical musing from the poodle takes on a position that could easily be likened to the Cynics own philosophy. By positioning humanity as cruel manipulators against the more natural temperament of animals—in this case dogs—we see echoes of the Cynics' philosophical position that has been seen as "the major assault on 'civilized values' in the ancient world" due to their aim to live life as naturally as possible ("Cynic" *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*). This philosophical musing, coming from a dog also once again alludes to Pratchett's awareness of the etymology of the word meaning 'dog' and an understanding of what is known of the Cynics' philosophical doctrine.

The Oxford Companion to Philosophy claims that reasons that the cynics were despised by both their Greek contemporaries and later Roman philosophers. It claims this despisal

> lies in the natural assumption that those who despise *our* values must despise all values. Cynics, like early Christians, were reckoned misanthropes because they preached against class division, greed, and enmity, and showed their own vulgarity by not being as ashamed as others thought they should be of their lack of honour. ("Cynics")

This suggests that the cynics were side-lined[9] from serious philosophical discourse precisely because they were willing to radically reimagine how a more equitable world could be

[9] This side-lining is a process that continues into the present day as "Cynicsm is frequently omitted from historical reconstructions of classical philosophy" (Schutijer 47).

organised. We might consider that the Cynics were a group who, due to their ability and propensity to imagine a world that operated differently to that of the hegemonic patriarchal systems, found themselves being cast out and shunned by those systems. The members of those patriarchal systems were then the ones who wrote the history books—and thus continued to control what constituted an authorised, or unauthorised, mode of masculinity. Schutijser finds that "the Cynic stance is one of intentionally transgressing society's norms and boundaries, not of being oblivious to them" (39). Due to this propensity and desire to transgress the boundaries of society Cynicism could hold the key to generating subversions of the patriarchal systems. Allen even goes as far as to claim that the site of Diogenes' "more deviant devious Cynicism" was "unprincipled and doggedly subversive" ("Ancient schools and the Challenge of Cynicism").

Perhaps intentionally, perhaps by simple accident through following the currents of language and the universe, Pratchett seems to have utilised the word "cynic" and its forms in ways that establish connections to the philosophical roots of the word. I argue that this positioning of cynicism means that we can read Vimes within the concepts of Cynic philosophy. The modern rejection of the value of the street-dwellers philosophy has been noted:

> Many a Cynic, […], was doubtless no more than a tramp—but every age and nation but our own has recognized that many a tramp may be a wandering sage. ("Cynics" *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*)

Vimes, when we encounter him early in the series, embodies the image of the tramp that may be a wandering sage. Despite the fact that when we first meet him Vimes is a drunk found on the side of the road, in *Men at Arms,* the second City Watch novel, he bestows some of his

own philosophy upon the reader. “Captain Samuel Vimes’ ‘Boots’ theory of socioeconomic unfairness” is perhaps one of the most resonant moments in the entire *Discworld* series (35). As Vimes contemplates his upcoming marriage to Sybil Ramkin, who we know is a member of the aristocracy, Vimes reflects that the “reason the rich were so rich, was because they managed to spend less money” (34-5). He weighs up how a good pair of leather boots costs fifty dollars, (more than his monthly paycheck) whereas an “*affordable”* pair of boots that might last “for a season or two and then leaked like hell when the cardboard gave out, cost about ten dollars” (35). But Vimes finds

> the thing was that *good* boots lasted for years and years. A man who could afford fifty dollars had a pair of boots that’d still be keeping his feet dry in ten years’ time, while a poor man who could only afford cheap boots would have spent a hundred dollars on boots in the same time *and would still have wet feet*. (35)

Perhaps on its own Vimes’ observation seems obvious and not overtly profound. Nestled within the context of Discworld, which evokes the complicated backdrop of turtles and elephants flying through space, the theory has a simplicity by comparison. The theory has enjoyed a lively existence beyond Discworld, being taught in economics classrooms and even having a charity named after it. It seems naive to believe that Pratchett invented “Boots Theory”.[10] Rather, boots theory has always been there. It exists in proverbs so old they are difficult to attribute, such as “buy cheap, buy twice.” Therefore, Vimes’ position as a drunk wandering the streets in a complicated and absurd world appears to offer a sense of simplicity that seems to have made the philosophy particularly resonant, allowing it to live a full life beyond Discworld.

[10] Although, as of 15th of August 2025 he is attributed as its founder on the “Boots Theory” *Wikipedia* page.

Vimes occupies a paradoxical position between the modern definition of cynicism—as a nihilist—and the ancient philosophical cynics. At times he does assume the worst, as many police officers who see the worst do. In *Feet of Clay* Carrot says that he has "checked up all the records" and cannot find a time a "golem has ever attacked anyone. Or committed any kind of crime" (166). This causes Vimes to respond with "'Oh, come *on,*' […] 'Everyone knows…' he stopped as his cynical ears heard his incredulous voice. 'What, *never?*'" (166). Here is seems that Vimes does initially think the worst of the situation and struggles to believe that a golem has never committed a crime. His comment comes across as problematic as it carries the implication of a racial prejudice that he holds, believing that golems are going to commit crimes. Although this prejudice could also be part of a larger prejudice that Vimes holds by mistrusting *everyone*, there are moments where Vimes does appear to hold specific prejudices against golems. We learn that "Vimes had seen many horrible things on the streets, but the silent golem was somehow the worst" (168). By thinking the worst of the people, Vimes has demonstrated cynicism in the modern sense. However, with an almost dog-like description, it is his own "cynical ears" that catch him out on his assumption comment. This means that the cynicism that he deploys to reflect on his own prejudice operates in opposition to the cynicism he is experiencing in his assumption about the golems. Therefore, Vimes moves between both the modern cynicism and ancient Cynicism. This means that he occupies and embraces the paradoxical position between these two states.

Paradoxical Movements

Vimes comes to occupy a paradoxical position between modern nihilistic cynicism and the ancient Cynic philosophical doctrine that cultivates the ideal conditions for generating

subversions. To reassert what this thesis has previously argued, paradox is innately destabilising and thus lends itself to subversion. I now claim that the paradoxical position in Vimes' cynicism that generates both negative attributes (such as his prejudice against golems) and positive attributes (such as his philosophical critiques of the class system in his 'Boots Theory') is conducive to destabilising and then generating subversions. In what follows I apply this dynamic to gendered narratives with the intention of destabilising them. The remainder of this chapter explores how the duality of the cynical position enables a pivot from Vimes being misogynistically cynical *about women,* to Vimes being subversively cynical *about romance*. I contend that through Vimes' development in *Guards! Guards!* there is an innate moment of paradox that occurs through undercutting his own previously held beliefs. This happens due to a reorganisation and shift in the cynical perspective, away from a more nihilistic cynicism, to a more morally driven cynicism. I claim this shift allows him to subvert gendered narratives because he is also participating in the very elements of them that make them problematic.

I now move to explore the application of this paradoxical movement within Vimes' romantic relationship with Sybil Ramkin. This relationship begins in *Guards! Guards!* and the pair get married in *Men at Arms*. The relationship then remains a constant throughout the rest of the City Watch series.

Cynical about Women

Emily Hulme argues the Cynic philosophical doctrine has always contained a misogynistic attitude. She claims that despite scholarship often perpetuating a narrative that ancient "Cynics are portrayed as progressive on issues of gender" there is, in reality, "a consistent

Cynic hostility towards the feminine, associated as it is with superficiality and conventional social life" (39). Hulme's argument reveals that even when ideologies (such as Cynicism) make an attempt to move towards a better more equal world, the innate anti-woman (or anti-feminine) prejudices of western patriarchal society make it difficult to establish a genuine change. In order to understand how Vimes' Cynicism allows him to be subversive, it must first be established how it makes him misogynist.

When we first meet Vimes on the side of the street in *Guards! Guards!* on the side of the street we enter his drunken train of thought:

> The city wasa, wasa, was wossname. Thing. *Woman.* Thass what it was Woman. Roaring, ancient, centuries old. Strung you along, let you fall in thingy, love, with her then kicked you inna, inna, thingy. Thingy. In your mouth. Tongue. Tonsils. *Teeth*. That's what it, she, did. She wassa…thing, you know, lady dog. Puppy. Hen. *Bitch*. And then you hated her and, and, just when you thought you'd got her, it, out of your, your, whatever, then she opened her great booming rotten heart to you, caught you off bal, bal, bal, thing. *Ance*. Yeah. Thassit. (10)

Leverett notes that in traditional fantasy/romance narratives "the quest is often fulfilled by both reclaiming land and (re)claiming the heroine" ("At Times Like This" 161). She highlights that in Vimes' drunken internal ramble "the city is conflated with a woman." However, Leverett does not address—or even acknowledge—the misogynist implications of Vimes' inner monologue, nor their historical contexts. Vimes' attitude to women—through conflating them with the city, as a "thing"—is innately objectifying. The crescendo builds to an outright misogyny as he refers to the city as "*Bitch.*" At the point of his introduction Vimes embodies the modern sense of cynicism; he thinks the worst of women and takes on a nihilistic attitude

towards them; he believes women will always treat him badly due to no fault of his own. At this point Vimes is yet to present the more philosophically Cynical side of his character.

By linking Sybil—and women in general—to being a city Pratchett toys with metaphors imbued with misogyny which pre-date the genre of modern fantasy. In the western canon the violent siege of a city being intertwined with the capture or courtship of a woman can be traced all the way back to Helen of Troy. It is particularly prevalent in the tradition of medieval romance. Otto Rank claims that such metaphors are employed throughout medieval romance and later European romance narratives and poetry. He finds that an "act of love, obviously drawing on the sadistic motive of mastery, can be conceived and represented symbolically as the conquering of a strong resolute fortress" (17). Corrine Saunders finds that "Romance is complicated by the fact that love and violence can often be intertwined" (189). The most overt example of this that they find within the medieval cannon is Jean de Meun's contributions to *Roman de la Rose*. Saunders argues that the "allegory depicts the 'siege' of the lady by the beloved" (191). The narrative features a lover who is on a quest for a rose that functions as a symbolic representation of love. Saunders argues that "once the Lover has approached the Rose, the castle of Jealousy is raised to protect it, Venus wages war on chastity, and the Lover enlists his forces to storm the castle" (191).

This general misogyny that Vimes demonstrates can also be mapped directly onto his attitude towards Sybil. When Vimes first meets Sybil, she is attempting to get two of her dragons to mate and notes that if one of them is unable to they will get the "choppy-chop" (120). Our narrator tells us:

> Captain Vimes managed to get a grip on himself. He was clearly in the presence of some sex-crazed would-be murderess, insofar as any gender could be determined

> under the strange lumpy garments. If it wasn't female, then references to 'it's me who has the tricky part' gave rise to mental images that would haunt him for some time to come. (120)

The critical tone that Vimes takes in his initial impression of Sybil is cynical in nature. Vimes' description establishes a misogynistic trope. The comments about Sybil's "lumpy garments" draw attention to her body, deploying a judgemental tone that feels inappropriate to the 21st century reader. Referring to Sybil as a "sex-crazed would-be murderess" writes Sybil into a well-established misogynistic trope that can be found in countless examples throughout history. She is castigated in the title and content of John Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* in 1558.[11] She is the in gothic romance, taking the form of Bertha in *Jane Eyre* in 1847. She is present in the femme fatale of hard-boiled detective fiction seen in characters such as Carmen from Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* in 1946. Just as with the example of the woman being a metaphorical city from the previous section, Vimes' inner monologue once again conjures up a tradition of misogyny through its cynicism.

Despite Vimes displaying clear aspects of misogyny in the early parts of the novel, Pratchett is careful to ensure that there is still an aspect of subversion. In Vimes' cynical attitude we see the groundwork for a subversion of gender, even if Vimes himself does not yet have access to it. The extent to which Sybil is able to participate in these misogynistic tropes is partially undercut by Vimes' uncertainty about her gender. Although "lumpy garments" carries a judgemental tone it also represents a potential destabilisation of presumptions about gender. Vimes also becomes unsure of his ability to "determine" Sybil's gender due to the lumpy garments. This, in conjunction with the fact that Sybil is also

[11] A text that Pratchett is no doubt well aware of as it directly inspires his own *Monstrous Regiment*.

described as “toweringly big,” demonstrates that she does not fit into the typical feminine mould (123). Although Vimes’ critical tone delegates her into a role of “monstrous female,” Pratchett is also toying with the trope to show how the trope’s inclusion of more masculine elements into the feminine innately destabilises the gender dichotomy at the same time. As the scene progresses, Sybil begins to flirt with Vimes through playing the role of an aristocratic maiden. She courts Vimes, saying “Captain is such a dashing title” (125). This in turn continues to make Vimes somewhat uncomfortable, and he “gripped his parcel like a chastity belt” (126). The fact that Sybil is the one being forward and initiating the romantic narrative, and the positioning of Vimes as wearing a “chastity belt” inverts the typical gender norms of heterosexual romance. This in turn subverts the larger master narrative of a romance plot.

At first glance Vimes’ thoughts about Sybil’s body could appear to be derogatory, designed to construct a ‘monstrous’ woman for the reader to join in ridiculing. However, they also play an important role in disrupting a perception that sex and gender have a mimetic relationship. Although the cynicism that Vimes holds is not, at this point in the novel, free of patriarchal baggage, it still holds some kind of subversive potential. The comments that if Sybil “wasn’t female, then references to ‘it’s me who has the tricky part’ gave rise to mental images that would haunt him for some time to come”—along with the comments about Sybil’s size and weight—are imbued with a layer of gendered discourse that comes across as potentially derogatory (120). Nonetheless, Pratchett is consistently encouraging his readers to be cynical. Vimes is, in this case, also partially modelling a kind of cynicism that they may wish to avoid, as it carries too much patriarchal baggage. At this point in the novel, Vimes’ cynicism is being used in a pre-programmed way to participate in a larger cultural misogynistic process.

Thus far, my analysis of Vimes and Sybil's relationship has positioned them in a similar position to Clúa's analysis of Carrot and Angua's relationship. Within the plot of *Guards! Guards!* Vimes is placed within a relationship that features subversions of the typical tropes and gender dynamics that dominate the fantasy genre. Yet, I see one key difference. With Carrot we are met with ambiguity as to the extent that he understands the narratives that are occurring. The reader has to extrapolate and speculate about the extent to which he comprehends the gendered narratives from 'blank looks.' With Vimes, Pratchett offers us an intimate glace into Vimes' inner psyche and lets us follow the development of Vimes as he moves past the misogyny that comes with hereditary patriarchal baggage that has been passed down through generations. This allows for further analysis (that was not possible with Carrot) where the dynamics behind these problematic aspects are directly addressed, and a sense of agency to overcome misogyny can occur.

Cynical Towards Romance

I now seek to seek to conjoin the need for agency in generating a subversive masculinity with Vimes' cynicism. I argue that, because the tools that are often available to non-hegemonic identities in their subversions of gender are not always available to the hegemonic bloc of masculinities different tools are required. One such tool that queer identities have access to is "camp." In "Notes on 'Camp'" Susan Sontag's 16th note is as follows:

> Thus, the camp sensibility is one that is alive to a double sense in which some things can be taken. But this is not the familiar split-level construction of a literal meaning, on the one hand, and a symbolic meaning, on the other. It is the

> difference, rather, between the thing as meaning something, anything, and the thing as pure artifice. (57)

Although Sontag notes that camp is not exclusively queer (or "homosexual" to use Sontag's 1960s terminology) it has long had clear associations to queer culture and communities (64). Because camp functions to reveal the "artifice" through moving between the literal and symbolic, it generates awareness and understanding that can be used as a tool to destabilize the presumed mimetic relationships between sex and gender. Although it may not be completely unavailable to the hegemonic bloc, camp does not come as naturally to the hegemonic bloc as it does to the non-hegemonic bloc.

Instead, I claim that as camp is to gay, cynical is to straight. That is, cynicism is a tool that draws attention to the artifice and inadequacies of traditionally gendered narratives, power orders and roles. In turn, that awareness can be used to form an agency that destabilizes those entities from within the hegemonic position. It is Vimes' cynicism that gives him the agency to subvert the gendered narrative between him and Sybil. This section claims that it is Vimes' cynicism that generates the necessary agency for him to engage in the tropes of romance on his own terms, when and where he wishes.

Despite Leverett's reluctance to address masculinity in her analysis of Vimes (exposed in the previous chapter) she does establish some elements I find fundamental to identifying a subversive performance of masculinity, particularly in her stressing of Vimes' agency. Leverett claims that Vimes

> knows the heroic stories, but he remains unbound by them. Instead, Vimes deliberately refuses epic fantasy tropes (which often embrace medieval romance

> tropes), and develops a new identity that surpasses and combines them. ("At Times Like This" 160)

Leverett finds that Vimes' "changing character is demonstrated in his changing attitude towards the city" ("At Times Like This" 161). She notes that Vimes "knows the heroic stories, but he remains unbound by them. Instead Vimes deliberately refuses epic fantasy tropes […] and develops a new identity that surpasses and combines them" (160). Therefore, I use Leverett's analysis of Vimes' arc to agency as a structure to implicate Vimes' Cynicism as the tool that enables him to perform subversive acts of masculinity. This positions Vimes as a character who has agency and is aware of his surroundings.

This sense of agency, generated through Vimes' cynicism, is evident in his interactions with Sybil as the novel progresses. At one point, after being injured, Vimes awakes in Sybil's room where he will eventually be nursed back to health and thinks

> It was the room of a woman, but one who had cheerfully and without any silly moping been getting on with her life while all that soppy romance stuff had been happening to other people somewhere else, and jolly grateful that she had her health. (167)

By simply stating that 'it was the room of a woman," this description, counter to the critical tone in reference to Sybil's gender, immediately asserts Sybil's status as a woman. It also creates space in the narrative for flexibility around Sybil's femininity as it demonstrates that Sybil is uninterested in committing to the narratives and tropes of heterosexual romance at the expense of other aspects of her life, such as her health. As we are focalised through Vimes, seeing the room as he awakens, we see his cynicism take on a new form. Through a process perhaps akin to free indirect discourse, he now is able to use his cynicism to almost slip into

Sybil's head and see the world how she does, or at least to make assumptions about how she is able to see the world. His critical and cynical perspective on the world now gives him the opportunity to connect with and hope to understand how a woman might see the world, rather than to be critical of a woman's body.

Although Sybil's no-nonsense attitude towards romance is presented with a certain reverence, there is still an implication that no participation at all in the narrative of heterosexual romance stops the romance from ever being initiated. At one point in the novel Sybil and Vimes have an awkward goodbye, a moment that is reminiscent of the classic 'no you hang up' romantic trope. Sybil's potential resistance to the tropes of heteronormative romance makes Vimes hesitant to engage in them. After the awkward exchange, as Vimes walks away he

> could feel her gaze on the back of his neck as he did so, or at least he told himself that he could. She'd be standing in the doorway, nearly blocking out the light. Just watching me. But I'm not going to look back, he thought. That would be a really silly thing to do. I mean, she's a lovely person, she's got a lot of common sense and an enormous personality, but really…
>
> I'm not going to look back, even if she stands there while I walk all the way down the street. Sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind.
>
> So when he heard the door shut when he was only halfway down the drive he suddenly felt very, very angry, as if he had just been robbed. (308)

This is the key moment to linking cynicism and agency in *Guards! Guards!*. The inner dialogue from Vimes demonstrates that he has an awareness that Sybil is not one to participate in the soppy tropes of romance. The fact that Vimes thinks that looking back would be a "silly" thing

to do and his mention of Sybil's "common sense" shows that, despite the fact that he clearly wants to, he knows that looking back and participating in the tropes of heterosexual romance does not feel right. He is able to take his cynicism from earlier, in his analysis of Sybil's room, and apply that cynicism into the given moment. This results in a direct reluctance to participate in the gendered romance narrative. It would not be a satisfying moment for the romance to resolve for the cynical readers that Pratchett has been training because it is trying too hard to participate in the tropes of romance. Vimes' direct awareness that is generated by his cynicism, stops him from participating in the narrative. Therefore, even if a subversion has not yet taken place, Vimes has demonstrated an ability to consciously and actively disrupt the narratives of heterosexual romance.

That does not change the fact that Vimes feels "robbed" by not having access to the moment, and not being able to participate in the very narrative that he also seems to know is not quite right for the dynamic between him and Sybil. She is upset in a similar fashion, as when we next see her, we find that she had "cried a bit […] but not too much, because it was no use being soppy and letting the side down" (324). This shows that despite her reluctance to participate in the heterosexual love narrative there is an implication that she has stayed true to herself and not sacrificed a personal narrative for the narrative of romance.

There does become a point where Sybil does engage directly participate in the gendered romance plot. Once Vimes has left she hears a knock on the door and believes it to be Vimes:

> She twitched the top hem of her suddenly far too sensible nightshirt into a position which, she hoped, revealed without actually exposing, and hurried back down the stairs. (326)

Here Sybil is willing to alter her appearance—and her performance of gender–in order to elicit a specific reaction from Vimes. Whilst neither of them were willing to actively look back to set the romance plot into action, Sybil is willing to perform gender in a certain way to create an environment that might kickstart the romance. When the romance plot is being cultivated behind the scenes—in ways that are not obvious to the participants—Sybil is willing to participate.

Instead of it being Vimes that is at the door it is a party of soldiers, who have come to kidnap Sybil so that she may be eaten by the Dragon who is looking for a maiden of noble birth. This plays into a dominant trope of pulpy fantasy where the virgin needs to be rescued from the dragon by the protagonist. The soldiers find that Sybil:

> 'Fits the bill,' said the captain. 'She's got to be the highest-born lady in the city. I don't know about maiden,' he added, 'and right at this minute I'm not going to speculate.' (329)

This undermines the typical trope where a hero must save a virgin maiden from an evil dragon. Pratchett deploys parody by creating a love interest in Sybil that ticks the boxes for this trope without fitting the same typically youthful feminine mould usually seen in this trope. Sybil approximates the 'maiden' of medieval romance and modern fantasy rather than actually being the maiden. Yet, the other participants within the genre do not actually care how the trope is fulfilled.

To demonstrate Vimes actively generating a genuine subversion of the romance narrative I return to the trope of the siege of a city being synonymous with the courtship of a maiden. Leverett argues that the novel charts a development of Vimes coming to terms with his role as a man of the law who views the law as a "higher purpose" for which he fights and

serves. This coincides with a growing reverence for both Sybil and the city ("At times like this" 167). This thesis has already problematised an adherence to law and order and finds that despite Leverett's crucial move in drawing attention to Vimes' agency, she is unwilling to explore how the complicated relationship that agency has to systems of law and order or patriarchy. However, there does seem to be a new respect for both Sybil and the city that grows throughout the novel that builds to a final realisation where Vimes amends his views on women and the city through a more reverent description of Sybil, which is again directly linked into the city:

> And then it arose and struck Vimes that, in her own special category, she was quite beautiful; this was the category of all the women, in his entire life, who had ever thought he was worth smiling at. She couldn't do worse, but then, he couldn't do better. So maybe it balanced out. She wasn't getting any younger, but then, who was? And she had style and money and common sense and self-assurance and all the things he didn't, and she had opened her heart, and if you let her, she could engulf you; the woman was a city. (407)

Although we perhaps get a sense of hesitance from Vimes, as he knows 'he won't do any better than Sybil' there is also a clear reverence and respect that comes with this passage. The original cynical attitude towards women seen in Vimes thinking that "he won't do any better" is pre-emptively undercut by an equally cynical thought that she "couldn't do worse." The comment that "maybe it balanced out" harkens back to the original drunken monologue where Vimes feels that women catch him off balance when he opens up, but now the image of balance seems to come through in a different light that represents some sort of romantic equality between himself and Sybil.

I contend that this sense of balance comes from the two sides of cynicism clashing. The critical, misogynistic, cynicism finds that Sybil "wasn't getting any younger." Sybil is older than Vimes and for a moment he sees her as being outside of his dating pool in the traditional romance narrative. However, because this is then undercut by the comment "but then, who was?" This comment shifts the cynical lens away from identifying why Sybil does not fit into a mould of traditional narrative, and onto why that traditional narrative is innately flawed by generating unrealistic standards.

Furthermore, in Vimes' metaphors connecting women to the city Pratchett is picking up on, and parodying, the trope. Pratchett's initial hint towards this dynamic in Vimes' drunken ramblings expose the misogyny behind the narratives of linking the city, and establishes the potential of a subsequent sexual conquest, to a woman. By focalising this dynamic on Vimes, before the maiden, or the implications of the narrative for the maiden are introduced, the focus becomes on how Vimes is navigating the patriarchal baggage that comes with the narrative and genre that he exists in. Just after Vimes' inner monologue declares that "the woman was a city" he thinks

> And eventually under siege, you did what Ankh-Morpork had always done — unbar the gates, let the conquerors in, and make them your own. (407)

Pratchett reorientates the metaphor so that the siege no longer occurs, instead of an assault/insult on the city/woman, there is an acceptance of both the city and Sybil. Sybil "engulf[ing]" Vimes also inverts the violent and sexual metaphors that come with images of penetration which accompany metaphors of siege and courtship, and are abundant in romance and fantasy narratives.

The subversive dynamic between Vimes and Sybil continues across the entire City Watch series. In *Snuff,* Vimes wears socks that were knitted by Sybil:

> They were dreadful socks, though, so thick, knotted and bulky that he had had to buy boots that were one and a half times bigger than his feet. And he did this because Samuel Vimes, who had never gone into a place of worship with religious aforethought, worshipped Lady Sybil, and not a day went past without his being amazed that she seemed to do the same to him. He had made her his wife and she had made him a millionaire; with her behind him the sad, desolate, penniless and cynical copper was a rich and powerful duke. He'd managed to hold on to the cynical, however, and a brace of oxen on steroids would not have been able to pull the copper out of Sam Vimes; the poison was in too deep, wrapped around the spine. And so Sam Vimes itched, and counted his blessings until he ran out of numbers. (13)

The dynamic between Sybil and Vimes continues to both participate in and undermine the typical romance conventions. Sybil, by knitting the socks, runs the risk of falling into the role of a conventional housewife who does the chores for her husband. However, because the socks that she knits are "awful" the trope is simultaneously participated in and undermined. Despite this, Vimes wears the socks. He is willing to put himself through discomfort to also participate in the tropes of romance, in turn generating a subversion of those tropes by entering into a parodic performance of the trope of dutiful husband. The passage also stresses that Vimes never loses his cynical side, which is essential as this chapter has argued that that cynicism is foundational to the subversions that the couple partake in. Because Vimes has managed to "hold onto the cynical," we are given an impression that his cynicism has been

softened within his relationship with Sybil. It could have been lost entirely, in which case I believe he would have slipped into the role of dutiful husband, without any layer of subversion being incorporated into his performance of the role.

Throughout the series, Vimes is faced with many difficult situations and navigates other prejudices (such as racial or species related biases), but he never returns to the misogyny seen at the beginning of *Guards! Guards!*. In the subsequent City Watch books Pratchett does not shy away from what is described here as the "poison" that comes with being a "copper." The toxicity innate to Vimes' role as a police officer will be explored further in the next chapter, but that "poison" is never able to contaminate his idea of Sybil. Despite not being a religious man he still "worshipped Lady Sybil." The reverence that Vimes has for the Sybil at the end of *Guards! Guards!* is one of the simple constants throughout the complex world of *Discworld*. No matter how complicated the absurdity becomes, no matter how convoluted the plot, the reader knows—beyond reasonable doubt—that Vimes loves Sybil.

Chapter Four: Samuel Vimes' Guide to Toppling the Patriarchy from the Inside

> Sam Vimes shaved himself. It was his daily act of defiance, a confirmation that he was… well, plain Sam Vimes.
>
> Admittedly he shaved himself in a mansion, and while he did so his butler read out bits from the *Times*, but they were just… circumstances.
>
> (*Thud!* 11).

When Vimes first appears in *Thud!* he is shaving. We find him partaking in this "daily act of defiance" several times throughout the City Watch series. In *Feet of Clay, Night Watch,* and *Thud!* Vimes' character is introduced through the moment of shaving. For Vimes, the act of shaving reeks of desperation as he attempts to hold onto his working class pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps masculinity, whilst his position within the patriarchal structure of the city is further elevated in each subsequent novel. In *Feet of Clay,* we see Vimes shaving for the first time in the series. This is also his first introduction in a novel following his marriage to Sybil. The narrator tells us the "razor was a sword of freedom" and refers to shaving as "an act of rebellion" (14). Vimes appears concerned that he now has servants that "do nearly everything for him [and] someone even polished his boots (and such boots! — no cardboard-soled wreaks but big, well-fitting boots of genuine shiny leather)" (14). In this new upper-class world, his ability to be subversive is impaired. Shaving himself is one small subversive act that he is hangs onto whilst the expectations of how he *should* act in his newfound positions close in around him. These expectations are implicitly gendered expectations: "He knew Sybil mildly

disapproved. Her father had never shaved himself in his life. He had a man for it" (15). Sybil holds these expectations of how Vimes should act using her own father as a model of masculinity. Therefore, Vimes' insistence on shaving himself is a desperate attempt to hold onto his working-class identity as "he hated the very idea of the world being divided into the shaved and the shavers" (15).

Shaving embodies the paradoxical position that Vimes occupies. The more that he subverts and disrupts patriarchal systems, the further into them he is assimilated through elevation of power. Through climbing the ranks in the Watch, and his marriage to Sybil, by the end of the series he has gained the position of "Duke," holding the title "His Grace Commander Sir Samuel Vimes" and has become an integral part of Anhk-Morpork's hegemonic power structure ("Vimes, Samuel"). In the previous chapter I argued that Vimes is able to act subversively in his personal life as he navigates the genres of romance and fantasy. However, this chapter will embrace the difficulties of transferring these subversions into his role as public servant and policeman. Small moments of rebellion and subversion (such as shaving) are possible despite his elevated position. The further he moves into the patriarchal hegemony, the extent to which he can subvert the patriarchy ultimately becomes more limited due to his obligations to patriarchal institutions.

This chapter explores how sustainable Vimes' subversions of gender are. In Chapter Two: Conundrums and Failings I explored two areas where Carrot fails to act subversively: law and order, and his relationship with Angua. Chapter Three then established how Vimes can act as a subversive masculinity when operating within the structures of the fantasy and romance genres. Now I contend that, in comparison to the role he plays in his relationship with Sybil, Vimes is more limited in the ways that he can be subversive within the confines of

his role as a police officer and his relationship to law and order. By exploring Vimes through his role as a police officer this chapter aims to interrogate the extent of Vimes' ability to act subversively while limited by the obligations to the hegemonic systems of power that his role serves.

Crime Fiction and the Conservative

Just as the previous chapter began with Vimes at his worst, to test the sustainability of his subversions, I now turn to what I regard as the moment where Vimes' actions are most unpalatable in his role as a police officer: Vimes killing Wolfgang, who is the antagonist of *The Fifth Elephant*. Vimes kills Wolfgang in the climax of the novel, after Wolfgang has spent much of the novel chasing and attempting to kill Vimes. This is a moment where Vimes stretches the jurisdiction of his role, and potentially abuses his power as a police officer.

Vimes' killing of Wolfgang is problematic due to its relationship to legality. He does not kill Wolfgang in a moment of self-defence, but rather uses the structures of law enforcement to create an environment where, despite it being a borderline case, the killing is made legal. As he approaches him, Vimes tells Wolfgang that he is police and that he is armed by showing his badge. He seeks affirmation that Wolfgang understands both statements before saying that he Is "under arrest […]" (432). Wolfgang responds condescendingly with: "Hah! This must be your Ankh-Morpork sense of humour!" (432). Which prompts Vimes to say: "[…] So, you're resisting arrest?" (432). Wolfgang asks: "Why all these stupid questions?" (433). To which Vimes asks again: "*Are you resisting arrest",* prompting Wolfgang to comment "Yes indeed! Oh yes! Good joke!" (433). Wolfgang continues to laugh as Vimes pulls out a firework rocket and then Vimes shoots Wolfgang with it, killing him. After the death, a fellow policeman, Captain

Tantony, from the local police force in Bonk (the city where Vimes is staying in then) says to Vimes: “I heard you warn him that you were armed. I heard him twice resist arrest. I heard everything. I heard everything that you wanted me to hear” (434).

The way that Tantony reacts shows how Vimes has taken care to make sure that his actions fall just enough within the law to allow himself to get away with the killing, sanctioning the killing within legal structures. However, he does also demonstrate awareness that what he has done is borderline and he may face consequences. He addresses Captain Tantony and says:

> ‘[…] Oh, yes… *now* you can say I did it wrong, you can say I ought to have handled it differently. That sort of thing is easy to say afterwards. I’ll say it myself, maybe.’ In the middle of every night, he thought to himself, after I’ve woken up seeing those mad eyes. ‘But you wanted him stopped as much as I did. Oh yes, you did. But you couldn’t, because you didn’t have the means, and I did, because I could and you’ve got the luxury of judging me because you’re still alive. And that’s the truth of it, all wrapped up. Lucky for you, eh?’ (434-5)

In response the other officer suggests that Vimes only meant to “fire that thing to warn him …” (435). This reflects that the officer is willing to be complicit in, and even to participate in the way that Vimes is playing the system to justify the violence that he has inflicted. Vimes does here demonstrates a genuine comprehension of the complexity of what he has done, and an acknowledgement that it may not have been the right thing to do. I find that his usage of the systems of law enforcement to commit the killing is grotesque and entangles the killing with Vimes’ role within the hegemonic systems.

Although we may be able to justify the killing of Wolfgang—who holds Nazi-like ideals, believing in werewolf superiority over all other species—I regard the killing as problematic when read into the wider narrative. The potential for violence occurs on a larger scale than just Vimes' individual killing of Wolfgang. Throughout the novel Vimes has noticed and commented on the declining state of the Watch in Bonk (the city he is visiting). After he kills Wolfgang, he orders Carrot to

> go along to Burleigh & Stronginthearm's [a weapons manufacturer], order a couple of dozen of everything off the top of their small arms catalogue, and get them on the next mail coach due to Bonk for the personal attention of Captain Tantony. (457)

Given that Captain Tantony is the officer that has spectated and been complicit in Vimes' killing of Wolfgang, gifting him weapons to improve the police force's capabilities in the city of Bonk is troubling. This functions as Vimes gifting Bonk the necessary resources to actively perpetuate more of the sort of violence that Vimes commits in his killing of Wolfgang, ensuring that the hegemonic systems of violence that support patriarchy can continue to operate.

Vimes killing Wolfgang should not be read in isolation. It joins a trend where Vimes demonstrates a potential for violence and abuse of power. In *Men at Arms,* we see the roots for issues to do with policing. Vimes demonstrates prejudice against certain demographics, such as "vampires" (55). He shows his capacity for violence by punching walls on several occasions (93, 198). He even discloses to the novel's antagonist that he is not a "good man" but rather he is "nasty and tired," suggesting that he may commit violent actions as a means of intimidation (347). In *Feet of Clay* the references to violence from the police become even more abundant. Vimes has a report that one of his officers "nailed [someone] to a wall by his

ears"[1] and this does not prompt any response of disciplinary action (34). From these other moments of violence, we can see the City Watch series build towards a crescendo of moments of violence that climaxes, and becomes most problematic, with the killing of Wolfgang.

The Tropes that Justify Violence

In recent years the potential for crime fiction to perpetuate conservative systems has received attention in both academic and popular spheres. The 2020 murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minnesota police and subsequent BLM (Black Lives Matter) protests have shaped the way that crime fiction/detective fiction is approached and analysed within this decade. The protests that occurred in 2020 initiated "a public reckoning and reappraisal of police programs and the way in which they operate as cop propaganda" (Spruce 221). This led to popular television programs such as *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, a program which was previously seen as politically progressive prior to the movement, being placed under scrutiny. The protests "incited the show's audience to rethink its progressiveness and to ask whether viewing the show was an act of complicity that enables the proliferation of 'copaganda'" (221). Copoganda is "content that encourages audiences to see policing and police violence as fair, noble, and necessary" (Hatrick and González).

Applying the term 'copaganda' to the City Watch series is an oversimplification that overlooks Pratchett's sarcastic tone, and the series' willingness to embrace and explore the complexities of policing. Vimes' awareness of the moral greyness of killing Wolfgang means we cannot read the moment as "fair" or "noble." However, it does serve the rhetorical function of making the killing "necessary." Because attention is drawn to the unpalatable

[1] It is worth noting that the "[someone]" in question is a troll—we can presume their ears are more durable than most.

nature of the killing, the narrative is directly invested in exploring the conundrum presented by the jurisdiction that police are given to commit acts of violence, but in the process the killing becomes necessary.

To further unpack the implications of the killing I find it necessary to enfold an understanding of crime fiction genre into this analysis. W.H. Auden, in his comments on detective fiction, draws attention to how the genre constructs innocence and guilt claiming that:

> As in the Aristotelian description of tragedy, there is Concealment (the innocent seem guilty and the guilty seem innocent) and Manifestation (the real guilt is brought to consciousness). There is also peripeteia, in this case not a reversal of fortune but a double reversal from apparent guilt to innocence and from apparent innocence to guilt. (406)

He argues that because the genre Is reliant on a "revelation of the presence of guilt" that comes with the event of murder the "[p]eaceful state before murder" is equivalent to a "[f]alse innocence" (407). The pattern of the genre generates a movement between guilt and innocence that predicates the requirement of violence by making "[t]rue innocence" only possible once the narrative of detective fiction has taken place. This dynamic occurs several times throughout the City Watch series, but it is most directly spelled in *Snuff* when Lord Vetinari points out to Vimes that the "law must start with a crime" (*Snuff* 468).

We see this predicated assumption of false innocence manifest itself within Vimes' role as policeman. In *Guards! Guards!* we learn: "There had been a crime. Senses Vimes didn't know he possessed, ancient policeman's senses, prickled the hairs on his neck and told him there had been a crime" (211). Considering *Discworld*'s investment in narrative causality, this

sixth sense is a recognition within Vimes that is aware of the 'false innocence' that the crime fiction genre implicates. He is experiencing an understanding of the genre that he is participating and performing within, which manifests as a hunch. This sense that there is a crime before the details of it are understood generates a rhetorical movement that requires pre-emptive action by the police force and justifies their existence as a necessity, even if violence is not yet enfolded into that dynamic.

This justification of policing also needs to be considered alongside the genre's historic desire to 'simplify' the processes of crime. Franco Moretti argues:

> Since Poe, the detective has incarnated a scientific ideal: the detective discovers the causal links between events: to unravel the mystery is to trace them back to a law. (247)

For Moretti, crime fiction has come to embody a scientific process, where the law is thought of as a science made up of binaries and absolutes, lacking any real sense of fluidity.[2] He also claims that detective fiction

> aims to keep the relationship between science and society unproblematic. What, indeed, does detective fiction do? It creates a problem, a 'concrete effect'—the crime—declares a sole cause relevant: the criminal. (248)

This pattern in detective fiction oversimplifies the systemic issues at play that generate criminals in society, and Moretti seems to imply that for detective fiction to move beyond this

[2] Pratchett would no doubt be the first to tell you that science itself having "concrete effects" is a daft and very under-informed. And that the high school science teachers that perpetuate such a view of science should be tried for their crimes against humanity.

pattern that supports the predominant power structures, it needs more, and more nuanced, engagement with the social sciences.[3]

I argue that this process of simplification in crime fiction, when combined with fantasy's tendency to have simplistic villains, creates an oversimplification of the process of justice that functions to, conservatively, justify police violence. That is not to say there are not mimetic elements at play. Many fictional crimes and criminals are taken from reality. Fantasy is well known for simple villains. Examples of popular fantasy villains such as Sauron or Voldemort demonstrate how fantasy villains are often uncomplicated abstractions of 'badness.' These villains represent abstractions of fascism or corruption that exist to be defeated. Wolfgang's character is one such example of this trope. According to *The Ultimate Discworld Companion* "Wolf was a murderous idiot who believed that werewolves were born to rule [and he] led a movement with these beliefs" ("Überwald, Wolfgang von."). The entry even goes as far as to say: "He was a traditionalist when it came to nastiness."

Because Wolfgang exists at this intersection between being a simple fantasy villain, and crime fiction's desire to make problems simple and solve the ailments of society, his killing generates an oversimplification of legal processes. His character does not engage with the nuanced and complicated systematic social issues that lead to crime. Therefore, Wolfgang effectively creates a strawman version of criminality upon which police violence is justified.

[3] It is worth noting that science fiction has long been aware of this dynamic and generated detective fiction that contains a far more scientific approach to crime and policing. See Douglas Adams' *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency.*

The Conservative and The Subversive

The reading of the murder of Wolfgang demonstrates the series' ability to participate in conservative elements of the crime fiction genre. This section aims to unpack the paradoxical relationship that crime fiction has to the conservative and the subversive. It will demonstrate that, deliberately or not, the killing of Wolfgang becomes a foundation upon which the series is able to build subversions. The previous section has demonstrated how in the specific example of *The Fifth Elephant* the tropes of crime fiction lend themselves towards the conservative. I now seek to demonstrate how the wider genre has a leaning towards the conservative. My aim is not to box the City Watch series in and claim that they are conservative novels, but rather demonstrate that they participate in the conservative elements of the genre so that they can in turn subvert them.

Paul Messent in *The Crime Fiction Handbook* argues that "one of the most productive ways of thinking about the genre is its relationship to the dominant social system" (11). In the western world the "dominant social system" has always been patriarchal in design and function. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, Messent is suggesting that a productive way of thinking about crime fiction is through its relationship to patriarchy. Considered alongside my claim that the killing of Wolfgang creates a rhetorical justification for the existence of police violence, I now also claim that this justification functions to uphold the dominant social system of patriarchy.

Many of the classic detective stories, whose literary DNA is found in the City Watch series, follow a pattern of upholding and protecting the dominant social systems. For example, Messent finds that in Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, the detective's work functions to restore "the social order as it existed before that crime occurred, with everything

once more in its proper place — though of course victim and criminal now removed" (16). Franco Moretti in *Clues* sees a similar dynamic in the Sherlock Holmes stories, where Holmes is "the *great* doctor of the late Victorians" who discovers symptoms, diagnoses, and finally cures, society of its ailments (249). There are even moments in the City Watch series where crimes are directly linked to a medical diagnosis. As the guilds of Anhk-Morpork plot to replace Vetinari (the Patrician) with a king, the president of the Thieves' Guild suggests that in the past the removal of the Patrician and instalment of a monarch was "part of the symptoms" seen in "madmen" (227).

It would be reductive to say that crime fiction must *always* have a tendency towards a conservative trajectory that protects the dominant social system. Lee Horsley points out that

> The genre itself is neither inherently conservative nor radical: rather, it is a form that can be co-opted for a variety of purposes. There has always been within it a capacity for socio-political comment, and using it in this way is facilitated by the very nature of crime fiction […] the genre itself contains characteristics that lend themselves to political and oppositional purposes. (158-9)

It is perhaps more apt to claim that crime fiction has a tendency towards the political, rather than just a tendency towards the conservative. Therefore, it is likely that the City Watch series contains a paradox of both subversive and conservative elements in its relationship to the genre. In what follows, I will demonstrate that the City Watch series is subversive *in spite* of the conservative elements of crime fiction, rather than being subversive by avoiding the conservative patterns of the genre entirely.

The City Watch series, in its early stages, arguably follows a conservative pattern and reinforces a (patriarchal) status quo in the first three books of the series. These books (Gu*ards!*

Guards!, Men at Arms, and *Feet of Clay*) all feature plots to remove the Patrician from office[4] and have him replaced with a monarch that is more typical of the fantasy genre. Catherine Ross Nickerson argues that detective fiction "represent[s] in a generally realistic style the most anxiety-producing issues and narratives of a culture" (744-5). Therefore, the anxiety the first three City Watch novels induce is the removal of the Patrician, which is, by extension, an anxiety about the destabilisation—and even potential removal—of patriarchy.[5] However, when considered alongside the fantasy genre this resists—and even subverts—the typical fantasy narrative tropes. Because Carrot never becomes king, the fantasy trope of a rightful heir is never fulfilled. The crime fiction narrative arc offers a structure to reject Carrot as ruler by returning to the original status quo of Discworld. In this process the narrative ultimately slips into the conservative patterns of crime fiction and reinstates a patriarchal system.

Considering this relationship that the early City Watch novels' have to crime fiction alongside Connell's framework of masculinities, I claim that *Discworld*'s relationship to crime fiction is (at least in the first thr

[4] Typically through methods involving inhuming the Patrician.
[5] Of course, this is an alternative to reinstating a monarchy. The Patrician may well be the 'lesser of two patriarchies.' This will be explored in more depth shortly.

ee novels) one of *complicity*. The novels are willing to incorporate structures of crime fiction to subvert fantasy tropes; but they fall short of challenging the hegemonic movements that generate a conservative narrative within the frameworks of crime fiction.

This creates a paradoxical position. The City Watch books are using the crime fiction narrative to reinforce its subversions of the typical fantasy plot through its refusal to have a traditional fantasy monarch ruling in Anhk-Morpork, whilst simultaneously perpetuating a hegemonic patriarchal world order. For Messent, paradoxical position is not unfamiliar for the genre:

> I see crime fiction as a genre that can be used for conservative ends, to protect and sustain the dominant social order, but also (often paradoxically, at one in the same time) work in a more radical and challenging way. (12)

Given that the opening chapter of this thesis located paradox's potential to operate in destabilising and subversive ways, I claim that the paradoxical nature of the genre is *exactly* what gives crime fiction the ability to operate transgressively. A tendency towards the conservative move to 'protect' the dominant social order means that crime fiction is always participating in said social order. In much the same way that Carrot cannot subvert gender due to the limitations on his participation in gender, genres that are not participating in power relations would not be able to subvert patriarchal systems. This means that crime fiction, that aims to be subversive, is always running a fine line between perpetuating the dominant social order and subverting it.

The City Watch books use the conservative tropes that are innate to crime fiction. The narratives often function to uphold patriarchy, represented by the Patrician. Yet, it does so on subversive terms. Monarchy represents a return to traditional forms of governance, and thus

traditional forms of masculinity. Reinstating a monarch would then be calling for a return to the forms of 'traditional masculinity' that this thesis has already problematised. Instead of falling into this trap, the series opts to uphold its own patriarchal status quo in the form of the Patrician. Monarchy can always be romanticised by those that wish for a return to the 'good ole days.' There is an appeal in the simplicity of the 'divine right to rule' that a monarch holds. Alternatively, through the title itself, the Patrician represents an obvious form of patriarchy, one I find so obvious that it reveals the very artifice of the male hegemonic position.

The question now becomes: How does the push and pull between the conservative and the subversive affect the way in which we read the killing of Wolfgang? I contend that just as Carrot cannot subvert gender because he is not a participant in gender, the City Watch series would not be able to subvert the conservative elements of the genre if it did not participate in them. For Vimes to continue to subversively undermine the problematic tropes of policework he must have low moments where his obligations lead him to commit unpalatable acts of violence. Chapter Three of this thesis identified that Vimes' subversions in his relationship are built on an initial misogyny that he overcomes. Those subversions are then constant throughout the series. However, for Vimes to be able to generate subversions in relation to his role as a policeman there has to be new, complicated, unpalatable, and low moments where he participates in the more conservative elements of his role so that he can subvert those elements.

Complicity

I contend that the key to turning participation in the conservative moments presented by the role of a policeman into subversive moments comes in an awareness of *complicity*. After *The*

Fifth Elephant, there are other moments in the series where Vimes is more actively reflective about his role as a police officer and the complicit position he occupies in perpetuating patriarchal systems is interrogated. In *Night Watch*, Vimes time travels into the past and must become a mentor to his younger self after John Keel—his own mentor from his timeline—is killed by a fellow time traveller, and dangerous criminal, Carcer. Vimes and his younger self are left navigating a bloody revolution as his younger self comes to realisations about the role that they play in enabling systemic violence as policemen, even when they are not the perpetrators of violence themselves.

Everything that happens in *Night Watch* is underpinned by a critique of complicit masculinity. This is best shown when, after co-habiting a barricade with revolutionary elements Vimes and his younger self raid a Watch house belonging to the Cable Street Particulars who are a "plain clothes" branch of the Watch who 'in "old Ankh-Morpork [would engage in] torture, coercion and subterfuge to manipulate the city" ("Cable Street Particulars."). The scene is one of the darkest in the novel. In the building they discover a torturer and a clerk. Vimes immediately knocks out the torturer but takes a minute to speak to the clerk. Upon seeing the clerk Vimes mocks him and says: "*And what does daddy do at work all day?"* (230). The clerk insists that he is "just a clerk!" and then says "I just measure people! It's all in the captain's book! I just measure people! I don't do anything wrong! I'm not a bad man!" (230). Vimes has no patience for this excuse. He violently slams a ruler into the desk with enough force to chop into the wood, and tells the man: "You have no friends here. You sat and took notes for a torturer, a bloody torturer!" (231). He then handcuffs the clerk to the desk "for [his] protection" from Vimes, who claims he will "kill [the man if he tries] to run away" (231).

This man is a perfectly uncomplicated example of Connell's complicit masculinities. He is not actively participating in the perpetuation of patriarchal systems through violence, but he is still playing a role in supporting their function. Vimes is completely unsympathetic to the clerk's belief he is not to blame for the violence that he helps perpetuate. The scene takes a turn when Vimes considers the torturer himself. As he looks at the knocked-out torturer, Vimes

> pulled off his hood and recognised the face. The face, yes, but not the person. That is, it was the kind of face you saw a lot of in Ankh-Morpork: big, bruised, and belonging to someone who'd never quite learned that hitting people long after they'd lost consciousness was a wicked thing to do. He wondered if the man actually liked beating people to death. They often didn't think about it. It was just a job. (231)

In comparison to Vimes' verbal treatment of the clerk, he seems almost sympathetic to the torturer. Despite the torturer being an active perpetuator of the violence that Vimes deplores, he seems to see the torturer as a symptom of a larger social order designed to perpetuate that violence. Given Vimes' attitude towards the torturer it becomes productive to think of the torturer as a marginalised masculinity, a masculinity that is adopted into somewhat hegemonic positions to do their dirty work but has no real power within that system. Vimes' ability to unmask the torturer and in the process unmasks the deeper social reasoning behind why the violence is being committed is not something that we are able to see when Vimes confronts Wolfgang. In *Night Watch* we are presented with a more nuanced and critical analysis of why it is that people commit horrible acts, rather than the 'plain bad' fantasy villain that Wolfgang presents in *The Fifth Elephant*.

Between how Vimes reacts to the torturer and the clerk an expectation is created whereby those complicit in acts of violence seem to be deserving of the same level of blame (if not more) as those who are active participants in the violence. This establishes an expectation that is designed to be an extremely confronting realisation for both the reader and Young Vimes and force them to reorientate how they think about policework.

After the older Vimes has dealt with the torturer (by strapping them to their own chair) Young Vimes has come to the realisation that by delivering criminals to the Cable Street Particulars he has played a role in enabling violence. He has just seen the people that have been tortured and walks in with tears "running down" his face (231). Vimes says they should "rescue what they can" to which Young Vimes responds by detailing a fragmented recollection that he himself would have been bringing in the people that were tortured:

> 'But we were on the hurry-up wagon, Sarge!'
>
> 'What?' said Vimes, and then it dawned. Oh, yes…
>
> 'But we didn't hand anyone over, lad,' he said. 'Remember?'
>
> 'But I've been on it before, Sarge! All the lads have! We just handed people over and went back to the Watch House for cocoa, Sarge!' (232)

Young Vimes has realised the complicit role that him, and his fellow officers have been playing in their role as police officers. Just like the clerk, they played a role in enabling violence to be perpetuated even when they were not actively participating in it themselves. Whilst the people they delivered are being tortured they are simply sipping on their cocoa.

In the heat of the moment Vimes then tries to reconcile Young Vimes, but struggles to even convince himself:

> 'Well, you'd had orders…' said Vimes, for what good that did.

> ‘We didn’t know!’
>
> Not exactly, thought Vimes. We didn’t ask. We just shut our minds to it. People went in through that front door and some of the poor devils came out through the secret door, not always in one box.
>
> They hadn’t measured up.
>
> Nor did we. (232)

These fragmented recollections and justifications generate an environment where being complicit in violence becomes completely inexcusable. Vimes cynically reflects on the processes that he has partaken in as a policeman. Young Vimes then has to be stopped by older Vimes from beating the torturer, who is strapped to a chair by older Vimes. Older Vimes tells him: “You *don’t* bash a man’s brains out when he’s tied to a chair,” to which Young Vimes responds: “*He* did!” (232). Vimes then tells his younger self: “And you don’t. That’s because you’re not him!” (233). Vimes stepping in to stop his younger self-perpetuating more violence breaks a cycle whereby his younger self would be turning his complicit position into active violence. Young Vimes’ violence would have had the intention of operating against the systemic patriarchal violence, but Vimes sees that this process will become a never-ending cycle and steps in. This disruption that Vimes creates is a key step in creating the necessary space from which subversions can be built upon.

But there are even bigger bastards…

What makes the City Watch books so efficient at navigating the complexities of masculinity is the ability to not only diagnose the flaws of patriarchy and efficiently situate characters such as Vimes within its systems, but also to move beyond exposing and diagnosing and exemplify

what men in those positions *can* do to make things better. *Night Watch*, the sixth novel in the City Watch series, is a story of revolution. Yet, it is not a typical story of revolution where the hero plays a role in overthrowing a corrupt government to be rewarded with a happy ending. It is a story of revolution where Vimes does all that he can to minimise the violence in his little corner of the city, in an environment that is rigged and ready to explode into violence.

In the same vein that there is a narrative causality suggesting that Carrot is the rightful king of Anhk-Morpork there is also a sense that Vimes should be the king slayer. Just as Carrot's ancestors where the royalty of Ankh-Morpork, Vimes ancestor 'Old Stoneface' Vimes was also commander of the City Watch and "led the city's militia in a revolt against the rule of a tyrannical monarch" ("Vimes, 'Old Stoneface.'"). Vimes "secretly loves" that old Stoneface was his ancestor—and that the "nickname is sometimes applied to *him* by his men." Vimes does not share the same flair for revolution that Old Stoneface had. Whilst discussing the revolution with the guild of seamstresses, who are pro revolution, Vimes thinks to himself: "Mad Lord Snapcase. Just another Winder, but with fancier waistcoats and more chins. Same cronyism, same piggy ways, same stupid arrogance" (*Night Watch* 173). Because Vimes comes from the future he is granted a dual perspective that allows him to see that the revolution, although it may mean well, will not actually change anything for the better. Vimes has a perspective that he sees revolution as a process of perpetuating violence and seeks to break that pattern and protect as many people as possible. Vimes disperses his cynical attitude about revolutions to junior members of the Watch. He tells Ned Coates:

> here's some advice boy. Don't put your trust in revolutions. They always come around again. That's why they're called revolutions. People die, nothing changes. I'll see *you* later. (194)

Ned, who is a 'freethinker" and "probably a revolutionary at heart," appears to know that Vimes is not John Keel as he is claiming and becomes naturally suspicious of Vimes' dishonesty ("Coates, Ned.). Ned loses faith in the Watch and joins revolutionary elements. At the close of the novel the revolutionary elements, who until now have been allied with Vimes/Keel, decide to attack them, finding that Keel is too dangerous to be kept alive because he's "a side all by himself. He is a complication" (164). Vimes' complicated position in the situation becomes detrimental to himself, because he represents the potential destabilisation of the new power—which is still patriarchal and hegemonic in nature—that will replace the old system. He represents a "complication" because his destabilisation is not able to be controlled. The destabilisation of the revolution is ultimately used for the patriarchal systems to reaffirm and slightly adjust themselves. However, because Vimes exists in a paradoxical position where he is operating against both the state and the revolutionary elements, his disruption holds the potential to subvert the new patriarchy that comes out of the revolution.

As the new Patrician sends soldiers to kill Vimes at the end of the novel, Ned and Vimes meet on the battlefield. Ned, who has switched sides to fight alongside Vimes, is asked by Vimes: "Whose side are you on[?]" (313). Ned responds: "We're all learning a lot today[.] There's even bigger bastards than you for a start." (313). The usage of the word "bastards" here and several other times in this section (311), creates a link to the phrase "A.C.A.B" (all cops are bastards) that originated in the 80s but resurfaces during times of political strife and police brutality such as the 2020 BLM movement. Pratchett's narrative here does not seek to belittle the meaning of this statement but does offer a way to build upon it: Ned's comment accepts an implication that Vimes is a bastard (who for our purposes is as an officer of the law

complicit in atrocities) but also acknowledges that he is a small element in a web of bigger more complex issues.

Marginal Cases

There are no doubt limits to what Vimes can do within the position of commander of the City Watch. In *Snuff*, Vimes uncovers a plot that has involved the enslavement and slaughter of goblins, who until the climax of the novel were not legally considered people and therefore could not have crimes committed against them. Vimes wants justice for the Goblin people because there "was a murder" (468). Yet, Lord Vetinari remains insistent that "the law cannot operate retrospectively" (465). Here, there is a clear disconnect between the word of the law and Vimes' own sense of justice. Although he has succeeded in getting Goblins' personhood in the future, he has been unable to please his own sense of justice. He views justice as serving a higher moral purpose than the law is in this scenario.

The City Watch series has a consistent vested interest in testing the limits and outer reaches of police obligation and jurisdiction. In *Jingo*, Ankh-Morpork goes to war with a neighbouring country and the role the police take on in times of war is explored. In *Thud!* the Dwarfs and Trolls are on the brink of war, and the police' role in mediating two differing cultural/religious groups that share a city is explored. In *Snuff*, Vimes goes on holiday but "barely has time to open his suitcase before he finds his first body" and the role of an off-duty police officer is explored alongside the duality of Vimes' position as an aristocrat and landowner in the countryside (blurb). I argue that in these marginal spaces Vimes is granted a flexibility about his role that allows him to be selective in his application of the law. This in turn generates subversive performances. This may not be completely consistent. There are no

doubt exceptions. Vimes is, after all, a flawed individual and this chapter has already problematised Vimes' application of the law in relation to the killing of Wolfgang in *The Fifth Elephant* when he is operating as a diplomat in a foreign city. However, I find that there is an overall trend towards Vimes using these marginal situations as spaces to generate subversions of the word of law to operate in the spirit of justice.

On The Margins of Revolution

The best example of Vimes' selective application of the law is in *Night Watch.* The moment of revolution that the novel occupies generates an innate paradoxical quality. A transition between two different governmental systems destabilises the patriarchal status quo and this destabilization in turn creates an environment that generates a moment of flux where law and order in their most rigid forms are held in suspense. Vimes can use this moment of flux to make decisions about the application of law with a confidence he could not afford when the hegemonic order that exists above him is more stable and would accost him for his transgressions.

As a time traveller, who has already experienced the revolution, Vimes knows what events will transpire. He uses that prior knowledge to reorientate the police's responsibilities in the revolutionary space to protect and serve people. He demonstrates that there is a way that the police could act in a crisis that is genuinely serving the people, keeping them safe in times of distress. He knows that by "sunset a uniform would automatically be a target. Then it wouldn't matter where a watchman's sympathies lay. He'd be just another man in armour" (207). With this understanding of how bad the relationship between the Watch and the civilian revolutionary population will be, he is able to navigate the space where he is able to opt out

of the sort of performance that will result in him getting a target on his back, or participating in the larger problems of the police and placing that target on his comrade's back.

The duality of Vimes' cynical perspective allows him to read the situation and create effective disruptions of the processes of policing. He is able to obey the word of the law, but generate his own interpretation of the spirit of the law. This enables him to function within the frameworks of policing, whilst still subverting the systems of policing. As the revolution is gearing up and the violence is beginning. The official orders from Vimes' superiors are to "expect revolutionary attacks" (153). Because of this they are they "must be mindful of the curfew regulation," insinuating that the Watch is expected to come down hard on any potential revolutionaries and maintain peace through force, and quite likely, violence (150). However, Vimes knows this approach will only stoke the fire of violence. He translates the order:

> "What that means, I suppose, is that if we see people coming to complain about unarmed citizens being attacked by soldiers, which personally I would consider to be Assault With A Deadly Weapon, we've got to arrest them." (153)

This show how Vimes is aware that the structural operations of the Watch and the orders that they are being given are enabling police brutality by encouraging conflict between the revolutionary groups and the Watch. It also shows how the systems that are in place ensure that the civilian population will have no one to go to when they are inevitably mistreated by the systems of the state.

Vimes also acts on this order himself. When one of the Cable Street Particulars comes crashing through the roof of his Watch house[6] his officers recognise the man as a fellow

[6] Because Vimes had preemptively sawn through a few ceiling supports.

member of the police. Vimes, in this moment sees opportunity for the letter of the law to overlap with the spirit of justice and says: “No uniform, no badge. Carrying weapons. Let’s have a bit of law around here, shall we?” and proceeds to have the man arrested and put in the Watch cells (154).

Vimes also participates in this performance himself on an individual level when he joins the officers outside and he “sat down on the steps, and took a sip of his cocoa” (PMC 155). The narrator suggests that this act is a source of shock for the bystanders, and is read in explicitly gendered terms:

> He might as well have dropped his breeches. The groups opened up, became an audience. No man drinking a non-alcoholic chocolate beverage had ever been the centre of so much attention. (155)

The way that the civilians/revolutionaries are positioned as an “audience” by the narrator suggests that the act is innately performative. And the fact that Vimes’ gender is mentioned shows that the audience’s sense of shock is tied directly into the absurdity of a man of Vimes’ standing in the hegemony drinking such an ‘unmanly’ drink. The fact that Vimes “might as well have dropped his breaches” generates an image that he is exposing something. The implication that it is his underwear/genitalia carries a gendered connotation. Vimes, by being willing to be vulnerable undermines the hegemonic performance of gender that is expected by the revolutionaries. Therefore, his ability to stop the process of violence is directly intertwined with a subversive performance of his masculinity.

When Vimes is asked by a loitering revolutionary if he is going to “arrest” them for “breaking curfew,” Vimes simply responds: “I’m on my break” (155). Where he was thorough in applying the law to the people who he knew were police officers, who have patriarchal

endorsed power, he is now selectively not applying it to the everyday people who have been caught up in the violence. He is able to successfully undermine the expectations of violence and subvert the expected performance of violence that the people expect to come from a policing institution. He is also steadfast in this position. When asked: "when do you come *off* your break?" Vimes responds: "Oh, around Thursday I reckon […] Got my day off on Thursday" (155-6). He once again undercuts the expectation, in turn largely defusing the situation.

This subversive performance that ensures that minimal violence takes place extends beyond Vimes onto the institution of the Watch itself. Vimes' ability to shape the way that the Watch itself performs masculinity enables his own subversion to be sustained beyond his individual performance. Whilst all of the other Watch Houses are preparing for a fight, Vimes is undermining the narrative of conflict by refusing to prepare for violence. When he finds his officers have prepared the Watch house for an attack he says: "Now here's what I feel is necessary. Take the shutters down, unbar the door, leave it open and light up all the lamps" (151). He instructs two of his officers—Colon and Waddy—to "stand guard outside, where they can be seen (151). He chooses them because they are "friendly-looking local lads" and makes it clear that they are not to have swords on them (151). When Colon objects saying "No swords? […] But what if a bloody great mob comes around the corner and I'm not armed?" (151). Vimes points out that there is likely not much Colon could do against a 'bloody great mob' alone and says

> "What I want them to see is Fatty Colon, decent lad, not too bright, I knew 'is dad an' there's ol' Waddy, he drinks in my pub. 'Cos if they just see a couple of men in uniform with swords you'll be in trouble, and if you draw those swords you'll be in real trouble, but if by any chance, corporal, you draw swords tonight without

> my order and survive then you'll wish you hadn't done either because you'll have to face me, see?" (151).

Vimes makes the correct decision to send Colon and Waddy out with no swords. Later on Colon reports that at another Watch House civilians were throwing rocks at the Watch House and "some of the lads went out to stop kids throwing stones and, er one of them drew his sword, sarge…"—when Vimes prompts Colon to continue, all he can say is "He'll probably live sarge." (161).

Vimes' decision to send out "Fatty Colon" and "Waddy from the pub" is a performance of gender, not only on the individual level but on the level of an institution. Police forces are seen as part of the hegemonic order. The revolutionaries are aware of this and of the ways that the Watch is a key support of the hegemonic order that they wish to dismantle. By sending them out unarmed, along with the open doors policy he has instilled, Vimes is subverting this ideal. Colon and Waddy are the friendly local guys, who may be a little bit useless but are 'decent blokes' when you get down to it. By sending Colon and Waddy out Vimes ensures Watch House is a masculine coded space and is undercutting and subverting the hypermasculine show of force the revolutionary elements are expecting. This performance also maps onto the fact that Vimes is disobeying orders issued to him from higher up the hegemony and doing what he thinks is best instead, thus disrupting the hegemony.

The Social Reproduction of Masculinity

Thus far, I have established that Vimes engages in subversive performances of masculinity on both the individual level within his personal romantic relations and on the margins of his role

as a police officer, such as during the moment of revolution. I have begun to elaborate on how Vimes' subversions are sustained as the subversive performance occurs on not only the individual level, but also the institutional level. However, these subversions still always hinge on Vimes' individual agency. The final part of this chapter aims to explore how Vimes' subversive performance of gender is not simply limited to his own agency, but rather how he reproduces that agency in others, allowing for a more subversive form of masculinity.

In later City Watch novels (*Night Watch*, *Thud!,* and *Snuff*) Vimes becomes a father. One of Vimes' most resonant moments is in *Thud!*, when he rushes home—closing "two major roads" to make sure he makes it on time—to read to young Sam (147). Musing on why it is important to get home on time Vimes thinks:

> *He'd be home on time*. Would a minute have mattered? No, probably not, although Young Sam appeared to have a very accurate internal clock. Possibly even two minutes would be okay. Three minutes, even. You could go five, perhaps. But that was just it. If you could go five minutes then you'd go ten, then half an hour, a couple of hours… and not even see your son all evening. So that was that. Six o'clock, prompt. Every day. Read to young Sam. No *excuses*. He'd promised himself that. *No excuses.* No excuses at all. Once you had a good excuse, you opened the door to bad excuses. (147)

Vimes takes his role as a father seriously. Just as with his relationship with Sybil, there is an uncomplicated dedication to his son. There is very little room to critique Vimes' relationship with his son, and therefore very little to unpack about the dynamic. Instead, I use this dedication as a jumping off point. I claim that this dedication to the next generation of men is

what gives Vimes the ability to reproduce the subversions that he has created in a way that sustains them beyond his own agency.

The narrative in *Night Watch* is book-ended by Sybil beginning labour before Vimes goes into the past at the beginning of the novel, and giving birth to a son that is named after Vimes (Sam) after Vimes returns from the past. This literal beginning of Vimes becoming a father is also paralleled by Vimes becoming a mentor to his younger self in the past. This process becomes a rite of passage to Vimes becoming a father in the present. Upon returning to the past, Carcer kills Vimes' own mentor John Keel and Vimes must then pretend to be Keel to make sure that he will turn into the man he is in the present.

There are many parallels between Vimes' literal son and the younger version of himself, including the name "Sam." When their son is born Sybil is insistent that they name the child "Sam"—"'He's called Sam, Sam,' she said. 'And no argument' (324). Naming the child Sam creates a direct patrilineal connection between Vimes and his son, but also creates a link between the child and the younger Vimes. In *Night Watch* Vimes' younger self is often referred to as "Young Sam" and in the two remaining City Watch novels (*Thud!* and *Snuff*) Vimes' son is always referred to as "Young Sam." In response to Sybil wanting to name the child "Sam," Vimes, clearly beyond words, simply says "'I'll teach him to walk!' beamed Vimes. 'I'm *good* at teaching people to walk!'" (324). This is a nod to an earlier moment in *Night Watch* the novel where Vimes effectively fathers his younger self when they go out on patrol together. He tells him:

> I always have to teach people how to walk. You swing the foot, like this. Get it right and you can keep going all day. You're not in a hurry. You don't want to miss things. (94).

Here a very direct parallel between how Vimes will raise his son and how he teaches his younger self to be a good police officer is established.

Vimes' social reproduction of his gender as a surrogate father also extends beyond his connections to his past self and biological son. We learn that

> after a year or so, an Ankh-Morpork copper could leave the city and get a job in the Watches of the other cities on the plain with instant promotion. That was happening all the time. Sammies, they were called, even in towns that had never heard of Sam Vimes. He was just a little proud of that. 'Sammies' meant watchmen who could think without their lips moving, who didn't take bribes – much, and then only at the level of beer and doughnuts, which even Vimes recognized as the grease that helps the wheels run smoothly – and were, on the whole, trustworthy for a given value of 'trust' at least. (13-14).

During his own tenure in the Watch Vimes has been not only able to climb the ranks and improve the Watch from the sorry state that we find it in at the start of the series in *Guards! Guards!,* but has also played a major role in shaping the Watch into a force for good that extends beyond just Ankh-Morpork. Through the officers that leave Anhk-Morpork being called 'Sammies' this positive force for change has a patrilineal link to Vimes, established through his name in much the same way that his reproduction of identity is generated through his son, and relationship with his past self. Once again, there is a sense that the Sammies are not perfect, they do still at the end of the day take *some* bribes, but they are better than the coppers of yesterday, and that progress is not to be scoffed at. In other moments of the series we even get a sense that the cynicism that I have identified as foundational to Vimes' ability to be subversive is a feature he passes on to the rest of the Watch. In *The Fifth Elephant* Lord

Vetinari both identifies and seems to critique the level of cynicism in the Watch, commenting that “it really does seem to me that the culture of cynicism in the Watch is… is…” (33). Vimes undermines the critique by supplying that the culture of cynicism in the Watch may be “insufficient,” suggesting that the Watch may yet require an even more cynical culture. Whilst the culture in the Watch that Vimes creates may not be perfect, it seems to be frustrating the right people to generate disruptions within—and perhaps even subversions of—the patriarchy.

What is perhaps most interesting about this social reproduction of gender and Vimes’ journey into the past to reproduce his own gender is the sense of expectation it creates for him when he returns to the present. At the beginning of *Night Watch* we see some elements of police brutality. At the beginning of the novel, whilst meeting with Vetinari, Vimes finds out that one of his officers is in pursuit of Carcer, the novel’s antagonist. Vimes says:

> ‘Carcer needs an arrow in his leg just to get his attention. You shoot first—'
>
> ‘—and ask questions later?’ said Vetinari
>
> Vimes paused at the door and said ‘There’s nothing I want to ask him’ (25).

In these comments about Carcer we see the roots of the attitude and pattern of police violence that led Vimes to killing Wolfgang, which was problematised earlier in this chapter. When he confronts Carcer, Vimes “tore his badge off” after Carcer says to him “You’re not going to kill me, Mister Vimes. Not you with a badge” (328). Pratchett seems to be building towards a similar killing as Wolfgang. Carcer says “I give in, okay? Just arrest me? For old times’ sake?” (329). Vimes knows that Carcer will have a knife hidden on him somewhere, and that as soon as he tries to arrest him Carcer will attack him, giving him a chance to make a kill and claim self-defence. But our narrator says to us.

> The beast screamed inside Vimes. It screamed that no one would blame him for doing the hangman out of ten dollars and a free breakfast. […] The gods knew that man deserved it…
>
> …but young Sam was watching him, across thirty years. […]
>
> He lowered the sword." (329)

The thing that finally brings Vimes down and leads to the arrest of Carcer, rather than a killing, is the thought of his younger self. Because Vimes has invested so much time in producing a better more subversive masculinity in his younger self, he now feels an obligation that he must also live up to those expectations of being a better copper that he has placed on his younger self.

This chapter began by identifying that there are moments in the series where Vimes commits acts of violence. These moments become most complicated in *The Fifth Elephant* where the overlapping of the fantasy and crime fiction genres creates an oversimplification of the legal process. Although he is not as physically monstrous as Wolfgang,[7] Carcer is also a simple villain. He is a "psychopath. A complete nutjob […] he'd simply worked out that if you kill people who stand in your way, you move forward" ("Carcer." *The Universal Discworld Companion*). However, during *Night Watch* we see how Vimes tackles his complicit position with the violence that occurs within his role. He has also become a father and demonstrates that he cares about what the next generation of men will look like, whether they be his own child, or the men he trains in law enforcement. It is now this care for the next generation that allows him to avoid the conservative trappings of his own moment. He claims agency and does not allow the simplicity that the fantasy and crime fiction genres desire to allow him to commit

[7] Because Wolfgang is a werewolf and Carcer is a human.

an act of violence. Vimes is not perfect. Although there are situations where he is genuinely subversive, there are also clear limits to his ability to be subversive. However, the real value is his ability to hand on this ability to the next generation of men (and 'coppers'). Hopefully, they will be able to continue to access the subversive potential of the margins and maybe, just maybe, be marginally better than the men who came before them.

Conclusion

"Are you worried about your manhood?" (My mother; in front of my supervisor).

It is at times difficult for some people[1] to fully grasp why some of us[2] are so interested in gender. To answer the question from my mother, yes. I am deeply concerned about my manhood. I am deeply concerned about the way in which my identity has been constructed over the past several thousand years to perpetuate a flawed, hegemonic societal order. The 'role' that I play in society is inextricably linked to the perpetuation of patriarchy. Sometimes this is in ways that I have become acutely aware of. Sometimes, I am sure, this occurs in ways that exist beyond the boundaries of my current comprehension.

This thesis has in practice been the mapping of this concern, which I experience on a personal level, onto the scholarship of 'masculinity studies.' My first chapter identified how this conundrum exists within the framework of scholarship. I found that 'masculinity studies' thrives whilst applying a critical perspective; but when it attempts to generate more positive readings of masculinity it falls into a trap of echoing calls for a return to more 'traditional' modes of masculinity.

The opening Chapter demonstrated why this conundrum exists. Simply put, the theoretical composition of masculinity is not currently constructed for the purpose of understanding positive change occurring from within the hegemonic bloc. Within a theoretical context, the function of 'masculinity studies' is to understand how patriarchy perpetuates

[1] Often, but not exclusively, philosophers.
[2] Often, but not exclusively, those of us who study literature.

itself so efficiently and subjugates identities that the hegemonic order deems lesser. To my eye, there is a clear need for the theoretical composition of masculinity (and gender) to embed the potential for positive change within the power relations of masculinity itself. In the introductory chapter, I suggested that *subversion* needs to be included alongside R. W. Connell's power relations of masculinity to create room in the conversation to identify the tools of transgression that are available to men. Furthermore, I then identified that *Discworld*'s tendency towards *subversion* in its relationship to genre makes it an ideal space to look for subversive masculinities, due to the relationship between genre and gender.

Once these fundamentals had been laid, it became increasingly perplexing that more work had not already been done identifying subversive masculinities within *Discworld*. Chapter Two demonstrated that Isabel Clúa's reading of Carrot as a subversive individual is flawed. Even though more room is needed within Connell's frameworks for embedded positive change driven from inside patriarchal systems, ignorance of Connell's theories about how masculinity perpetuates itself is equally problematic. Furthermore, reading Clúa alongside other voices that analyse the *City Watch* but do not directly address masculinity reveals that, within *Discworld* scholarship, there is a significant trend of praising the 'traditional' elements of masculinity and patriarchy that have been successfully (and rightfully) problematised by 'masculinity studies.' The resultant celebration of 'traditional masculinity' ultimately functions to idealise the very patriarchal institutions that the masculinities are supposedly subverting. Instead, *subversion* must be incorporated into Connell's framework and read in tandem with her concepts of *hegemony*, *subordination*, *complicity,* and *marginalisation.* The missteps of previous *Discworld* scholarship were paramount to understanding how not to approach this search for healthier masculinities.

I look not towards Vimes then as a 'role model.' The introduction of this thesis argued that since the Ancient Greeks (at least) there is evidence of hegemonic modes of masculinity reproducing themselves through a false ideal of what masculinity should be, which was set out by the previous generation of men. Nevertheless, as Butler has pointed out, there is no true original from which contemporary gender is the copy. Therefore, to look to 'role models'—as 'masculinity studies' so often does—for the solutions to generating newer, more transgressive, forms of masculinity is ultimately a flawed movement. The very notion of a role model is so embedded within the patriarchal world view is seems naive to believe that we simply need different role models. To genuinely subvert and disrupt patriarchy, its functions cannot simply be co-opted to suit modern sensibilities. Instead, we must rethink the logics of identity construction and reproduction to create non-patriarchal identities.

Vimes, in his role, is not perfect. He, no doubt, as all men do, holds within his identity many flaws that function to maintain and uphold the hegemonic position of the masculine. However, as a thought experiment Vimes renegotiates elements of his roles. He deploys the tools of transgression that are available to him in his masculine identity (such as cynicism) to perform his role subversively. Unlike other men in Discworld*,* such as Carrot, Vimes' character does this actively. Vimes is an agent who shapes his own role, rather than needing a role model to strive for. He does this consistently throughout the series in his relationship with Sybil. Although he constantly participates in an outdated, indubitably flawed, role he simultaneously adjusts how that role is constructed. I do not suggest aspiring young men try to recreate the role that Vimes lives in his own relationship verbatim. Rather I suggest that they to seek to renegotiate the masculine roles they perform in their everyday life on the presumption that those roles innately function to perpetuate patriarchy.

What makes Vimes most successful as a thought experiment is that through his character the full spectrum of complexities that come with masculinity are visible. There are elements of societal roles that cannot be avoided. Vimes' responsibilities in his occupation as the head of a police force are, at times, incompatible with the ideal that a 'role model' should present. He intimidates people. He thinks the worst and holds prejudices. He kills people. To claim that this man should be a 'role model' that men should aspire to would ultimately fall into a rhetorical function that justifies violence and the hypermasculine. Yet, Vimes also renegotiates his role. He uses moments of flux in the functions of law and order to subvert hegemonic systems. He saves lives. He trains the next generation to be slightly better than the last.

To my own dismay, this thesis demonstrated that Vimes' subversions of gender are mostly restricted to marginal situations.[3] He can be genuinely subversive in moments where law and order is in flux, or when jurisdiction is questionable. His unshakeable moral compass and belief in justice does not lead to consistently perfect legal outcomes. However, what Vimes offers is a thought experiment that proves to men that they can renegotiate the terms of their role. Vimes' performance of his role models a process that generates subversions. Although the subversions may be restricted to the margins, I hope that if the processes are reproduced often enough, we may yet enclose those margins, eroding the foundational pillars of the patriarchy, until it topples over from the inside out.

[3] As they always say: "Never write a thesis on your heroes."

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