Shakespeare in Discworld: Witches, Fantasy, and Desire.


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Abstract:
In Shakespeare’s plays, most notably A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Macbeth, the supernatural world provides a means to discuss desire, a force both uncanny and inescapable. In the modern fantasy genre, the liminal world of the fairies and witches becomes just as essential, and the question of human versus super-human experience takes center stage. Terry Pratchett’s invocation of Shakespeare in the Discworld series, particularly in the novels Wyrd Sisters and Lords and Ladies, Macbeth and A Midsummer Night’s Dream respectively, allows for an exploration of the ambivalent relationship between enchantment, and human free will. In these novels, Pratchett suggests that while desire is an unavoidable, powerful, and ambivalent part of life, with all attendant dangers and strengths, the heart of successful magical thinking lies in human response and choice.

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