“A PERSONAL ODYSSEY”:
CONTRAPUNTAL HEROISM IN THE WORKS OF DIANA WYNNE JONES

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Apolline Nicola Lucyk, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in English, has presented a thesis titled, “A Personal Odyssey”: Contrapuntal Heroism in the Works of Diana Wynne Jones, in an oral examination held on December 15, 2014. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

This study examines one specific aspect of Diana Wynne Jones’ fantasy fiction—her use of multiple, interdependent character identities to craft heroes whose heroic journeys do not necessitate violence or conformity with preset definitions of heroism. These characters’ heroic journeys are inward ones of self-acceptance and empathy rather than outward ones that lead to external conflict. Because their identities are not always fragmented or divided, I use the term contrapuntal to describe them. Counterpoint, in classical music, refers to pieces crafted from two or more similar melodies interwoven together, and thus is a fitting concept to use in describing Jones’ heroes because her heroes’ selves are all slightly different, yet interdependent, and these characters must integrate their multiple selves to utilize their power fully, and act heroically. I suggest that Jones has crafted an innovative modulation of the traditional hero-type: contrapuntal heroism. I have divided contrapuntal heroism into two clusters, relative and relational. Closely examined, Jones’ heroes all fall into one of these two clusters, though they often contain characteristics of both, as the categories are intertwined. The relative hero is one whose heroic journey is inward as much as outward, centered on the acceptance of his or her own selves, a hero who defeats his or her opponents with wit more often than violence. I have chosen the term “relative” for these heroes, because they are all deemed heroic for acts that, under different circumstances, would not be deemed heroic, or considered exceptional. The relational hero is one whose heroism comes directly from his or her relationships with others. These heroes go through a process of self-discovery just like the relative heroes, but in the central conflict, they must work closely with one or more other relational heroes to defeat the antagonist. The defining characteristic of Jones’
heroes is that they all possess multiple identities or selves, and they must accept and embrace all of these selves in order to be heroic.

Jones’ treatment of identity stems from the postmodern concept of the decentered self developed by theorists such as Roland Barthes, who suggests that not only is there no “core self” but that the self, the “I,” is purely a linguistic convention (Barthes 145). Jones’ works, published from 1970 right up until her death in 2011, accept Barthes’ claim in many ways, since her characters, when closely examined, do not have unified, scripted stories and selves. Rather, they have multiple, contrapuntal identities that must be integrated for them to become heroes.

This study explores a number of Jones’s notable heroes and villains in order to explain contrapuntal heroism and how it functions in Jones’ works. In the first two chapters, I examine heroes who are deceived about their identity, and heroes who adopt disguises, revealing that it is essential for these characters to embrace all their identities in order to become heroes. Finally, in the third chapter, I examine the relationships between three notable villains and their identities, showing that if characters do the opposite—deny or oppress aspects of their identities—they become the villains rather than heroes. I dissect the construction of her villains in order to further explain her heroes. I argue that, for Jones’ protagonists, the acquisition of agency is directly related to their journeys toward self-acceptance and heroism, and that because Jones writes for children and young adults who are in the midst of their own process of self-discovery, this treatment of identities is meant to suggest to her readers that they must accept their multifaceted, contrapuntal identities in order to become heroes in their own lives.
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Abbreviations

“Child” Le Guin, “The Child and the Shadow”

Christopher Chant Jones, The Lives of Christopher Chant

Conrad’s Jones, Conrad’s Fate

“Development” Nikolajeva, “The Development of Children’s Fantasy

Diana Mendlesohn, Diana Wynne Jones: Children’s Literature and the Fantastic Tradition

Hemlock Jones, Fire and Hemlock

“Heroic” Jones, “The Heroic Ideal—A Personal Odyssey”

“Heterotopia” Nikolajeva, “Heterotopia as a Reflection of Postmodern Consciousness in the Works of Diana Wynne Jones”

Howl’s Jones, Howl’s Moving Castle

“Nowhere” Hixon, “The Importance of Being Nowhere: Narrative Dimensions and Their Interplay in Fire and Hemlock”

Pleasures Nodelman & Reimer, The Pleasures of Children’s Literature

Portals Campbell, Portals of Power: Magical Agency and Transformation in Literary Fantasy


Quest Campbell, A Quest of Her Own: Essays on the Female Hero in Modern Fantasy
| Reflections | Jones, *Reflections on the Magic of Writing* |
| Rhetorics   | Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* |
INTRODUCTION:

Identity, Postmodernism, Agency

The only way to explain who we are is to tell our own story, to select key events which characterize us and organize them according to the formal principles of narrative. (Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* 17)

Diana Wynne Jones is a fantasy writer known for her inventive, yet critical approach to the fantasy genre. In her monograph, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children’s Literature and the Fantastic Tradition*, Farah Mendlesohn argues that “Jones is both a fiction writer and a critic and … her fiction can be viewed as a sustained metafictional critical response to the fantastic” (Mendlesohn, *Diana* xiii). Mendlesohn’s four categories of fantastic literature are useful to demonstrate how Jones’ works are not easily categorized alongside earlier fantasy narratives such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Jones is often said to write immersive fantasy: “fantasy set in a world built so that it functions on all levels as a complete world” (Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics* 59). Immersive fantasy assumes “that the reader is as much a part of the world as are those being read about” and thus describes magical worlds with hints and allusions, rather than extensive explanations (59). However, her stories fit into the other categories as well (portal-quest fantasy, intrusion fantasy, and liminal fantasy). Mendlesohn explains that in both portal and quest fantasies, “a character leaves her familiar surroundings and passes through a portal into an unknown place” (1). In the intrusion fantasy, “the world is ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or
defeated, sent back whence it came, or controlled” (115). Finally, liminal fantasy is, at its core, fantasy “which estranges the reader from the fantastic as seen and described by the protagonist” (182; emphasis in original). These categories articulate the main trajectories and characteristics present in fantasy. Jones’ works, however, often transcend and confuse the four categories. For example, *The Merlin Conspiracy* can be considered immersive fantasy, because many of its main characters, including its female hero, Roddy Hyde, are native to the world in which the story takes place; however, it is also a portal-quest fantasy, since its male protagonist, Nick Mallory, is not from the secondary world, and his adventure is essentially a portal quest. Since the novel gives equal weight to these two journeys, it cannot be simply placed into one category.

Jones’ works do not all fit into one of Tzvetan Todorov’s categories (the fantastic, the uncanny, and the marvellous) either, which aim to categorize stories based on the nature of the phenomena that occur rather than the conventions the story employs. Todorov writes that the fantastic is a space of hesitation: “a hesitation common to the reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from ‘reality’ as it exists in the common opinion” (Todorov 41). He explains that if he “decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described” then the work moves into the genre of the uncanny (41); however, if “he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvellous” (41). In Jones’ stories, characters are sometimes unsure whether or not magical events really happened, such as for Polly in *Fire and Hemlock*, and the children in *Black Maria*; in these instances, the novels can be categorized as works of the fantastic, although later in the novels the hesitation
disappears (25). However, in other texts, the magic is clearly there and accepted by all, such as in *Howl’s Moving Castle* and the *Chrestomanci* series, in which case they fall under the definition of the marvellous (25), showing that Jones’ treatment of magic varies as well. The *Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (2012) uses the term “clusters” to gesture toward distinct threads that appear often in fantasy literature (James and Mendlesohn, eds. viii), suggesting that fantasy itself is difficult, if not impossible, to classify, although there are certainly threads of attributes and themes that recur often in fantasy. Jones’ fantasy is much the same; it is difficult to categorize or define, although one can find and examine recurring strategies in her work to better understand her themes and discover what her work has contributed to the critical conversation about children’s and young adult fantasy.

Because Jones’ fantasy is so complex, and fantasy, itself, is a difficult genre to classify or define, this study examines a specific aspect of Diana Wynne Jones’ work. It examines her use of contrapuntal character identities in crafting heroes whose heroic journeys do not necessitate violence or conformity with preset definitions of heroism. These characters’ heroic journeys are inward ones of self-acceptance and empathy rather than outward ones that lead to external conflict. I suggest that Jones has crafted an innovative modulation of the traditional hero-type: contrapuntal heroism, which I have divided into two clusters, relative and relational. Jones’ contrapuntal heroism stems from her distinct treatment of identity, which builds on the postmodern concept of the decentered self developed by theorists such as Roland Barthes. In his essay, “The Death of the Author” (1977), Barthes suggests that not only is there no “core self” but that the self, the “I,” is purely a linguistic convention, pronouncing that “I is nothing other than
the instance of saying I” (145). Jones’ works, published from 1970 right up until her death in 2011, accept Barthes’ claim in many ways, since her characters, when closely examined, do not have unified, scripted stories and selves. Rather, they have multiple, contrapuntal identities that must be integrated for them to become heroes. Multifaceted identity is visible in other contemporary young adult fantasy literature, such as Ursula le Guin’s A Wizard of Earthsea, in which the hero, Ged, has a demonic “other self” that follows him throughout the novel. However, Ged’s “other self” can also be viewed as a “shadow self,” to use the Jungian term, which refers to “the dark side of his soul, the unadmitted, the inadmissible” (Le Guin, “Child” 60), while for Jones’ heroes, their other selves do not fit into this binary. Her characters’ secondary selves are not wholly good or bad, just different.

Through exploring a number of notable heroes and villains in Jones’ work, this study proposes that the defining characteristic of Jones’ heroes is that they all possess multiple identities or selves, and they must accept and embrace all of these selves in order to be heroic. Because these identities are not always fragmented or divided, I use the term contrapuntal, or “according to the rules of counterpoint” (“Contrapuntal, adj.”) to describe these intertwined identities. In music, this refers to the additional “melody added as accompaniment to a given melody of ‘plain-song’”, or “[t]he combination of two types of rhythm in a line of verse” (“Counterpoint, n.1”). Musical counterpoint refers to songs crafted from two or more similar melodies interwoven together. These melodies are all beautiful on their own, but only when they are played together can such a piece be fully appreciated. The magic in counterpoint comes from the way the melodies interact with and play off each other. Thus, Jones’ characters have contrapuntal selves because their
selves are all slightly different, yet interdependent, and these characters must integrate their multiple selves to utilize their power fully and act heroically. In the following chapters, I explain contrapuntal heroism and how it functions in Jones’ works.

In the first two chapters, I examine heroes who are deceived about their identity, and heroes who adopt disguises, revealing that it is essential for these characters to embrace all their identities in order to become heroes. In the third chapter, I examine the relationships between three notable villains and their identities, showing that if characters do the opposite—deny or oppress aspects of their identit(ies)—they become the villains rather than heroes, thus dissecting the construction of her villains in order to further explain her heroes.

In order to classify Jones’ heroes, I have made two clusters within the concept of contrapuntal heroism: relative and relational heroism. Closely examined, Jones’ heroes all fall into one of these two clusters, though the categories are intertwined, and they often contain characteristics of both types. The relative hero is one whose heroic journey is inward as much as outward, a journey centered on the acceptance of his or her own selves. He or she is a hero who defeats his or her opponents with wit more often than violence. I have chosen the term “relative” for these heroes, because they are all deemed heroic for acts that, under different circumstances, would not be deemed heroic, or considered exceptional. For example, Cat’s great feat is to keep his magical power from his sister, Gwendolen, an act which is heroic only because it is so hard for him, and because she has been using his power for wicked deeds, not because one must always keep one’s power to oneself (Charmed Life). This is not an act that would be automatically considered heroic by someone with no knowledge of the context, and thus
it is an act which is heroic only relative to Cat and his situation. The relative heroes I examine in this thesis include Cat Chant from Charmed Life (1977), Polly Whittacker from Fire and Hemlock (1984), and Sophie Hatter from Howl’s Moving Castle (1986). Other examples of relative heroes from children’s fantasy include Harry Potter from the Harry Potter series (1997-2007), because he carries a piece of Voldemort within him, and his greatest task is to realize that and destroy it (a struggle which is inward rather than outward), and Ged from Ursula K. Le Guin’s A Wizard of Earthsea (1968), whose ultimate task is to accept his frightening “shadow self”, his spirit of death, as a part of himself, thus knowing and accepting his whole self.

Jones’ other contrapuntal hero-type is the relational hero. The relational hero is one whose heroism comes directly from his or her relationships with others. These heroes go through a process of self-discovery just like the relative heroes, but in the central conflict, they must work closely with one or more other relational heroes to defeat the antagonist. They could be heroic sidekicks, like Vierran Guaranty from Hexwood (1993), or a heroic figure who needs the help of another to defeat the antagonist, like Roddy Hyde from The Merlin Conspiracy (2003), who raises the land with the help of the Flower Witch. Other relational heroes that are examined in this thesis include Millie from The Lives of Christopher Chant (1988), and Conrad Tesdinic from Conrad’s Fate (2005). Again, one can find examples of relational heroes from outside Jones’ work, as well, such as the Pevensie children in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (1950), who heroically help Aslan defeat the White Witch, Jadis, although no one of them could have defeated her alone.
The Postmodern and Diana Wynne Jones

Postmodernism in literary criticism is a movement that aims to dismantle the traditions, assumptions, and modernist critical framework that preceded it. Ian Gregson describes postmodernism as a movement founded on skepticism: “[t]he dominant attitude in postmodernism is disbelief. The dominant strategy of both postmodernist philosophy and the postmodernist aesthetic is deconstruction, which is disbelief put into practice. Deconstruction is an anti-system, or a system that subverts systems; it is a mechanism that exposes mechanisms” (1). A key feature of postmodernism is that it does not offer solid answers to the questions it poses. In her extended study, *A Poetics of Postmodern*, Linda Hutcheon writes that

the postmodern is, if it is anything, a problematizing force in our culture today: it raises questions about (or renders problematic) the.common-sensical and the ‘natural.’ But it never offers answers that are anything but provisional and contextually determined (and limited). In Foucault’s (1985, 14-22) sense of the notion of problematizing—as generating discourses—postmodernism has certainly created its own problematic, its own set of problems or issues (which were once taken for granted) and possible approaches to them. (xi)

Thus, the postmodern is not easily defined and is more of a response or reaction than a conclusion. What characterizes the movement primarily is a large apparatus of questions and concerns that postmodernist thinkers and writers share, which, as Gregson articulates,
generally stem from a disbelief in previous belief systems, and an effort to expose the mechanics of these belief systems in order to undermine them. However, in its lack of overarching answers, the postmodern opens the door for new strategies and the chance to break away from traditions and assumptions that were previously upheld in literature, such as the existence of a self’s core or essence.

Regarding identity, Gregson asserts that “[t]he most important postmodernist take on identity questions arises from the deconstruction of concepts of inner or underlying essence. What is being deconstructed, therefore, is the idea of a stable core of self (like a soul) which is presented throughout an individual’s life and which constitutes their true being” (41). Therefore, Jones’ novels, which often present characters with multiple identities, and misconceived notions about themselves, show an engagement, on Jones’ part, with the postmodern notion of identity.

There have been many articles written on postmodernism in Jones’ work; in fact, they make up the bulk of Jones criticism. Catherine Butler notes that, for many years, Jones was not well-known in the Academy, but that her “critical fortunes have risen sharply [in recent years]” (6), because of the rise in theory-conscious criticism that occurred at the turn of the century: “her exploitation of such ‘post-modern’ devices as multiple or fragmented subjectivities, alternative realities, self-altering narratives, intertextuality, and a generic hybridity have made her a more fashionable writer in the theory-conscious academy of the 1990s and beyond” (6). But she also observes that “[Jones’] books, which are characterized by humor, intelligence, unparalleled technical inventiveness, and a humane but unsentimental view of human nature, have long had a devoted following, not least among other fantasy writers” (5). In another study, Maria
Nikolajeva argues that “Heterotopia, or a multitude of discordant universes ... a concept used in postmodern literary criticism to denote the ambivalent and unstable spatial and temporal conditions in fiction” is a “trademark” of Jones’ novels (Nikolajeva “Heterotopia” 25). Nikolajeva argues that heterotopia is “present, explicitly or implicitly, in most of [Jones’] novels” (26), and that it “interrogates the conventional definitions of children’s and juvenile fiction based on simplicity, stability, and optimism” (26). The most obvious example of heterotopia from Jones’ novels is the Chrestomanci multiverse\textsuperscript{1}, but she employs similar multiverses in most of her novels, such as in *The Homeward Bounders, The Merlin Conspiracy* and *Deep Secret*. David Rudd adds that “Diana Wynne Jones is particularly adept at demonstrating how what we think of as solid ground is always prone to dissolution” (258), such as when Polly realizes, in the first pages of *Fire and Hemlock*, that what she believes to be her adolescent memories are not actually her own (Jones *Hemlock* 14-15). Similarly, Mendlesohn argues that Jones revises fantasy traditions in her novels, Martha P. Hixon examines the narrative techniques she employs, and Debbie Gascoyne examines the power of language in her texts. Building on the work of such scholars, I seek to explain how Jones breaks down and recreates the hero-type in her fiction.

\textsuperscript{1} The Chrestomanci multiverse, often called the “Related Worlds,” comprises twelve world series, each containing about nine worlds which have similar historical ancestors, but branch away from the others at key event in history. In *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, Flavian explains, “Each world is really a set of worlds, which we call a Series. The only one which is just a single world is Eleven, but we needn't bother with that. All the worlds were probably one world to begin with and then something happened back in prehistory which could have ended in two contradictory ways. Let's say a continent blew up. Or it didn't blow up. The two things couldn't both be true at once in the same world, so that world became two worlds, side by side but quite separate, one with that continent and one without. And so on, until there were twelve.” (152)
**Heroes and Heroism**

The hero-type can be traced back at least as far as the Greek heroes, whose exploits comprised much of Jones’ childhood reading:

> The eccentricity of my parents meant that there were almost no books in the house except learned ones, or books they used for teaching ... So before I was ten I had read innumerable collections of Greek myths, including Hawthorne’s *Tanglewood Tales*, and the unabridged version of the *Morte d’Arthur*, ... I had also read *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the Grimm—and a certain amount of Hans Andersen ... I then went on to the *Odyssey*, which I preferred to the *Iliad*” (Jones, “Heroic” 129)

In her essay, “The Heroic Ideal—A Personal Odyssey,” published in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Jones explains how she perceives heroes, and how she prepared to craft her female hero for *Fire and Hemlock*, Polly Whittacker. In this article, she defines the traditional hero primarily as “the one you identify with in the story” (Jones, “Heroic” 129). She observes that “heroes are brave, physically strong, never mean or vicious, and possessed [(sic)] a code of honour that requires them to come to the aid of the weak or incompetent and the oppressed when nobody else will” (Jones, “Heroic” 130). She also notes that heroes are always somehow connected with higher powers such as supernatural beings or the gods, and that having this supernatural connection serves two purposes: it forces the hero to uphold a code of honour, but it also “suppl[ies] a huge extra set of dimensions that put the hero in touch with the rest of the universe and render his actions significant for the whole of humanity” (Jones, “Heroic” 130). Finally, she attests that “above all, heroes go into action when the odds are against them. They do this … often
knowing they are going to get killed, and for this reason they impinge on a hostile world in a way others don’t” (Jones, “Heroic” 130). So, for Jones, the tradition of the heroic character-type is very important, and heroism is linked intrinsically with courage and selflessness.

Jones does not simply replicate the traditional hero figure in her own writing. Rather, as Mendlesohn observes, Jones’ heroes “are heroes because the gods and the fates and we take notice of them. … Heroes get to do what we want do to [(sic)], without subtlety, without symbolism” (Diana xxii; emphasis in original). Mendlesohn maintains that Jones’ concept of the hero builds on Joseph Campbell’s monomyth, but “[w]hereas Campbell’s ideas about heroes are about following the rules of a moral narrative, Jones argues ‘No.’ The thing about heroes is that they will not follow the rules” (Diana xxii). Jones writes that her heroes are in many ways “a scapegoat, to be blamed for doing exactly what you would do yourself” (Reflections 146). I will add, however, that while Jones’ heroes do not always follow the rules set out for them, the tasks and decisions that make them heroic are not easier actions than those faced by the heroes of other literature. They are often personal sacrifices and feats, such as giving up a loved one, or confronting embarrassment. As Mendlesohn states, these heroes are not always moral, per se, like Conrad Tesdinic from Conrad’s Fate, whose act of trespassing into Mr Amos’ wine cellar helps him defeat Mr Amos. The allowance of transgression within the heroic sphere is a key characteristic of Jones’ heroes, and draws them towards transgressive heroes such as Odysseus from the Odyssey. However, I will add that the most important characteristic of Jones’ heroes is their revision of the heroic journey,
through which Jones opens up the space for characters who would not traditionally be deemed heroes to be heroes, both for girls and women, as well as boys and men.

Traditionally, the hero role has not been as widely available to female characters in fantastic fiction as it has been to their male counterparts. René Fleischbein writes in “New Hero: Metafictive Female Heroism in Fire and Hemlock” that

There are far too few true female heroes—girls who are active, adventurous, intelligent, just, and independent—in literature. Other female heroes are not really female; they are boys and men who have had a feminine name given to them, like Pippi Longstocking, a young girl who lives by herself with her pet monkey and who beats up pirates by herself.

(235)

Similarly, in Earthsea Revisioned, Ursula Le Guin claims, “Women may be good and brave, but with rare exceptions (Spenser, Ariosto, Bunyan?) women are not heroes. They are sidekicks. ... Women are seen in relation to heroes: as mother, wife, seducer, beloved, victim, or rescuable maiden. Women won independence and equality in the novel, but not in the hero-tale” (5). These perspectives suggest that the female hero’s place in literature has been restricted.\(^2\) I do not wish to imply that there is anything wrong with female heroes who assert themselves in battles or take on masculine roles. Female heroes such as Pippi Longstocking and Arya Stark from A Song of Ice and Fire are very good examples of girls who have gained agency and become heroic in their spheres. Neither will I argue that women should not be viewed in relation to others. Yet, it is also important for there to be space in stories for individuals of all personalities and in all roles to be heroic. It is important that there are also female heroes who do not have to physically fight to help

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\(^2\) See also Bottigheimer “Fertility Control” and Campbell A Quest of her Own.
defeat the villains, and for female characters who are stay-at-home mothers, for example, to be heroic as well. Some good examples of such heroes are Molly Weasley, a stay-at-home mother and housewife who kills Bellatrix LeStrange in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, and Princess Eilonwy from *The Chronicles of Prydain* by Lloyd Alexander, who does not physically take on the antagonists, but teaches Taran how to be a hero, an important process that makes her a hero in her own right. Female heroes, such as Molly Weasley and Eilonwy, are important to the female hero character type, because they show that there is space for different types of women to be heroic. Like these women, many of Jones’ female heroes are able to act heroically in both masculine and feminine roles, because of their contrapuntal identities. Jones blurs the boundaries of gender in her fiction, and creates more options for both female and male characters, such as Chrestomanci, who is feminized in his flamboyant style yet remains dominant and powerful, or Polly, who is a tomboy in her younger years.

In “The Heroic Ideal,” Jones argues “it seemed to me women [characters] were a mess. All over the world they were either goaded into taking vengeance … or they were passive” (131). She remarks that a medievalist she consulted “opined that Christianity had substantially affected the heroic ideal, especially where women were concerned, by introducing ideas of patience and endurance and solitary personal struggle against one’s own fleshy instincts” (Jones, “Heroic” 131-132). Ruth B. Bottigheimer claims that female characters have had fluctuating levels of agency over the centuries, but that in twentieth-century literature, they moved back into subjective roles: “girls had become frightened damsels, their mothers had retreated into the shadows, and maids and sisters who had formerly lent their mistresses a helping hand had disappeared” (Bottigheimer
Similarly, Fleischbein observes, “[t]here are yet other females such as Cinderella figures … who are heroines by virtue of their socially approved womanly beauty, complaisance, silence, and passivity, all of which result in a lack of what we would normally consider heroic action” (Fleischbein 235). The disenfranchised position female characters have often occupied can be disheartening for female readers and writers, but perhaps that is partly why recent fantasy has been gradually revising the traditional place of women in new and exciting ways. Jones, as author and critic, has been an influential innovator in developing new space for girls and women in the hero-type, creating not only effective male heroes in her stories but admirable female heroes as well.

However, it is not only Jones’ crafting of female heroes that is innovative: her revised hero-type also opens space for men and boys to be contrapuntal heroes as well. For this reason, I have not focused my study solely on female heroes. I have also included a discussion of two notable male heroes: Cat Chant from Charmed Life, and Conrad Tesdinic from Conrad’s Fate. Neither of these characters appears exceptional at the outset of their stories, yet each becomes a hero within the story. I include them to show that Jones’ hero-type revision is not only present in her female characters, it is present in her male characters as well, creating a space where female and male heroes can function in similar ways.

Jones’ treatment of identity and the process of self-acceptance that she impresses on her protagonists are connected to the adolescent journey to adulthood and search for agency. This process is especially important to Jones’ characters, because most of them, at least her protagonists, are at an age when they are learning about themselves, and forming their own sense of self. Mendlesohn asserts that “Most of children’s literature is
concerned with the need for children to gain autonomy and pass into adulthood” (*Diana* 19), and Jones’ stories are no exception. While most of Jones’ heroes possess exceptional magical power from the outset of their stories, they need to gain agency before they can use their power effectively. As Mendlesohn says,

> Jones posits that power is a direct consequence of the acquisition of agency. Because agency is about the ability to make conscious choices—the realization that one obeys because it is the wise thing to do, rather than because an order has been given by an authority figure—agency cannot be acquired solely with the conferring of power. Power without agency creates either a more powerful servant, or an individual unable to harness his or her own power effectively. (*Diana* 21)

Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer note, also, the power of literature to free a child from culturally imposed rules, arguing that children should simply read for pleasure:

> “providing children with a variety of literary texts will help free them from common cultural assumptions about what children can or should like, and will help develop their willingness to seek pleasure from the new as well as from the familiar” (*Pleasures* 40). In this passage, they deny that all children’s literature should be didactic, but nonetheless acknowledge the ability of literature to mould the young mind and influence their beliefs, or call into question previously-held assumptions.

The acquisition of agency, for Jones’ protagonists, is directly related to their search for identity and the process of self-acceptance. Agency and young adulthood are important themes in Jones’ work, and deeply connected to the journey toward self-acceptance and heroism in Jones’ novels. The connection between heroism and the
acquisition of agency is especially important because Jones writes for a young audience—children and young adults—who are going through their own processes of maturation and self-realization, drawing a parallel between her heroes’ heroic journeys and the readers’ process of maturation and journey toward adulthood. Jones has written about the influence she perceives novels to have on children if they read them “at a time when ideas [a]re still forming” (Reflections 72). She argues that books read at a young age have a profound influence on the developing mind, and can remain with the reader through their later life (Reflections 72). In this sense, there is a didactic impulse at the forefront of her writing, suggesting she means to suggest her readers must accept their multiple, contrapuntal identities in order to become heroes in their own lives.
CHAPTER ONE:

Deception

This chapter examines four characters who are deceived about their identities: Cat Chant from *Charmed Life*, Polly Whittacker from *Fire and Hemlock*, Vierran Guaranty from *Hexwood*, and Conrad Tesdinic from *Conrad’s Fate*. These characters have misconceived notions about themselves, or are not aware of significant aspects of their identities, aspects often concealed from the narrators, whose points of view are often partial, deceived, or naive, and from the reader as well. Their misapprehensions lead them to undervalue themselves initially, but once they discover and subsequently embrace the other aspects of their identity, they are able to harness their power and become indispensable heroic forces in the fight against the novels’ antagonists. Using these characters, Jones connects the fragmented *I* with the fragmented nature of memory, as memory provides only a partial portrait of the past, at best, and is not always reliable; however, it remains integral to the formation of one’s identity. All identities are integral to these characters’ development into more powerful individuals, as it is through the gradual discovery of their full selves that they find the power to play their role in resolving the conflict of the novel. These characters have something to remember or discover, although the foundation of their identity remains imprecise and fragmented, and they must use their complex identities, the combination of the old and the new, to become heroes in their stories.
**Cat Chant, *Charmed Life* (1977)**

Cat Chant, the protagonist of *Charmed Life*, is orphaned at the outset of the novel, and spends much of the story worshipping his older sister, Gwendolen, for her apparent magical powers. Through passivity and ignorance, Cat allows Gwendolen to use his magical powers to work dark deeds. He is deceived about the nature of his identity, because Gwendolen does not let him know that he is a powerful nine-lived enchanter and instead deludes him into thinking he is an ordinary boy with no magical power at all, while she harnesses his power to do magic of her own.

Since Cat perceives himself to be without magical power, overshadowed by his older sister, Cat’s character experiences a fissure between perception and identity. There are many hints throughout the novel that Cat is a powerful magic user, and the other characters around him, along with the readers, realize that Gwendolen is using his lives in order to work her mediocre magic. For example, she uses one of Cat’s lives to create an apparition to scare Chrestomanci, an apparition which looks like Cat, since it is his life she uses to create it. Mr Saunders later comments to Chrestomanci: “What possessed her to give away the source of her power like that?” (*Charmed Life* 67). Later on, once Gwendolen’s non-magical ‘replacement,’ Janet, has found this out, Janet remarks, “You know, you should be called Mule, not Cat. If you don’t want to know a thing, you don’t” (165). Her comment is very perceptive: Cat does not want to know the truth of his own life and his relationship with his sister. Thus, the other side of Cat’s identity is his enchanter self, and he must use both the knowledge he has gained from his time spent believing he is an ordinary boy as well as the knowledge of his identity as an enchanter in order to help defeat Gwendolen and the other corrupt magic users who wish to take over
Chrestomanci Castle.

Cat must use aspects of both sides of his identity in order to help Chrestomanci and his staff suppress the hedge wizards. Cat’s two most important contributions here are breaking Chrestomanci free from his silver bindings, so that he can summon his power, and realizing that Gwendolen is using his power, which enables him to stop her. In order to free Chrestomanci from his silver bindings, Cat must believe that he can saw through rope. By willing himself to do so, he is able to saw through the rope that is binding him and release Chrestomanci. Similarly, in order to stop Gwendolen, Cat needs the knowledge that Gwendolen has been using his powers against him, knowledge which he gains from having discovered his enchanter status; yet, it is his naïve self who must shake her off and regain his power, because she is using him just as she has many times before. Again, when Chrestomanci and all his staff are trying to subdue the hedge wizards, both Chrestomanci and his son remark that something is stopping them from counteracting the mob’s little spells. And suddenly Cat realizes that

He *was* joining in the magic. Only he was joining in on the wrong side, because Gwendolen was using him again. He was so used to her doing it that he barely noticed. But he could feel her doing it now. She was using so much of his power to stop Chrestomanci fetching Millie that Cat was getting burned. (*Charmed Life* 205-206; emphasis in original)

This realization is that Gwendolen is leaching his power and taking it away from her is a very important move in defeating the hedge wizards. Mendlesohn comments that “There is an indication here that Cat does not recognize his power because to do so would be to accept agency and he is just not ready to do this … The link between emotional maturity
and real power is absolute” (Mendlesohn *Diana* 35). Thus, Cat’s heroic task is really a struggle within that he must go through in order to help defeat the novel’s antagonists, a struggle to distance himself from his sister and take responsibility for his own power. Cat’s story is like a coming of age story, as Cat has to mature before he can complete his journey and help defeat Gwendolen and the hedge wizards.

Mendlesohn says that Cat is “not wholly willing to acknowledge” his powers (*Diana* 35). Cat not only finds it difficult to believe he has tremendous magical powers, but he also does not want to believe it, because it would force him to accept that his sister has been leaching his powers for her own ends. As Mendlesohn articulates, “Cat learns that being horrified by Gwendolen’s actions without intervening makes him culpable, even though there is little he could do” (Mendlesohn, *Diana* 11), especially because it is his power she is using to do the very things that upset him.

Thus, in Cat Chant, Jones creates a relative hero, as his heroic task pivots on a struggle with himself. Cat does not need to actively defeat the hedge wizards in order to be heroic; he simply needs to stop them from using his magic. Once Cat has reclaimed his magic, it is quite easy for Chrestomanci and his staff to take away the mob’s magic. This sense of relative heroism that centers on an inner struggle within the hero, rather than an outer struggle between the hero and antagonist, emerges repeatedly in Jones’ novels. Just as Cat must let go of Gwendolen and stop himself from letting her use his powers, Polly Whittacker (*Fire and Hemlock*) must let go of Thomas Lynn, emotionally, in order to save him. Similarly, the greatest feat that Gair from *The Power of Three* must accomplish is accepting that he is powerful and learning to listen to his intuition.

In *Charmed Life*, Cat’s assumption that he is an ordinary boy proves detrimental
not only to him, but also to the whole staff of Chrestomanci castle. Not only does it hinder him from making use of his powers effectively, and for the good of the people around him, but it also enables his sister, Gwendolen, to use his powers for dark purposes. As Chrestomanci explains to Janet: “Cat appears to have no magic at all. Yet his sister works magic far beyond her own abilities, and goes on doing it even when her witchcraft is taken away. What am I to think? Does Cat know what he’s doing? If he doesn’t, why doesn’t he? And if he does know, what is he up to?” (Charmed Life 215). Cat’s passive relationship with his magical ability is posed as a danger to himself and those around him.

Jones repeatedly crafts heroes who perceive themselves as ordinary. Gair, from The Power of Three, also perceives himself as ordinary, but actually he has the most extraordinary gift of all—the gift of sight unasked—more useful than his brother’s or his sister’s gifts. Sophie Hatter (Howl’s Moving Castle) also perceives herself to be unexceptional, and much of her heroic journey involves overcoming this faulty preconception. Finally, Polly from Fire and Hemlock continually positions herself as a sidekick, a helper in her relationships. Her heroic task, in a sense, is to recognize herself as a hero in her own right, separate from any other power, since she must let go of Tom to save him. Thus, not only do Jones’ heroes need to accept the contrapuntal aspects of their identity in order to accomplish their heroic tasks, but they must also overcome the preconception that they are ordinary, and take responsibility for their power before they can play their part in defeating the antagonists of their novels.

Christopher Chant is another example of a hero with magical power that is not beneficial, unless he understands it. Mendlesohn illustrates:
Christopher becomes aware of his status as a powerful enchanter in the first third of the novel: he blows the roof off his tutor’s house and must learn to control his magic in order to put it all back together again. Much of the rest of the book is devoted to positioning Christopher so that he can use his power and gain authority thereby. There is also a fascinating thread in which Christopher begins to reinterpret the characters who surround him. *(Diana 36)*

What Mendlesohn alludes to here is that before Christopher realizes his power, he unwittingly lets his power be used by his Uncle Ralph for corrupt activities. As a young boy, Christopher assumes he is absolutely ordinary and unexceptional, so when his Uncle Ralph takes a liking to him, he automatically worships him and trustingly agrees to do a series of favours for him without investigating the nature of these favours. It is not until the end of the novel that Christopher realizes he had been unknowingly importing illegal substances into his world, including dragon’s blood, and even dead mermaids. Like Cat Chant, Christopher’s assumption that he is an ordinary boy, and that what he does for Uncle Ralph could never have a substantial effect on the world around him, is detrimental because in helping Uncle Ralph, he unwittingly propagates evil and causes chaos throughout the related worlds.

**Polly Whittacker, Fire and Hemlock (1985)**

Martha Hixon asserts that *Fire and Hemlock* (1984) is “a complex story constructed of interconnecting narrative layers that questions the nature of time, reality, and the linearity of narrative itself” (“Tam Lin” 86). Specifically, the text builds upon the
traditional English ballads, “The Ballad of Tam Lin” and “Thomas the Rhymer” (ed. Child), both of which are mythic narratives involving a mysterious faerie queen who has vast powers over men. In “The Ballad of Tam Lin,” which *Fire and Hemlock* adapts most closely, Tam is in line to be sacrificed to the queen of the fairies, and his love, Janet, saves him by holding on to him as he changes forms several times. In evoking these mythic narratives, Jones brings a deeper level of meaning and myth to Polly’s journey.

In this novel, Jones presents another character who is deceived about significant aspects of her identity, but whose eventual discovery of her cohesive identity helps her to achieve her potential in the story: Polly Whittacker. In the story, Polly discovers a hidden set of memories that reveal an old friend, Thomas Lynn, who had been erased from her memories completely and is in grave danger as a result of something she did. To find and save Tom, Polly must journey into the depths of her memory and relive a past she has since forgotten, and thus accept and make use of both of her identities, or both her sets of memories, to save him.

Throughout the story, Polly gradually revisits her hidden memories from her forgotten adolescent years, which begin with the funeral where she first meets Tom (*Hemlock* 16-47), and end with the Hunsdon House gathering where she agrees to forget Tom at Laurel’s behest (345-352). Through rediscovering her hidden memories, she realizes that Tom was an extremely important part of her adolescence, one of the most important people in her life during that time. With every memory Polly revisits, she comes a little closer to understanding what happened to Tom, and why he was wiped from her memory. Hixon observes that the nineteen-year-old Polly we see in Part Four has far more agency than her earlier self, as she is “now armed with the truth and a
deeper understanding of the meaning of those past events” (Hixon, “Nowhere” 98). By revisiting her past from the perspective of an outsider, Polly is able to realize that Tom is in great need of her help, and that she must find a way to save him from his ex-wife, Laurel.

As Alice Mills maintains, “[a]t the end of Fire and Hemlock it is Polly who is the least lost; she functions as the most powerful, wise and healing character” (10). Polly realizes, through the exploration of her hidden memories, that it was when she tried to “hang on” to Tom that the worst things happened to them. For example, at the Middleton Fair, Tom avoids Polly, but she clings to him, and when they go through the House of Horrors together, he is almost killed by a suit of armour and a falling portcullis (Hemlock 288). Similarly, when Polly spies on Tom and Laurel with the Fire and Hemlock photograph, Laurel responds by erasing Polly’s memories of Tom. Thus, it is through revisiting her hidden memories and discovering her uncanny “other-self” that Polly is able to realize what she must do to save Tom and become a relative hero: she must let go of him.

Polly’s heroic rejection has multiple levels of significance; most notably, it establishes her as a relative hero because it centers on a conflict within her rather than between her and another person. Her task is heroic because it is so difficult for her to do, and because she does it to save Tom. Jones also establishes that Polly must actively reject Tom, since forgetting him does not save him but rejecting him in the final struggle at Hunsdon house does. Additionally, Polly’s task is significant because it departs from the Tam Lin myth. Whereas Janet needs to hold on to Tam no matter what form he takes, Polly must let go of Tom in order to save him. So, in this heroic task, Jones has shown
that in order to save Tom, Polly cannot simply do what has been done before; she needs to break away from the “Tam Lin” narrative in order to save him. Finally, it is a perfect example of a heroic task which does not follow the rules, yet is heroic because of its context. In another context, it would appear that she should hold on to Tom rather than push him away. However, because Polly realizes that letting go of Tom will save him, the act becomes heroic.

The need for a protagonist to let go of someone or something is not unique to Polly’s journey: it is present throughout Jones’ oeuvre. Just as Polly needs to let go of Tom in order to save him, Cat needs to let go of Gwendolen in order to reclaim his power and begin to use it for good (Charmed Life). Similarly, Christopher Chant must let go of his Uncle Ralph physically and emotionally, in order to help stop his uncle (the Wraith) from illegally smuggling dangerous materials from other worlds.

Since Jones writes primarily for children and young adults, it is likely that she is suggesting that the journey to becoming a hero is connected to the journey to agency and self-knowledge. Not only must characters accept themselves for who they are in Jones’ stories, but they must also let go of their authority figures, or change their relationships from naïve obedience to informed, discretionary interdependence and respect. This is dissimilar from earlier children’s fantasies like those of Edith Nesbit, such as The Phoenix and the Carpet and The Enchanted Castle, which approach education differently. As Maria Nikolajeva writes, Nesbit’s stories “feature magical agents (objects or creatures) that make mock of the children and demonstrate their inferiority as they prove incapable of controlling magic” and force the children to learn “bitter lessons from their adventures, ... [and] voluntarily give up their empowering implements” (Nikolajeva,
“Development” 51). Jones’ texts encourage young readers to follow their intuition and trust themselves to learn and grow on their own, whereas Nesbit’s stories invite outside forces to instruct the young protagonists.

The process of growth and learning is addressed in ways similar to Jones’ vision in other children’s fantasies, as well, such as Frank L. Baum’s The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, in which Dorothy goes through a very similar process of self-discovery. Dorothy begins her story with a similar scepticism about her own power and discovers different aspects of her identity throughout her journey, personified by her friends the scarecrow, the cowardly lion, and the tin man, which, as Nikolajeva points out “can be interpreted psychoanalytically as three projections of her inner self, [and] seek the three different qualities—brain, heart and courage—which Dorothy repeatedly reveals during the journey: she is clever, caring and brave, yet she believes that only an adult can send her back home, and as a very young child, she longs for the protection of her foster parents” (Nikolajeva, “Development” 52). While I do agree with this psychological reading, I also believe the characters can also be seen as separate in their own right. Regardless, Dorothy possesses all she needs to return home from the outset of the novel, she just has to realize this, which she learns through accepting the aspects of herself she initially doubted. Thus, Dorothy can be seen as an early example of a relative hero, similar to those in Jones’ work, although the different aspects of her identity are projected through other characters rather than internally.

Returning to the trope of letting go as it appears in Jones’ novels, both Cat and Christopher must let go of their childhood authority figures, Gwendolen and Uncle Ralph, and let the older Chrestomanci and the castle staff take the place of those authority
figures. In Polly’s case, her guardian, Granny, is already a rather detached yet honourable authority figure, and Polly has already grown independent from her, but she needs to let go of her idealized notion of Thomas Lynn in order to save him from Laurel. She must also open up the space for developing a real adult relationship with him. Thus, the trope of letting go, in Jones’ texts, is important both in the journey to relative heroism and in the passage to adulthood and agency.

Polly’s process of discovery, prompted by the discovery of her alternate set of memories, gives her the strength to become a fully independent individual and to see herself as her own hero, rather than someone else’s assistant. Initially, she places herself as the sidekick to her outgoing friend, Nina, “a big, fat girl with short, frizzy hair, glasses and a loud giggle” \cite{Hemlock16}, who threatens never to play with Polly anymore if she does not come up with a fun game idea, or if she cannot figure out what “High Priestesses do” \cite{emphasis in original}. When Polly meets Tom, she immediately positions herself as his assistant, explaining to him, “Really you’re secretly a hero, a very strong one who’s immortal— …Your name is really – um – Tan Coul and I’m your assistant” \cite{28}. Polly’s constant scripting of herself as an assistant suggests that this is how she perceives herself, echoing Cat and Christopher Chant’s assumptions that they are “ordinary” or without magical powers. However, as Polly gradually rediscovers her past and realizes that Tom has been erased from the memory of almost everyone she knows, it finally becomes clear to her that she must act on her own—independently and selflessly—if she is to have any chance of saving Tom from Laurel. Once Polly realizes this, she is finally able to embark on her heroic journey and save him from Laurel’s ritual sacrifice, a mythic feat that has been seldom accomplished in the past, neither in the Tam
Lin ballad, nor in *Fire and Hemlock*. Therefore, in the case of Polly, the process of discovering heroic potential and finding agency is intrinsically connected to the gradual discovery of her full identity, and her ability to ultimately withstand loss.

Polly’s multifaceted identity also makes her a more dynamic hero. In *Fire and Hemlock*, Polly evolves from a young child to a young woman, both naïve and ordinary, and also savvy and learned, with an acute knowledge and awareness of the supernatural plots unfolding around her as well as a keen mind for logic, strong resolve, and all the qualities of the traditional male hero that Jones describes in “The Heroic Ideal.” Further, as Fleischbein notes,

[in modeling Polly on heroes of both sexes [(including Snow White, St. George, Pierrot, Pandora, and Janet from ‘Tam Lin’)], Jones has created a multifaceted character who is not bound to traditional female roles. Thus, Polly provides the young reader with a more fluid and open example of gender construction than is often found in previous writing for children. (Fleischbein 234, with examples from Jones “The Heroic Ideal”)]

This dynamic identity construction, influenced by both male and female characters, enables Polly to play an active role in the plot, and not be restricted by gender roles.

The connection between memory and identity, brought to the forefront in *Fire and Hemlock*, is central to Jones’ treatment of identity. In *Fire and Hemlock* we can see that Polly’s perception of herself and her personal identity changes as her personal memories change. Not only does she gain tremendous agency, but she begins to perceive her teenage years as heavily centered around her relationship with Tom. Her romantic relationship with Laurel’s stepson, Seb, takes on greater meaning, so that she no longer
trusts him in the way she used to. Thus, her perceptions of herself and her relationships take on greater meaning once she begins to unearth her secondary memories. But neither set of memories is cohesive, or able to give her a definitive understanding of how she can save Tom. By using memory as the basis for Polly’s two separate identities, Jones suggests that while a person’s identity is fragmented and disjointed, to make sense of it and use it effectively, one must make some sort of coherent whole from it, just as people compile narratives from fragmented memories. Polly cannot simply discard the memories Laurel imposed on her once she realizes that she had different experiences during her teenage years. It is through speaking with the friend from her other identity, Fiona, that she is able to begin figuring out how to save Tom. Fiona is the only person she knows who is able to verify Tom’s existence and even suggests she check for a recording of his quartet at a record shop to trigger her memory (Hemlock 332-334). Through this narrative choice, Jones ties together her treatment of identity with her treatment of memory, suggesting that in her novels, a person’s identity is fragmented just as memories are.

**Vierran / Ann Guaranty, Hexwood (1993)**

In *Hexwood* (1993) Jones presents another female hero, Vierran Guaranty / Ann Stavely who needs to draw on her multiple identities to help defeat the villains of the novel. In *Hexwood*, however, the multiple identities function slightly differently from those in *Fire and Hemlock*: rather than presenting a female protagonist with two sets of adolescent memories, Jones presents a girl who turns out to be a completely different person and who has a group of voices she communicates with inside of her head. The female protagonist of *Hexwood*, Vierran Guaranty, is first introduced as Ann Stavely, and
it is not until the reader is well into the story that both the reader and Vier[Ann] realize that Ann is merely Vierran in disguise. As Deborah Kaplan explains,

like several other Jones characters, Ann does not know that she is in disguise. Her disguise not only conceals her name, family history, and planet of origin, but also makes her appear substantially younger than her actual age. Ann is actually Vierran, a powerful twenty-one-year-old noblewoman from another planet, with a job of her own as well as a role in an anti-government rebellion. (198)

Vierran is not introduced as herself until Part Four of the novel, and it is not until Chapter Two of Part Six that her role in the novel finally becomes significant—over two hundred pages into the novel. Also, not only does Vierran have an alternate identity in the beginning of the novel, but there are also four internal voices with which she communicates—both when she is Ann, and later when she is Vierran. Vierran’s ability to think independently and resist deception, which she achieves in part through contact with these voices and the realization that she has had a disguise imposed on her, enables her to play her part in conquering the previous Reigners and prompts her to make the choices that mark her as truly heroic, suggesting that Jones’ characters must seek to understand themselves to become heroes in their narratives.

Vierran is not a largely independent relative hero figure like Polly; rather, she is a part of a team of heroic individuals who have to conquer the evil force—the previous Reigners—together. She is, thus, a relational hero because she is an important part of this team, and instrumental in defeating the previous Reigners and solving the puzzle of the Bannus. This is the fantastical device that distorts characters’ realities throughout the
novel, and ultimately chooses the new set of rulers for their Universe (the Reigners). Even towards the beginning of the novel, Mordion and Hume—the characters with whom she works to conquer the previous Reigners—value her opinions greatly; as [Vier]Ann reflects, “[b]oth of them seemed to think of her as a sort of consultant” (*Hexwood* 106). They seek out her opinions and advice when she visits them at Hexwood Farm as Ann Stavely. Throughout the novel Vierran continues to be an important member of the Mordion-Hume-Yam team, operating as their connection with the outside world and giving them an objective perspective when their minds are under the influence of the Bannus.

In addition to being a part of the Mordion-Hume-Yam group, Vierran is also one of the future Reigners, a group of people who communicate with each other telepathically. However, this group, introduced simply as Ann’s “four imaginary people” (*Hexwood* 27), appears in the text as a dimension of Vierr[Ann]’s psyche, rather than a group of living people. These people can be seen as aspects of Vierran’s psyche if we accept a psychological reading, and it is partially through communicating with them that Vierran realizes how magically adept she is. In communicating with the voices in her head, Vierran becomes the first person in the Bannus’ field to understand what is happening in Banners Wood. This includes discovering who is caught in the role-playing game, and how strong and large the Bannus field really is. Gaining this knowledge leads Vierran to realize her unique power, and it enables her and her companions to take control of the Bannus field and subsequently become the new leaders, or “Reigners,” of the surrounding worlds.
In Part Seven, once Vierran has been on Earth for some time, she finds a strange message she left herself on the tape recorder her father gave her before she left for Earth. On hearing it, she consults the voices in her head to figure out how long she has been on Earth and to confirm that she is in fact Vierran, that Ann Stavely is merely an alternate version of herself. Her voices tell her that the termination of the controller (the last event before she arrived on Earth) had been “Quite a while ago. Ten days at least” (Hexwood 261; emphasis in original), which informs Vierran that she has been on Earth for over a week. Vierran asks them who they think she is: “[I am] Not Ann Stavely?” (258). The King answers, “I was puzzled by that name” (259), and they all tell her they think of her as the “Girl Child” (258; emphasis in original). In this way, the voices in her head also enable her to confirm that she is really Vierran, and that Ann Stavely is only a disguise the Bannus made for her. This enables her to piece together how long she has been on Earth, again stressing a link between memory and identity.

These discoveries, prompted by the multifaceted nature of her identity, are what lead her to make the decision to return to the Banners Wood in order to do what is right, even though she does not want to return. After discovering that she has been living disguised as Ann for over a week, and especially after remembering flashing her legs to Mordion from up in the tree, Vierran is so embarrassed that she never wants to see Mordion again. Yet, she realizes immediately that she must return to the wood to help her friends out of danger: “no sooner had Vierran decided [not to see Mordion again] than she found she would have to. She had to warn Mordion” (Hexwood 263). She realizes that although she does not wish to re-enter the Bannus, she must return because she has information that Mordion needs: “Mordion would think he was going to the
castle to face Reigners Two and Four. She did not think even he knew that Five had also come to Earth. He certainly had no idea that Three and One were here too” (263). It is arguably at this moment that Vierran comes into her heroic identity, and this decision enables her to help defeat the previous Reigners. This passage echoes Cat Chant’s heroic journey, because Cat’s identity is also successfully concealed from him for much of the story, but once he has his moment of recognition, he knows what he must do to protect his friends almost instinctually.

Thus, in a sense, it is her selfless integrity, rather than outright heroic action, that makes Vierran heroic. Vierran, like Polly, does not engage in the type of action that characterizes traditional male heroes: for example, she does not “[set] out to do a deed which no one else dares to do and/or at which others have horribly failed,” as Jones claims most male heroes do (“Heroic” 131). She does not save a person’s life singlehandedly, as Polly does. Mordion is the one who actually defeats Reigner One, although Vierran supports him throughout the conflict. Therefore, Vierran’s heroism comes from the sum of many smaller heroic acts that combine to make her a truly heroic sidekick character, or team player, rather than an independent hero herself. Most significantly, she decides to return to the Bannus to help Mordion and Hume defeat the corrupt Reigners. As Kaplan observes, once Vierran has come to Banners Wood and “realizes she has been Ann all along due to the reality-warping powers of the wood … [her] story, at least, moves forward linearly in time, even if the context around her warps and flows” (199). She plays her part in this battle by keeping a level head—helping to unravel the Bannus’ illusions, and to work out the true identities of those around them. At the crux of the novel, she is instrumental in revealing people’s true identities to all
those deceived by the Bannus. The physically heroic acts of the novel’s climax, however—the killing of the previous Reigners—are performed by Mordion, making him the primary hero character, in a traditional sense, who Vierran helps as a sidekick, or relational hero.

Although Vierran plays a largely supportive role to Mordion, her supportive heroism is not passive, as those of the female heroes Jones describes in “The Heroic Ideal.” As previously noted, Vierran is very perceptive of her surroundings, and returns to Banners Wood in Part Seven to warn Mordion that all of the Reigners are now in Banners Wood, so he knows he has a much more difficult task ahead of him than he anticipated. Similarly, in Part Nine, when Mordion has transformed into a Dragon, Vierran and Hume come to warn him that Morgan la Trey—Reigner Three—knows he is still alive, and is coming to kill him. Mordion assumes that Vierran is just worried for him, and tells her, “You needn’t be afraid” (Hexwood 334) to which she answers, “We’re not afraid … But we came to warn you, Mordion” (Hexwood 334; emphasis in original). Additionally, Vierran and Hume also have some advice for Mordion on how their group should manage their battle against the corrupt Reigners: “And I thought you ought to take Vierran and Martin back to their parents … If you fly away with them over the lake, you’d be safe too” (Hexwood 334). This exchange is illustrative of exchanges between Mordion, Vierran and Hume. Mordion is more powerful than Vierran and Hume, and is therefore the leader and authority figure; however, Vierran and Hume advise him, and keep him updated on the happenings in the Bannus. Moreover, Vierran, Hume and Mordion all work together as a team to fight the original Reigners. While Mordion ultimately terminates Reigners One and Three, they all work together to defeat the
original Reigners, and once their adversaries are overcome, they each earn a place as the new Reigners in the House of Balance. Thus, Vierran does not play a passive role in Hexwood, but functions as a relational hero who plays a key role in defeating the previous Reigners.

**Conrad Tesdinic, *Conrad’s Fate* (2005)**

Conrad is another relational hero who is initially deceived about the nature of his identity, and ultimately needs to use divergent aspects of himself in order to help defeat the villains of Stallery. Conrad spends the length of the novel defining himself through his perceived bad karma, which does not actually exist. Ultimately, he needs both “sides” of himself, the identity he initially perceived to be his own, and his other gradually discovered identity to function to his potential and defeat the antagonists of the novel, Mr. Amos and Uncle Alfred.

Conrad’s misperceptions hinder his defeat of the novel’s central antagonist, Mr Amos. As Caroline Webb notes, “Conrad’s preoccupation with his Fate, the ‘bad karma’ his Uncle Alfred convinces him he possesses, comes to dominate his understanding of himself so completely that when he is persuaded it is a lie, he feels bereft not only of purpose but of identity itself: ‘If I didn’t have a Fate, then what was I?’” (qtd in Webb 221; emphasis in original). In actuality, Conrad is a far more complex individual than he thinks, and his “bad karma” or lack thereof is only part of his identity, albeit an important part, because it motivates much of the plot. Like Cat, Polly and Vierran, Conrad assumes his identity is much more simple and straightforward than it turns out to be. Towards the
beginning of the story, Conrad’s Uncle Alfred convinces him that he has bad karma:

“He Unless you put right what you did wrong in your previous life – and put it right now – you are going to be horribly and painfully dead before the year’s out” (Conrad’s 37).

Because Conrad is so preoccupied with this bad karma and finding the person who is supposedly causing it, he spends most of the novel pursuing this empty endeavour, and is thus too preoccupied to see the real plot surrounding him: that the butler of Stallery, Mr. Amos, is misusing magic to change the fates in order to remain wealthy at the expense of everyone else. In order to change the fates, Mr Amos tampers with reality, causing probability shifts which change not only the reality of his world, but also the reality all of the parallel worlds in the Series of worlds to which his belongs, which is why his actions are so serious.

It is not until Conrad realizes his mistake and accepts a new, more complex perception of himself that he is able to contribute to Mr. Amos’ exposure. Conrad realizes he is mistaken about his identity only because another character tells him that he has misinterpreted himself; in his case, it is his sister, Anthea. When Conrad finally explains his bad karma to Anthea, she realizes immediately that their Uncle and his friends were using Conrad: “[Uncle Alfred] just wants his chance to make money the way Stallery does,” says Anthea. “I think he lied to you, Conrad, in order to find out how to pull the probabilities himself” (Conrad’s 218). Once Conrad has been convinced that he does not have bad karma, and thus recognizes his other identity, he finally realizes that he should “summon the Walker” in order to see precisely how Uncle Alfred had planned to take over Stallery. The Walker gives Conrad the key to the wine cellar, the room in which Mr. Amos “pulls the probabilities” to keep Stallery prosperous, and Conrad and Christopher

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3 Walkers are “messengers of the Lords of Karma” (Conrad’s 347).
go into the wine cellar to investigate. There, they accidentally jam a switch on a machine, which leads to the machine causing so many probability shifts that it helps the police find Mr. Amos. Thus, Conrad’s discovery regarding his identity helps him to defeat Mr Amos.

While this could appear to be simply an inventive plot point, it is evidence of a structural pattern in Jones’ work: a revelation of the self is often used as a catalyst to prompt her protagonist to carry out an action that ultimately marks him or her as heroic, or propels forward his or her fight against the novel’s antagonist. This structural device is used in Conrad’s Fate as I have just explained, but is also visible in the journeys of Vierran and Polly. For Vierran, it is immediately after she realizes that she has been deceived into thinking she is Ann Stavely—and that she has been on Earth for over a week—that she decides to return to Banners Wood to help Mordion and Hume defeat the Reigners with her newfound knowledge. Polly’s whole journey toward saving Tom is prompted by the revelation that she has two different sets of memories, and the decision to uncover her hidden memories is the act that begins this journey.

Conrad’s decision to follow Anthea and Christopher’s advice and summon the Walker is the action which positions Conrad as a hero in the novel. It is significant in his journey to heroism because it goes directly against his Uncle’s instructions. He does it because he trusts that it is the right thing to do—not because he wants to do it. When Anthea tells him he should summon the Walker, he is horrified: “’No, no!’ I cried out. ‘I’m not supposed to do that until I know!’ ... ‘The—the person who’s—the one who I should have killed in my last life’” (223). Christopher has to explain to him that he is scared because of the spell his uncle put on him, and that “it’s much safer to summon the
thing now, before there’s any real danger” (Conrad’s 223). However, as with Polly, Conrad’s actions are not always conventionally moral. One of his most significant actions in his heroic journey, sneaking into Mr Amos’ wine cellar, is not a moral act per se. But it is through this trespass that Conrad and Christopher help expose Mr Amos; in the context of the story, it is heroic. Furthermore, as I noted earlier, summoning the Walker launches the set of events that lead to Mr Amos’ exposure. Thus, although Conrad is simply following Anthea and Christopher’s instructions, his decision to follow their advice is truly heroic, and positions him as one of the heroes of the story.

Like Vierran, Conrad is not really the most powerful, assertive hero in his story; rather, he helps heroically in the defeat of the novel’s antagonists. He contributes to the defeat of the novel’s antagonist, but does not lead to his defeat or capture. He is not as central to the action of his novel as Polly, although he is more central than Vierran, which shows that Jones’ heroes have varying levels of power in their respective novels. While Vierran does not commit any actions that directly contribute to the defeat of the novel’s antagonists, Conrad does summon the Walker twice, and both of these incidents are key to his antagonists’ defeat: the first time leads to Mr Amos’ defeat, and the second time, the Walker takes Uncle Alfred to pay for his wrongdoings. However, Conrad is advised to summon the Walker the first time, so he is ultimately a relational hero, part of a heroic team, like Vierran.

Conrad is distinct from Cat and Christopher in that he does not have an overwhelming amount of magical power, although he is a crucial force in Mr Amos’ exposure and defeat. Jones directly overshadows Conrad with Christopher: not only is the central romantic plot between Christopher and Millie, but Christopher is clearly a far
more powerful and resourceful character. Yet, it is Conrad who is the focal character of the novel, and its main heroic figure. This character positioning contradicts the convention of the hero being the most resourceful and powerful young member of a group of characters, as we see in novels such as the *Harry Potter* series. Conrad is comparable to Ron Weasley, since his closest relationship is with someone far more powerful and charismatic than him, and he welcomes this subordination. Ron Weasley is not the focal character of the *Harry Potter* series, and the series would be very different if he were: it would have put more emphasis on the message that even if one grows up constantly overshadowed by siblings and friends, one can still be heroic in one’s own right. Thus, for Jones—as revealed in *Conrad’s Fate*—coming to terms with his or her identity doesn’t necessarily make the protagonist extraordinarily powerful, or turn them into a leader, but it does enable them to be heroes and become more adept with the magical power they have, suggesting that a character does not need to be a leader, or have any commanding personality, to be a hero.

Jones’ deceived protagonists all eventually develop into heroes, relative or relational, only by discovering the aspect of themselves that was concealed or overshadowed, while retaining a connection with the other notion of their identity as well. Polly, Cat, Vierran and Conrad all need to know and embrace the various aspects of their identities in order to become heroes in their novels, whether relational or relative. Through Polly, Jones suggests that identities are fragmented like memory, and that a person must compile a meaningful one from the various fragments, just as people compile memories to create a sense of their past.\(^4\) Jones also suggests, through all of her deceived characters, that perceiving oneself as ordinary can have disastrous

\(^4\) See Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory.*
consequences: for Cat, it enables his sister to use his power against him, and for
Christopher Chant, it leads him to doing grave misdeeds for his Uncle Ralph
unknowingly. Jones also suggests through her deceived characters that actions must be
purposeful in order to be heroic. Vierran’s return to Hexwood is heroic, because she goes
back, purposefully, to warn Mordion. Polly cannot save Tom by simply forgetting him;
she must actively reject him in order to free him from Laurel. Finally, Conrad could not
simply summon the Walker when his instincts told him it was time, he needed to decide
to call the Walker in an isolated setting to ensure that it helped him. Therefore, Jones’
deceived protagonists must accept the various aspects of their identities, dispel the
assumption that they are ordinary, and act decisively in order to be heroes.
CHAPTER TWO:

Disguise

This chapter examines characters from Jones’ work that appear disguised for a significant portion of the story, exploring how accepting their alternate identities as part of their full identity helps these characters to gain agency and empowerment. I will focus on three characters from Jones’ novels who adopt a disguise, or knowingly have a disguise imposed on them for a period in the story: Sophie Hatter from *Howl’s Moving Castle* (1986), Millie from *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, and Roddy Hyde from *The Merlin Conspiracy*. Sophie Hatter, a young woman, spends the better part of *Howl’s Moving Castle* as an elderly woman due to a curse placed on her by the novel’s villain, the Witch of the Waste. Millie, a young enchantress from another world, uses her powerful other identity as the living Asheth to help Christopher defeat the evil ruler of Series Eleven, the Dright. Roddy Hyde needs to use the collection of knowledge she has inherited from an ancient witch to raise the land and save her friend Nick from a dangerous group of conspirators. Each character is disguised for a slightly different reason, and in a slightly different way. This chapter examines how the experience of these disguises affects the characters, and how ultimately accepting their alternate identities or disguised personas grants them additional agency at the end of their stories.

Sophie Hatter is a relative hero who spends the length of the novel trapped in the body of a ninety-year-old woman due to a curse put upon her by the vindictive Witch of the Waste. Sophie lives throughout the novel with the aches, pains and self-assurance of a ninety-year-old, combined with the fresh wit and energy of the young woman she also is. In scripting Sophie’s dual identity, Jones aligns herself with Barthes, who rejects the idea of an innate essence of self: “language knows a ‘subject’, not a ‘person’ and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language ‘hold together’ suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it” (Barthes 145). However, Jones also counters his wholesale rejection of “self.” For Sophie to become a hero and save Howl and Calcifer, she needs to use aspects of both her identities, forming a cohesive identity from two seemingly diverse selves.

Sophie’s young self has very little agency. Although she is smart and skilled, she believes she is destined to failure due to her position as the eldest of three sisters. This alludes to folk and fairy tales, as many fairy tales prophesize that the eldest of siblings to fail, such as the Grimms’ tale, “The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was,” while others feature evil eldest sisters, such as “Toads and Diamonds” (ed. Lang), in which the eldest sister is depicted as so terrible that every time she speaks, toads come out of her mouth. In contrast, her younger sister is so good that she is blessed with diamonds and flowers when she speaks. Thus, Jones is alluding in part to a fairy tale trope in making Sophie expect failure due to her place as the eldest sister. However, it is also likely a subtle connection to Jones herself, who was the eldest of three sisters, and writes in her autobiography that her mother “decided that Ursula [(her youngest sister)]
was going to be an actress. Isobel, she told us, was beautiful but not otherwise gifted. As for me, she said, I was ugly, semidelinquent, but bright” (*Reflections* 272), showing Jones’ anxiety regarding her mother.

At the outset of *Howl’s Moving Castle*, Sophie has resigned herself to inheriting the hat shop owned by her stepmother, Fanny, as she feels it is all she can expect for herself (*Howl’s* 14), since in Ingary, her mystical homeland, “it is quite a misfortune to be born the eldest of three. Everyone knows you are the one who will fail first, and worst, if the three of you set out to seek your fortunes” (1). When she works at the hat shop as a young girl, she works very hard and talks life into the hats she creates. However, she does so unwittingly; she is unaware of the magical gift she possesses—to talk life into things—and therefore not able to use her gift to her own ends.

The young Sophie has difficulty standing up for herself. It is suggested multiple times that she is unhappy working at the shop, such as when the narrator observes, “[t]hat night, as she sewed, Sophie admitted to herself that her life was rather dull” (*Howl’s* 18). On learning that she will eventually inherit the hat shop, the narrator notes that “Sophie could hardly say that she simply felt resigned to the hat trade. She thanked Fanny gratefully” (14). It is apparent, therefore, that Sophie is not entirely happy with her life, but she does not act to change it. Similarly, when the Witch of the Waste comes to curse her, she is not able to keep her out of the store, or protect herself, although we learn later on that Sophie has powerful magical abilities of her own. Thus, it is evident that Sophie is unable to function to her potential at the outset.

However, once Sophie takes on the form of an old woman, she is finally able to break away from the life she had resigned herself to and to gain some much-needed
agency. As Mendlesohn articulates, “Sophie sets out to seek her fortune only when artificially aged” (Diana 41). Rudd agrees, noting that “it is precisely because Sophie is prematurely aged that she is freed from the standard patriarchal plot that enslaves most young females” (258). Rudd argues that in Howl’s, the reader is “made to rethink the traditional Bildungsroman, in which we follow a character (male, usually) from their young days to a coming of age in marriage and good fortune. Sophie, though, moves the other way: for most of the novel she is an old woman ... only becoming truly rejuvenated in the book’s closing pages” (258). Since Sophie doesn’t want her family and friends to see her as an old woman, she runs away from the hat shop, seeking refuge in Howl’s mysterious moving castle, leaving her pre-scripted life behind. Her newly found appearance also helps her feel comfortable asserting herself. The narrator explains of Sophie’s early time at the castle: “It was odd. As a girl, Sophie would have shrivelled with embarrassment at the way she was behaving. As an old woman, she did not mind what she did or said. She found that a great relief” (Howl’s 66). This newfound vigour enables her to play a more active part in her journey than she did as a young woman.

Sophie’s additional identity also helps her to discover her unique magical power, and make her way to the heroic task Jones has set out for her: to free Howl and Calcifer from the contract that binds them. Once Sophie is aged, she has the opportunity to talk life into more than simply hats. She talks life back into a scarecrow, actually a messenger for the Wizard Suliman, who had been silenced by the Witch. She talks magic into a stick which then effectively begins to function as a powerful magic wand. Mrs Pentstemmon, a powerful witch that Howl sends Sophie to visit, informs her that when

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5 There are many allusions in Howl’s to The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, which are expanded on and engaged with in Gili Bar-Hillel’s essay, “Of Moving Castles and Flying Houses: The Wizard of Oz and Howl’s Moving Castle as Interconnected Milestones in Children’s Fantasy Literature.”
talking to Howl’s suit, she cast “a dazzling attraction charm, directed at ladies—very well done, I admit, and barely detectable even to my trained eye, since it appears to have been darned into the seams” (Howl’s 166). Sophie’s opportunity to talk life into these things helps her to realize how significant her magical ability is, along with actual hints from a number of characters, including Calcifer and Mrs Pentstemmon. In their brief meeting, Mrs Pentstemmon remarks: “I like your gift, … It brings life to things, such as that stick in your hand, which you have evidently talked to, to the extent that it has become what the layman would call a magic wand” (Howl’s 168). It seems that Sophie needed the integration of her new, “older” identity in order to discover her magical ability, because her transformation fuels her flight to Howl’s castle and journey of self-discovery.

Sophie’s knowledge of her power is crucial to her ability to complete the task in the story that positions her as a hero: breaking the contract between Howl and Calcifer, which ultimately saves both of their lives. When Sophie first enters the castle, Calcifer proposes: “How about making a bargain with me? I’ll break your spell if you agree to break this contract I’m under” (Howl’s 48). Although Calcifer never explains what the contract entails, it soon becomes clear it is a very strong contract intertwining, while also endangering, the lives of both Howl and Calcifer. The contract that binds Calcifer and Howl is the same one that binds the Witch of the Waste and her Fire Demon, except that the Witch of the Waste and her demon have been under the contract so long that it has eaten away at them almost completely. In order to free Calcifer and Howl from their contract, Sophie must return Howl’s heart to him, and while doing so, talk life back into it.
However, it is not enough for Sophie to simply adopt this new identity and discard the former (young) one in order to gain agency; she needs to meaningfully combine aspects of the two in order to save Howl and Calcifer. As Carolynn Wilcox asserts,

Ultimately, [Sophie] triumphs over the Witch of the Waste’s fire demon by ordering [her] stick to ‘Beat Miss Angorian, but don’t hurt anyone else’ (207). Her power meets her intention, successfully delaying the fire demon’s escape so Howl can arrive to deal with it, and, in doing so, breaks the aging spell that was on her by taking a true step in personal agency. (163)

Sophie knows that she can tell the stick to beat Miss Angorian and it will do so, because she has learned about her power while disguised as an old woman. However, the Witch’s curse did not affect Sophie’s actual mind or psyche, so it is still her young identity which decides to use her power with words to detain Miss Angorian while Howl returns to the castle, the act which enables Howl to defeat the Witch of the Waste and her fire demon. Thus, Sophie uses the understanding of her magical gift that she gains through her experiences as an older woman as well as her young mind in order to figure out how to help in the Witch’s defeat. Additionally, Sophie uses these same two traits when she breaks the contract between Howl and Calcifer, and returns Howl’s heart to him. Sophie realizes how to break the contract thanks to her time as an old woman, but it is young Sophie who talks life back into Howl’s heart, and Calcifer as well. She does not simply adopt a new identity, leaving a previous identity behind, and in doing so gain agency and independence. Rather, Jones’ character must use aspects of his or her old identity
combined with aspects of the new in order to function to his or her full potential in the text.

Sophie is also recognized as a combination of two diverse identities by other characters in the story: many characters know she is under a spell which makes her appear older than she really is. As Kaplan observes,

Sophie Hatter might be in disguise as an old woman for most of the action of *Howl’s Moving Castle*, but knows all along that she is a young woman, as does Howl himself. ‘I’ve been wondering all along if you would turn out to be that lovely girl I met on May Day’ (211), he tells her, revealing that he has seen through her elderly appearance all along. (Kaplan 198)

Calcifer also knows: when he first meets Sophie, he says to her, “[a]nd what are you? … I can see you’re under a spell” (*Howl’s* 48). Finally, it is revealed at the novel’s conclusion that even Sophie’s sisters have found out that she’s been cursed into appearing as an old woman. Thus, although Sophie adopts the appearance of an old woman, she retains her old “young” identity, and the other characters recognize this as well.

In making Sophie act differently while her appearance is changed, Jones has crafted two identities for Sophie quite different from one another, although they are only fully functional when intertwined. Additionally, in the conclusion of the novel, Sophie returns to her original form, but retains the sense of agency, and newfound self-confidence gained from her elderly form, creating an identity for herself that merges aspects of both her identities. Thus, *Howl’s Moving Castle* supports Barthes’ claim about identity. However, it moves away from it by suggesting that Sophie must create a more
complete identity from pieces of both her identities in order to complete her heroic task in the novel.

This modification of Barthes’ assertion is especially interesting when we call to mind that Jones writes her novels primarily for children and young adults. Most of her readers are reading her stories at an age where they are going through the process of developing their own identity, or coming to terms with it. Jones recognizes this and has written an article on writing for children in which she asserts her belief that authors take on a great deal of responsibility when they write literature for children: “The important thing about it is that [the story] has entered this person’s consciousness at a time when ideas were still forming, waking their sense of wonder, and forcing their ideas in a new direction—enlarging their imagination, in fact—and, by the mere fact of always being in their mind from then on, has influenced that reader’s entire personality. Permanently” (Reflections 72-73). Jones recognizes that her stories have the potential to affect the shaping of her readers’ consciousness and beliefs, whether implicitly or explicitly, as Nodelman and Reimer also argue in The Pleasures of Children’s Literature.

Thus, the fact that Howl’s Moving Castle is specifically written for a younger audience brings another level of meaning to Sophie’s two identities. Jones’ work is read by all ages, but most of her works—save A Sudden Wild Magic and Deep Secret, which were written as adult fiction—are aimed at a young readership. If we recognize that Jones sees children’s literature as having the power to make a great impression on developing minds, then perhaps in her scripting of Sophie, Jones is suggesting to her readership that a person’s identity is not meant to fit into a pre-scripted mould—that, as Barthes claims, there is no predetermined nature or “core” to one’s identity, but to be a hero, one must
come to terms with all the divergent aspects of one’s identity and create a fuller sense of self.


In *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, Jones presents a relational hero—the Goddess, later known as Millie—who aspires to be exactly “ordinary.” Millie appears in distinct manifestations in a number of Chrestomanci novels, most notably *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, *Charmed Life*, *Conrad’s Fate*, and *The Pinhoe Egg*. In each of these novels, she plays a key role in defeating the antagonists, while inhabiting the role of the goddess, and later of the mother, making her a good example of a Jonesian female hero that is heroic within a feminine sphere.

Millie’s journey of identity occurs in *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, the novel that takes place earliest in her life (although *Charmed Life* was published first). *The Lives of Christopher Chant* tells the story of Christopher Chant, the young boy who will become the Chrestomanci of the Chrestomanci novels. It chronicles his discovery of his power, and the defeat of his Uncle Ralph, and the Dright, who has been abusing Christopher’s friend, Tacroy (a.k.a. Mordecai Roberts) throughout the story. In this novel, Millie has two distinct identities: she is both the living aspect of the Goddess Asheth in her native world, and Millie at Chrestomanci Castle. So in a sense, she has her original identity, as well as the one she creates for herself at the castle; this first functions as a type of disguise, but is also adopted as part of her identity. Like Sophie, Millie is not able to simply discard one identity or the other. Instead, it is her use of both identities together that enables her to develop into a relational hero in the text.
There is very little written about Millie in Jones studies; however, Karen Sands-O’Connor notes the Goddess’ greatest fear: that she will be killed once she is no longer the appropriate age to be the living aspect. She writes, “Christopher encounters a girl who is required to pose as the living aspect of the Goddess Asheth—until she is no longer a girl, at which point she will be replaced. The fate of the replaced goddess is left as uncertain, but the girl Christopher meets believes she will be killed” (Sands-O’Connor 18). This fear overshadows Millie’s life in her native world, and is the reason she longs to escape to Series Twelve with Christopher. However, Millie is unable to simply abandon her Goddess self in coming to this new world. Millie uses her pseudo-life, the statue of Asheth in the temple, as a second life in order to leave her world, securing that piece of herself in the temple forever. In order to embrace her new life, she needs to secure her old self as a permanent part of her identity in her native world.

Millie also makes use of both her identities in the final moments of the novel, when she helps Christopher defeat the Dright and his people in order to rescue Tacroy and the current Chrestomanci, Gabriel de Witt, from Series Eleven, a corrupt world ruled by the Dright, who possess both Tacroy (Mordecai Roberts)’s soul and Gabriel de Witt’s lives. Although Christopher is a more powerful enchanter than her, and ultimately defeats the Dright, Millie is the first to adapt her magic to combat the magic of Series Eleven. The narrator remarks, “the Goddess always seemed a little quicker on the uptake than Christopher. She frowned at the armrest and seemed to get the hang of it. The block of wood hurtled away into the trees sending the man’s arms down onto the spikes, quite hard” (Christopher Chant 294-295). And Millie needs to help Christopher learn to use the Series Eleven magic to combat the Dright and his people, making her presence and help
critical in the defeat of the Drigh. Most importantly, when the Drigh starts trying to conceal Tacroy’s soul so Christopher cannot take it from him, Millie uses her power to put a stop to the Drigh’s illusion, and at that moment, Christopher notices the Goddess’ arms are outstretched, too, bringing attention to her use of both identities in stopping the illusion:

Then, with a sort of wavy jolt, everything went back to the way it was at first. Thank goodness! Christopher thought. The Goddess! ... Sure enough, the Goddess was staring at the Drigh with her arms spread. Christopher was surprised to find that, even without his magic, he could see the second pair of ghostly arms spread out underneath. ‘My priestesses taught me that it was low to cheat,’ she said. ‘I’d have thought you were too proud to stoop to it.’ (Christopher Chant 305)

By evoking Asheth, the Goddess stops the Drigh from cheating and enables Christopher to see Tacroy’s soul, making her a critical part of the heroic team.

Because Millie helps Christopher defeat the Drigh and save Tacroy and Gabriel, she is a relational hero rather than a relative hero. Her heroism comes from her relationship with Christopher, and the critical help she gives him in Series Eleven. It seems that Millie would not be able to defeat the Drigh on her own, or even meet him if not for Christopher; however, because she is critical in defeating him, she is a heroic figure in her own right.

Millie’s importance is evident in all the novels she inhabits. In The Lives of Christopher Chant, she is a Goddess who must “stay in the Temple unseen, except for one day every year, when I ride through the city and bless it” (Christopher Chant 54).
However, she is still a critical force in the novel, as explained above. Once she escapes her native world, she makes arrangements to go to boarding school like the girls in the *Millie* books, taking up the place of a schoolgirl. In *Conrad’s Fate*, we see Millie as a schoolgirl who has escaped from her school, and she is once more far from helpless. Christopher arrives in Conrad’s world looking for Millie, who is apparently lost. Conrad reflects, “[Christopher] had set off to rescue Millie like a knight errant rescuing a damsel in distress. That impressed me” (*Conrad’s* 291). Ironically, however, Millie saves herself and Christopher just gets himself lost looking for her. This is not a strategy unique to Jones. Garth Nix, for example, often writes female characters who save or heroically help their male counterparts, such as Suzy and Leaf in *The Keys to the Kingdom*, as does C.S. Lewis in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*’s Lucy. As Lori Campbell writes, “most often, Nix pairs his female heroes with weak, indecisive, and insecure male protagonists” (*Campbell Quest* 207), which is not wholly dissimilar from the relationship Jones illustrates between Christopher and Millie. Christopher is not weak or insecure; he is just unable save Millie, and she, in turn, does not need saving.

In *Charmed Life* and *The Pinhoe Egg*, Millie occupies a traditional female role, that of the mother who does not work outside of the home, and again she remains an important force in these novels. In *Charmed Life*, she is crucial in defeating the corrupt magic users who are trying to overthrow Chrestomanci. At the standoff, Chrestomanci has summoned all of the Castle staff to overpower the hedge wizards, but they are still unable to subdue them. However, as one of the staff asserts, “We can’t do anything more without Millie” (*Charmed Life* 205). Once they summon her, the narrator writes, “He supposed it was some trick of the hillside that made her look tall as the apple tree. ...
Chrestomanci smiled, and let his hand go. He did not seem to need it to hold back the crowd anymore. They stood where they were, and their muttering had stopped” (206). With the arrival of Millie, the balance of power is tangibly altered. Thus, Millie’s presence is necessary in order to defeat the hedge wizards. Although Millie uses her two identities more perceptibly in *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, she is a relational hero in each of these novels, because her help is necessary in the final struggle of each novel, making her another important Jonesian female hero.


Alongside Polly and Vierran stands another young female hero with a unique twofold identity that pushes her to grow and eventually become a relational hero. Rather than having a disguise or false identity imposed upon her, Roddy obtains the complete knowledge of the ancient Flower Witch. Roddy explains that “the law is that you have to pass your knowledge on to someone” (*Merlin Conspiracy* 130). However, because the Flower Witch had been ritually injured by the people in her village for being a powerful witch, she looked elsewhere: “she had searched the centuries and the millennia for the right person to pass her magic to. And she had found me” (*Merlin Conspiracy* 130). Roddy inherits this wisdom after meeting the witch “in a time slip” (*Portals* 195) that enables her to travel to a “ruined village where people lived before History began” (*Merlin Conspiracy* 195). After this brief encounter, the Flower Witch’s wisdom is Roddy’s own: “I had the knowledge all at once in a bundle—all she knew, all she could do, and her entire life with it” (*Merlin Conspiracy* 195). This possession of the Flower Witch’s knowledge, the “flower files,” functions as Roddy’s other-identity in *The
Merlin Conspiracy. This leads her to discover her immense power, and enables her to save the world once she has “learn[t] to control and implement it” (Campbell, Portals 196).

Like Polly and Vierran, Roddy has to gradually realize her own magical potential before she is able to save her world from “the process of corruption that has begun in the magic of Blest” (Hixon, “Power Plays” 176). Throughout the novel, Roddy progresses from a young girl who exerts most of her energy caring and looking out for her younger friend, Grundo (who has a terrible mother and sister, but who is actually a very strong magic-user himself), to an immensely powerful witch who “raise[s] the land” of Blest (Jones, Merlin Conspiracy 149). The magical act of raising the land is “a process [that] involves setting all the magic of Blest free from the authoritative structures that keep it in place” (Hixon, “Power Plays” 176); thus Roddy essentially “pull[s] up the very foundations” of the land and magic of her entire world in order to save it from corruption (Merlin Conspiracy 302).

When Roddy inherits the Flower Witch’s files, she begins the process of self-realization and growth that will culminate in her eventually raising the land and saving her world. Before saving the world, however, she has to learn how to use the flower files to find and implement the spells she needs. When Grundo asks Roddy, “Can you out-magic the Merlin now?” she muses, “There was certainly stuff in my head that would do that, but you had to learn what it was and how to work it first” (Merlin Conspiracy 133-134). As Roddy gradually discovers the depths of the flower files, she realizes that not everything she and Grundo were taught at court was correct: “I realized that all the magic we had learnt at Court was small and one-sided and incomplete. The reality was
huge—and all the things our teachers said were complicated were really quite simple. And the other way round” (Merlin Conspiracy 134). As she sifts through the flower files in her head, she realizes she is an enormously powerful witch, and simply needs to free herself from the assumption that she is not, again evoking Nodelman and Reimer’s argument. Thus, Roddy’s inheritance of the Flower Witch’s memory motivates her to grow as a magic user, which helps her become knowledgeable and powerful enough to save Nick from being made a sacrifice, and raise the land—a process that returns the magic of the world to its original form, “pulling up the very foundations” of Blest’s magic (Merlin Conspiracy 302) to prevent its being overrun with black magic.

It is not only magical ability that Roddy needs, however. It is not until she realizes the full danger her world is in that she is able to raise the land and save Blest. The Little People had originally advised her to raise the land, but Mrs. Candace cautions her against it: “On no account! … I’m surprised he even mentioned it. The Little People are usually so wise” (Merlin Conspiracy 301). She does not want Roddy to raise the land because she is worried that it could “make [the magic] all come loose or perhaps even blow apart” (Merlin Conspiracy 302). She explains, “we can’t have that, because Blest magic keeps the magics of several hundred surrounding worlds in their right place” (Merlin Conspiracy 302). However, when Grundo tells the powerful magic user, Romanov, that the Little People told Roddy to raise the land, he responds otherwise: “When one of the Little People gives advice like that, you take it!” (Merlin Conspiracy 405). Romanov believes Roddy must raise the land because the Little People would only advise someone to do such a monumental task if it were truly important.
Only when Roddy understands the significance of the damage the conspirators are about to do to Blest does she finds the power and the will to raise the land. As the false Merlin tells the King and Prince Edmund that he is taking over their throne, Roddy suddenly understands what he is really doing:

As soon as he said “raise the land,” I realised that this was exactly what he was doing. And he couldn’t be allowed to, not like this! Doing it by a blood sacrifice would bring Blest and all the worlds surrounding it into the realm of purest black magic. The balance would be tipped entirely the wrong way. (Merlin Conspiracy 457)

She had been attempting to sort through the flower files for a while at this point, but only at this moment is she finally able to use them to raise the land:

[the hurt woman’s files] rushed into my head, file after file … in a wild waterfall of spells … At first they seemed to be no use at all. But that phrase raise the land had given me such a jolt that before long it seemed to steady the rush down. I saw that they did not come into my head in any old order[,] … [a]nd I knew that I had known how to raise the land, long before Romanov tried to explain it to me. (Merlin Conspiracy 451-452)

Thus, Roddy does not flippantly decide to raise the land; it is a considered decision. She realizes how difficult a task it is, and how severe the consequences might be. She raises the land because she knows she must in order to save Blest from total corruption. The fact that she takes on this task fully aware of the possible consequences and of the necessity of her action makes Roddy’s decision even more heroic.
Roddy fits perfectly into the definition of a hero that Jones shapes in “The Heroic Ideal.” Although the reader may identify with the novel’s other protagonist, Nick, as well, he or she will certainly identify with Roddy, as she is a co-narrator, and her narration opens the book. Secondly, although Roddy is not physically stronger than the other characters of the novel, she is very strong mentally and emotionally, and she comes to Nick’s defence when no one else will, saving him from the evil Merlin who has chosen him for his blood sacrifice. Roddy is connected with the Flower Witch, who is certainly supernatural, and the Flower Witch’s ability to transcend space and time in order to pass on her wisdom to Roddy does make Roddy’s actions universally relevant and significant. Finally, Roddy “go[es] into action when the odds are against [her]” (”Heroic” 130). She realizes that raising the land could have grievous consequences for Blest and the surrounding worlds, but she also realizes that it is the only thing she can do to save Blest, and this is why she does it. Thus, Roddy is truly heroic in Jones’ terms, and Roddy’s embodiment of Jonesian heroic qualities situates her as a significant hero in Jones’ oeuvre.

Roddy is both a relative and relational hero, because her journey is inward and her task is accomplished without violence. However, although the Flower Witch can be seen as a different aspect of Roddy’s identity, she really is another person as well, and crucial in Roddy’s development into a hero, and without her Roddy could not have raised the land. Therefore, within my definitions, Roddy is primarily a relational hero, because although she goes through a significant journey of recognition and acceptance within herself, her heroism is developed out of her relationship with the Flower Witch, making her heroism primarily relational rather than relative.
Roddy’s unique double identity is important because it enables her character to evade simple categorization. Polly, Vierran, and Roddy are all very dynamic female heroes, in part due to the multiplicity of their identities. By giving their personalities different layers, Jones allows them the chance to act “out of character.” Jones’ rejection of gender stereotypes is especially interesting in *The Merlin Conspiracy*, because she enables Roddy to evade classification by situating her in two diverse female roles simultaneously. Roddy’s original self is somewhat naïve, yet smart and driven: all typical traits of a young female protagonist like, for example Lucy Pevensie in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, who is the youngest in her family, but the first to find Narnia, and the best at navigating it. The inheritance of the Flower Witch’s memory thus complicates Roddy’s character by adding to it the boundless wisdom of an old woman. Roddy becomes more knowledgeable about the technical aspects of magic use in her world than any other character, including her Grandad Hyde and Romanov; however, she retains a youthful naiveté towards the full extent of her new knowledge, which prevents her from fully taking on the position of the wise old woman. Therefore, she is not a simple heroic character, ignorant or passive, but neither is she a wise old woman, as she retains her youthful perspective, mirroring Sophie Hatter. Thus, in Roddy Jones creates a character with exceptional depth for a young female protagonist, revising the options for heroic young women in fantasy, again, with her mixture of both old and young woman in one.

It is also significant that Roddy rescues Nick from the false Merlin, reversing the traditional gender roles of the male hero and female damsels in need of rescuing. The false Merlin takes Nick as a blood sacrifice in order to raise the land, and tortures him:
Nick’s body became covered at once in hurrying silver ripples. ... He was in obvious agony from it. He rolled about, trying to scream—or not being able to scream—and every time the ripples formed into a leaf-shape this seemed to hurt him even more. He curled up, he uncurled, he flung his legs and arms about, much as the salamanders were doing in the false Merlin’s fist. (Merlin Conspiracy 449)

Nick is unable to save himself or lessen his pain, but Roddy wants to save him: “I am entirely in a muddle as to whether this was what I would have done for anyone or whether it was because it was Nick,” Roddy notes (448). Shortly after this, Roddy is able to raise the land, foiling the conspirators’ plans, and saving Nick in the process. So, as in Fire and Hemlock, the female hero of The Merlin Conspiracy ultimately comes to the rescue of her male protagonist counterpart.

Through the characters of Sophie, Millie and Roddy, Jones suggests that disguises can be a source of power, and can help a character find his or her agency. Sophie’s disguise helps her recognize her own agency. It helps her assert herself and take control of the power she has always had but never used effectively. A disguise can also be a source of power: Millie effectively uses her disguise, or her other self (the Living Asheth), to evoke Asheth’s power, which enables her to stop the Dright from cheating Christopher. Finally, a disguise, or an “other self” such as Roddy’s can be a great source of wisdom, and, again, help a hero to use the power he or she already has, effectively. Roddy’s disguised “other-self,” the Flower Witch, does not give Roddy power, but she gives her a wealth of knowledge in the form of spells, so she can use the tremendous power she already has. Although I did not discuss any disguised male heroes in this
chapter, there are also a number of male heroes who inhabit a disguise for a period of
time, notably Christopher Chant in *Conrad’s Fate*, and Sirius from *Dogsbody*, both of
whom must use elements of their disguised and original selves to accomplish their heroic
feats. Thus, in these “disguised” protagonists, Jones presents heroes who must accept
their various selves in order to become heroic, and their disguises often help them find
the power or agency they already have, but have not been aware of.
CHAPTER THREE:

Corruption

This chapter addresses antagonists in Jones’ novels in order to better explain the relationship between identity and heroism in Jones’s work. It explores the characteristics that distinguish them from the protagonists: what makes Jones’ antagonists “antagonistic.” One of the many interesting aspects of Jones’ novels is that her characters’ moralities are not easily defined. Mendlesohn claims that “[w]here other writers provide a pathway through the adventure to adulthood, bound by spiky and obvious wrong choices, Jones requires of her protagonists a constant negotiation with possible right choices and attractive wrong ones” (Diana 22). Similarly, Jones’ villains are also not so clearly villainous; rather, they are characters who have given into selfish desires, struggle or fail to empathize, and make choices which hurt those around them simply for personal gain, unlike starker villains such as the blood-curdling Jadis from The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, or the furious Queen of Hearts from Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. I will examine the common traits and actions that appear in Jones’ antagonist figures, and how they differ from those that characterize her heroes.

This chapter examines three of Jones’ villains: Gwendolen Chant from Charmed Life, The Witch of the Waste from Howl’s Moving Castle, and the inhabitants of Series Eleven from The Lives of Christopher Chant. It examines the construction of these characters’ identities, and suggests that what hinders Jones’ antagonists from being positive forces is their inability to accept the world as a complex multiverse, choosing
instead to impose their own perception of the world onto those around them. Rather than constructing an identity for themselves that functions in the world, they endeavour to manipulate their surroundings to fit their perception of the world, and their personal desires.

As Sarah Fiona Winters argues, while J.K. Rowling “draws upon traditional genres of children’s literature, [and] throws her young Harry straight into the midst of a pre-existing conflict between heroes and villains[,] Jones, on the other hand, shows the influence of more adult literary genres as she forces her children to negotiate their way around the good and evil that lie within” (Winters 79), aligning Jones with other authors who write for both children and adults, such as C.S. Lewis. Jones’ antagonists are not static villains, such as Sauron from *The Lord of the Rings* who terrifies the hobbits simply with his roving gaze. Yet, they are also not semi-heroes in disguise such as Professor Snape from the *Harry Potter* series, whose antagonistic nature is called into question in the later novels. While the reader often empathizes with Jones’ antagonists, and they are presented as complex individuals with human qualities, these antagonists ultimately remain corrupt. Their attempts to impose essentialist narratives on their surroundings and identities, as well as their failure to see the multiple layers of people’s identities are the source of their corruption. Thus, for Jones’ antagonists, immorality, or “evil” is the result of their inability to empathize with others and become familiar with the world around them.

In an archived letter\(^6\) that responds to a question from a fan regarding the sex of her villains, Jones wrote,

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\(^6\) This letter is archived in the Diana Wynne Jones manuscripts at Seven Stories, National Centre for Children’s Books in Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK. (Reference number: DWJ/04/03/01/179)
As for the villains, I must confess that the awful females all derive from my mother. She was so awful in so many ways that in fact she has provided me with a great deal of material, but my main reason for using her in this way is because it took me so long to realize as a child how awful she was, and I feel that this happens to quite a number of children. So my aim is really to warn children that when their mothers behave in certain ways this is not normal. (Jones, “Dear Kait Bessing” 1)

In her autobiographical piece, “Something About the Author,” Jones writes at length about her childhood, and attests that her mother was very neglectful; for example, she made it clear to her daughters that they were being a nuisance when they were ill:

The cardinal sin we could commit was to be ill. It meant that someone grudgingly had to cross the yard with meals for us. My mother usually made a special trip to our bedsides to point out what a nuisance we were being. Her immediate response to any symptom of sickness was to deny it. ‘It’s only psychological,’ she would say. On these grounds I was sent to school with chicken pox, scarlet fever, German measles, and, for half a year, with appendicitis. Luckily the appendix never quite became acute. The local doctor, somewhat puzzled by my mother’s assertion that there was nothing wrong with me, eventually took it out. (Reflections 287)

Thus, Jones cautions children against mothers, and presumably other authority figures, who manipulate their surroundings and the people around them, and who are not trustworthy. Untrustworthy authority figures are common in children’s literature, appearing in stories such as Roald Dahl’s *Matilda* and fairy tales such as *Snow White and*  

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7 Jones and her sisters slept in a “cottage” on the family’s property, separate from the main house.
the Seven Dwarfs. Through this use of untrustworthy authority figures, she suggests that these individuals should not continually control situations to their gain, even if they have the power or opportunity to do so. The quotation is especially interesting because it reveals that Jones’ didactic impulse stems from trauma as well as education and reading.

Gwendolen Chant, *Charmed Life* (1977)

I have argued throughout this study that Jones’ protagonists need to accept all aspects of themselves, however divergent or confusing, and produce a functional identity in order to become the heroes of the stories they inhabit. By contrast, Gwendolen Chant, perhaps the most disturbing of Jones’ antagonists, refuses to accept herself as she is, and instead tries to change a key aspect of herself that she does not particularly like: her magical ability. Instead of accepting that she possesses average, rather than extraordinary, magical talent, she uses her brother Cat’s enormous magical powers to be more powerful than she is, killing some of his lives off in the process.

Although Gwendolen and Cat’s relationship initially appears to be a caring, loving one, such as would be expected of orphan siblings, it is gradually revealed that their relationship is far from nurturing. As Winters posits, “there is much willful blindness on [Cat’s] part before he realizes that she is evil” (87). She says that Jones begins to give clues pointing to Gwendolen’s true nature early on in the novel, and makes note of one such instance: when Gwendolen and Cat initially go to live with Mrs. Sharp, the narrator says, “Living with Mrs. Sharp, Gwendolen seemed to expand. Her hair seemed brighter gold, her eyes deeper blue, and her whole manner was glad and confident. Perhaps Cat contracted a little to make room for her—he did not know”
Charmed Life 8). She notes that in the first part of this description, the narrator “sympathizes with Gwendolen and admires her vitality the same way Cat does”; however, “these two sentences are followed immediately by one that undercuts our attraction to her” (Winters 87), suggesting that although the reader will not realize until much later, Gwendolen is actually using more of Cat’s power at this time. For Winters, this conclusion leads to another: “it is nevertheless clear that her ego leaves no room to consider Cat as her equal” (87). Thus, as Winters notes, while Cat and Gwendolen’s relationship initially seems to be a loving, nurturing one, it is deeply abusive. Similarly, when Chrestomanci first meets Cat, he says that when Gwendolen wrote to him, she had suggested that Cat had been killed in the boating accident with their parents: “I had a letter from your sister ... She gave me the impression that you had drowned with your parents” (Charmed Life 21). Here Gwendolen’s actions strongly suggest a disregard, if not contempt, for her younger brother.

Further, when Chrestomanci notes that Gwendolen told him Cat was dead, he replies, “You must have made a mistake ... I didn’t drown because I was holding on to Gwendolen, and she’s a witch” (Charmed Life 21). Gwendolen’s use of Cat is suggested throughout the novel in passages such as the one quoted by Winters, but it is not explicitly stated until Mr Saunders’ conversation with Chrestomanci after her apparition at the dinner table. Not only does this conversation reveal that Gwendolen has been leaching Cat’s powers, but also that she has been hurting him in the process. Towards the end of the novel, Gwendolen admits to all of Cat’s lives she has destroyed, all for selfish reasons. When Cat is asked how many lives he has, she answers for him:
He doesn’t know ... I had to use quite few. He lost one being born and another being drowned. And I used one to put him in the book of matches. ... Then that toad tied up in silver there wouldn’t give me magic lessons and took my witchcraft away, so I had to fetch another of Cat’s lives in the night and make it send me to my nice new world. ... And that was the end of that life. ... I put his fourth life into that violin he kept playing, to turn it into a cat—Fiddle[..] (Charmed Life 198)

When Gwendolen finds out that her friends plan to kill Cat as a sacrifice in order to end Chrestomanci’s control over the magic in their world, her only concern is that with Cat no longer around she will have no access to his magical power. For this reason, and no other, she escapes to another world. She does not worry that Cat will die, and she certainly does not do anything to save him.

In stark contrast to Gwendolen is her doppelganger, Janet, who is forced to take Gwendolen’s place when she escapes to another world. Whereas Gwendolen uses Cat and deceives him about his powers, Janet protects and cares for Cat as an older sister would and is very honest with him. Janet is the one to tell Cat about his nine lives, and if anything she tells him too quickly because he does not believe her at first, and in his disbelief and shock, accidentally takes one of his lives. When Janet realizes that Cat might have nine lives, and they might be stored in the matchbox, she tells him. Once Cat has killed one of his lives by lighting one of the matches, Chrestomanci tells Janet she should not have told Cat the truth yet: “Don’t you understand? ... You shouldn’t go telling him things like this until the Castle has had time to work on him. He wasn’t ready to understand. You’ve given him the most appalling shock” (Charmed Life 169). But
although it costs Cat a life, Janet’s open communication and honesty with Cat is exactly what he needs to understand himself and finally take responsibility for his powers.

Furthermore, while Gwendolen tries to manipulate the world around her to fit her expectations and desires, Janet sees the world as it is, and tries to make the best of circumstances, whatever they are. Gwendolen hates Chrestomanci because he does not believe that she is a powerful enchantress, despite her best efforts to make herself appear as one, but Janet is able to recognize him as kind and caring, despite his eccentric disposition. She remarks to Cat after the episode with the matchbox, “So he is an enchanter. And he ruined a suit over you, Cat, and didn’t seem to mind, so I think that when he isn’t being like freezing fog over the Grampians, he’s really very nice” (Charmed Life 173). Mendlesohn claims that Janet is “[o]ne of the very few passive figures (relatively speaking)” in Jones’ oeuvre, and notes that she “is precisely not in command of her fate” (Diana 82). While this is not untrue, we can see in instances such as the one quoted above that while she is ignorant due to her displacement from her own world, she is essential to Cat’s development into a hero. Thus, she is also a relational hero in her own right. Gwendolen, in contrast, is extremely knowledgeable in the ways of her Universe, but uses her knowledge for selfish, evil acts, and is therefore a villain.

Gwendolen’s fate at the conclusion of the novel is important, because although Cat makes sure he never has to see her again, she is actually sealed in a world she clearly loves to inhabit, and it is suggested that she does not care to see her brother anyway, so her fate is not really a punishment. Gwendolen chooses to escape back to the world where she is queen, and seals herself in the world with dragon’s blood, but she does it using Cat’s magic, and this time Cat consciously lets her do it:
Gwendolen screamed. She held up her golden clothes, kicked off her pointed shoes, and ran for the archway. Chrestomanci reached out to stop her. Gwendolen spun around and hurled her last handful of dragon’s blood in his face and, while Chrestomanci was forced to duck and put one arm over his face, Gwendolen backed hastily through the archway. There was a mighty bang. The space between the pillars turned black. When everyone recovered, Gwendolen was gone. There was nothing but meadow between the pillars again. Even the pointed shoes were gone.

(Charmed Life 209)

When Chrestomanci says she has “Sealed herself in that world ... Cat nodded mulishly. It had seemed worth it. He was not sure he wanted to see Gwendolen again” (Charmed Life 209). Thus, Cat realizes what she is using his power for at that moment but consciously allows her to do it, so that he does not need to see her again. With this act, Gwendolen loses the freedom to move from world to world, but it is not a vindictive punishment, nor one meant to make the rest of her life miserable. Therefore, one can perceive Gwendolen’s fate as almost sympathetic, because Cat does not hurt her, just sends her away. He has identified that neither of them wishes to see each other again, and he lets that happen, but also lets her escape without pain or punishment.

This narrative choice is echoed in Black Maria (1991), a novel about an old woman who manipulates a whole town into acting exactly as she wants. At the conclusion of the novel, she meets a fate similar to Gwendolen in that she is not punished, per se, but is put away so no one will have to encounter her again, and here the
choice of fate is explained. Anthony Green, the character deciding Aunt Maria’s fate, says,

Most of you seem to favour punishment ... But you realize it won’t *be* punishment, do you? ... [Because] As far this lady herself is concerned, ... she was in the right all along—all her life. Nothing is going to make her see she was wrong. And the only point of punishment is to make someone see the error of their ways. If they don’t see it, then what you are doing to them is vengeance, not punishment. Right? I daresay a lot of you do want vengeance. But if you do take revenge, that makes you as bad as Mrs Laker herself. I want to stop the wrong in Cranbury. So I am not going to take revenge. I’m simply going to put her away quietly. She probably won’t even realize I have. Is that understood? (Black Maria 198)

Green’s explanation seems to be an articulation of Jones’ own rationale for giving Gwendolen and Aunt Maria their fates. It suggests that while Cat and everyone else at Chrestomanci Castle recognize that what Gwendolen was doing was wrong, she could not comprehend the wrongness of her actions: punishment would have been of no use, and revenge could do no good, so she is simply put far away where no one needs to encounter her again. This treatment of a villain is not terribly common in fantasy literature. Sometimes a villain escapes in a way that is rather pleasant for them, such as when Peter Pettigrew escapes in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, but this escape is seldom facilitated by the hero(es). However, for Aunt Maria and Gwendolen, there will be no further punishment; the protagonists have decide to let them go, because their evil is partly a result of ignorance, as well as a difference of opinion which cannot
be resolved. So, rather than punish them, Cat and Anthony Green have decided to simply ensure that they will never have to see them again, acknowledging that evil has its place in the world.

Mendlesohn claims that Janet “make[s] it clear that it is the intelligent negotiation with magic, rather than magical power, that leads to agency” (Diana 44), a trait that makes characters heroic, especially within the bounds of relational heroism. And similarly, one could say that Gwendolen and Janet show that it is an intelligent negotiation with one’s surroundings rather than a denial of them or endeavours to modify them deceitfully that casts a character as a hero rather than an antagonist, and vice versa. However, Jones also makes it clear that revenge is never justified, no matter how badly one is hurt.

The Witch of the Waste, Howl’s Moving Castle (1986)

In Howl’s Moving Castle, Jones presents a female villain who inhabits the spaces of both malicious antagonist and pitiable victim. There are also connections drawn between her and the wizard Howl throughout the novel. The Witch of the Waste’s identity is fundamentally dichotomous, primarily because she is a composite of two different beings: herself and her fire demon. Her fire demon possesses her heart, so she cannot live without it, and it cannot live without her, because her heart is what sustains it. Like Gwendolyn Chant, the Witch of the Waste is not a force of good in her surroundings. While there are different factors that combine to make her corrupt and unsympathetic, it is clear that the Witch of the Waste is unable to incorporate the different aspects of her identity effectively.
Both the Witch of the Waste and her fire demon endeavour to manipulate the world around them so that everything is exactly the way they want it to be. Rather than formulating an identity for themselves that functions in their surroundings, they manipulate these surroundings. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the Witch’s attempt to fashion a perfect male from pieces of three powerful men: Prince Justin, the Wizard Suliman and Howl. The Witch does not see the problems inherent in destroying the lives of all three men in order to fashion herself a man she finds suitable. Similarly, her fire demon endeavours to steal Howl’s heart from Calcifer in order to gain renewed life, even though doing this would kill both Calcifer and the Witch of the Waste, and greatly impede Howl’s freedom.

Jones uses this manipulative behaviour to signify corruption. For example, Mr. Amos from *Conrad’s Fate* interferes with fate so that his estate can remain successful in a way that tampers with reality: not simply the reality his own world, but also the reality all of the parallel worlds in the series of worlds to which his belongs. The changes that cause these probability shifts are visible to Conrad throughout the story. Indeed, Gabriel de Witt, the current Chrestomanci, comments upon his arrival at Stallery that

> There had been so many shifts, in fact, that all Series Seven was in danger of flowing into Series Six on one side and Series Eight on the other. …

> There are beginning to be serious climate changes and even more serious disruptions to geography—mountains subsiding, seas moving about, continents cracking apart—as this Series tries to conform to the Series on either side. (*Conrad’s* 312-313)
Conrad, as well as the young Christopher Chant and Millie, have to work together to stop Mr Amos from tampering with reality because it is producing these dangerous effects throughout the whole Series. This egotistical desire to trim the world to one’s desires without considering the needs and wellbeing of others is one of the defining traits of Jones’ villains. Both Howl and the Witch of the Waste are completely absorbed with themselves and their appearance. However, while Howl is constantly helping people with his magic, the Witch of the Waste is unable to feel empathy or compassion for others, and merely uses people in order to gain what she wants.

This egotistical manipulation and fundamental inability to empathize with others is another trait that distinguishes Jones’ antagonists. For instance, the Witch’s actions throughout the novel reflect a total disregard for the feelings of others. The Witch does not feel sorry for the wizards whose lives would be ruined if she succeeded in creating her man. This lack of sympathy is reminiscent of Gwendolen Chant, who is incapable of caring for her brother’s wellbeing and not only uses his magic, but kills him multiple times, simply to make herself powerful. Although siblings sometimes lack empathy for one another at a young age, or permanently, Gwendolen is a maternal figure to Cat as well as a sister, because they are orphans: their relationship is set up as a nurturing one. However, not only does she take advantage of Cat, she actually kills a number of his lives. Similarly, the Leroys’ practice of killing people off in order to maintain their immortality (Hemlock) also shows a similar lack of empathy for others.

The Witch’s fire demon desires to replace her heart with Howl’s in order to live longer, and this is the opposite of fulfilling the task of identity formation that Jones sets out for her heroes. Rather than accepting and embracing the different aspects of herself
and forming a functional identity out of them, the fire demon endeavours to discard a facet of herself that she believes to be unsatisfactory—although it is the one that is most crucial to her very existence—and replace it with one she believes will better suit her. Thus, the Witch and Howl, with their fire demons, form a very interesting parallel that can be examined in order to further discover how Jones distinguishes between good and evil in her stories.

Early in the novel, Mrs Penstemmon points out to Sophie that Howl’s power is similar to that of the Witch of the Waste:

My feeling is that he has gone the same way as the Witch of the Waste. They tell me she was not wicked once... Howell has gifts in the same order as hers. It seems as if those of high ability cannot resist some extra, dangerous stroke of cleverness, which results in a fatal flaw and begins a slow decline to evil. *(Howl’s 167)*

However, Howl is not perceived as a villain or antagonist. He is said to be heartless, especially in his relationships with young women, but is not exactly condemned for it by the characters or narrator, and is depicted as a fundamentally good person: flawed, perhaps, but good. The Witch of the Waste, on the other hand, is positioned as the villain of the novel, and while the narrator shows her some sympathy, such as through Mrs. Penstemmon, she is fundamentally perceived as corrupted, and is ultimately condemned for her wrongdoings.

The key characteristic that sets Howl and the Witch of the Waste apart from each other, morally, is their distinct attitudes toward the contracts they have with their fire demons, which are relational texts to begin with: the contract can be interpreted
differently depending on who it is joining together. These pacts are ones that originated out of sympathy and love, but are soon shown to be damaging if drawn out too long. The fire demons are revealed to have been shooting stars who were about to die. Before the moment of death, the human gives them their heart to sustain them, in exchange for magical power from the fire demon. However, this contract gradually corrupts both human and fire demon. The fact that Howl and the Witch of the Waste do not possess their own hearts while under the contract is certainly part of the corrupting force. However, it is also suggested that the loss of independence incurred under the contract is damaging to both parties, almost as if both of the two are leaching from each other rather than sustaining a healthy, interdependent relationship.

This mutual dependence is the main corrupting force that sets the Witch of the Waste apart from Howl. Howl and Calcifer are both bent on breaking the contract they have with each other, and eventually succeed in doing so. Conversely, the Witch of the Waste and her fire demon never show an interest in breaking the contract, and her fire demon is even looking for a new heart to leach from. Additionally, Howl and Calcifer are positioned as protagonists for successfully breaking their contract, whereas the Witch of the Waste and Miss Angorian (her fire demon) are positioned as villains and die for their wrongdoings. Through this juxtaposition, Jones suggests that the contract is not irreparably damaging, but that it is relational, and can be less or more damaging depending on who it joins together, and how the two beings react to the contract. Howl and Calcifer are relational heroes because they recognize the need to separate from each other and endeavour to do so even though it is not easy. Their ability to recognize the ill-effects of the contract between them is noteworthy, especially because the contract does
not appear to be so destructive at first sight. They are relational heroes rather than relative heroes because their heroic task, separating from each other, requires cooperation, and their process of self discovery involves coming to an understanding of each other as well as themselves. Theirs is an interdependent rather than independent heroism, as are Millie’s and Roddy’s.

Rudd compares the contracts between human and fire demon in *Howl’s Moving Castle* with the pact between Faust and Mephistopheles in Goethe’s *Faust*. He writes that the name, Calcifer, “has links with Lucifer, whose name suggests not only fire ... but more specifically a ‘bright star’ (Isa. 14: 12-14). So there is the hint of a pact between Howl and Calcifer that brings to mind other such agreements, such as that between Faust and Mephistopheles” (263). However, there is a key difference between the contracts in *Howl’s Moving Castle* and Faust’s pact with Mephistopheles: Faust and Mephistopheles’ pact is built on Faust’s longing for endless knowledge, but is purely manipulative on Mephistopheles’ part, whereas the contracts in *Howl’s Moving Castle* are prompted by fear and sympathy. Calcifer explains to Sophie how the contract came about:

> He chased me in seven-league boots. I was terrified of him. I was terrified anyway, because when you fall you know you’re going to die. I’d have done anything rather than die. When Howl offered to keep me alive the way humans stay alive, I suggested a contract on the spot. Neither of us knew what we were getting into. I was grateful, and Howl only offered because he was sorry for me. (*Howl’s* 229)

This passage mirrors the earlier passage in which Sophie and Michael chase after a shooting star in seven league boots and almost catch it, but it begs them to let it die
In this passage, the shooting star is clearly terrified, but begs Michael and Sophie not to save it: “‘No! No!’ the star crackled desperately. ‘That’s wrong! I’m supposed to die!’” (Howl’s 133). After the star dies, Sophie says to Michael, “That was sad” (Howl’s 133), and he agrees, “Yes. My heart went out to it” (Howl’s 133). This scene suggests that Howl’s empathy for Calcifer and desire to save him is not abnormal or unique. And, since the Witch of the Waste’s story is not retold—only said to be similar to Howl’s—her motives may have been humane as well. This suggests that another key problem with the contracts in Howl’s Moving Castle is that they interfere with the natural life cycle, even though they are fundamentally empathetic. So the Witch of the Waste’s pact is similar to Faust’s in that it is corrupting and detrimental to her, but it is more innocent: it is formed out of empathy rather than greed. In the Witch of the Waste’s journey, the story is also cautioning the reader that empathy can be destructive if it interferes with the natural life-cycle, a theme that is at the forefront of other fantasy literature, such as Lewis’ The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, and That Hideous Strength. In both of these novels, the heroes must work with the organic world and life-cycles in order to defeat the villains. It suggests that individuals do not always need to have bad intentions to do things that are destructive. People can be led to evil deeds, whether it be out of a yearning for knowledge or wisdom, a yearning for power, or even empathy for others if it interferes with the natural life-cycle.

In *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, Jones presents a population whose customs reflect Jones’ characterization of evil so severely that the other characters in the novel do not see them as human. Tacroy, who is actually a native of Series Eleven, although he spent his whole life in Series Twelve, tells Christopher,

I’m not sure they *have* laws like we do ... They go by pride and appearance and what people *do* mostly ... they control everything with magic ... Food comes when they call and they don’t use fire to cook it ...

The only time they think any of you are good is when one of you is absolutely loyal to a king or chief or someone. They admire people like that, particularly if they cheat and lie out of loyalty. (*Christopher Chant* 285)

Miss Rosalie warns Christopher of Series Eleven, saying “Nobody can get there, dear.... At least, nobody ever comes back from there if they do” (281). Furthermore, the Dright, their ruler, has a practice of “eat[ing] someone’s soul whenever his power fails” (284), a practice that mirrors the ritual sacrifices that are made in *Fire and Hemlock* to maintain the immortality of Laurel and Morton Leroy. Tacroy says that the people of Series Eleven are “cold, unearthly people who go by quite different rules” (286). This suggests their ideology and moral code is so different from that of the other worlds, that it is incomprehensible to others.

The main attributes that characterize Jones’ antagonists are all present, in their most extreme form, in the Dright and his people: their inability to accept the world as a complex multiverse, their endeavours to manipulate their surroundings to fit their desires, and their inability to empathize and achieve understanding with others. The
Series Twelve inhabitants’ inability to accept the world in its complexity is represented in “strong wills and tunnel vision” (Gascoyne 217). As Debbie Gascoyne writes, they “are all supremely powerful and supremely selfish” (217). She concludes that it is this narrow-mindedness that enables Christopher to ultimately defeat the Dright and his people:

Nearly always, the most effective magic to combat groups such as [the inhabitants of Series Eleven], characterized by strong wills and tunnel vision, is something indirect. The magic users of Series Eleven, like Aunt Maria, are utterly convinced of their own superiority and importance. A direct approach would be met with absolute resistance, so when Christopher wants to use magic against them, he discovers that “you seemed to have to work in a way that was tipped sideways from the way you did it on any other world, with a bend and a ripple to the magic.”

(Gascoyne 217; Jones Christopher Chant 234)

Because of this, Christopher is able to defeat them by adapting his magic specifically to combat them: the Goddess recognizes that they need to use a different sort of magic, and Christopher follows her lead. In contrast, the Dright is not able to familiarize himself with foreign magic, so when Christopher and Millie set him on fire, he is unable to beat out the flames and is defeated through his inability to adapt to the new and foreign.

The Dright’s inability to empathize with others is made clear in his treatment of Tacroy (Mordecai Roberts). He sends Tacroy to Series Twelve; Tacroy explains, “he wanted me to study good and evil, so he ordered me to work for Gabriel first, and then for the worst villain he could find—who happened to be your uncle. ... [T]hey study the rest of you like something in a zoo when the Dright happens to feel interested”
Christopher Chant 284). Ironically, the unethical way he conducts his study situates him as equally, if not more, evil than Uncle Ralph. The Dright forces Tacroy to go to Series Eleven and retains possession of his soul. Nothing is given to Tacroy in exchange for his service; in fact, in their hierarchal world, Tacroy holds no rank at all. The Dright takes advantage of Tacroy, treating him as an object rather than a human, and showing no empathy for him. Tacroy says, “[t]hey don’t go by right and wrong in Eleven. They don’t consider themselves human—Or no, I suppose they think they’re the only real people” (284). That is why they study the people from other Series so inhumanely. This does not account for their ill treatment of him, however, as he is from Series Eleven himself.

Finally, like Gwendolen and the Witch of the Waste, the Dright is unable to accept divergent aspects of himself and his people; however, his inability to accept himself is manifested on a greater scale. While every Series has nine worlds, Series Eleven only has one, and Tacroy explains that the Dright wanted to study Gabriel de Witt because he wanted to study someone with nine lives. This is because “[t]hey can’t get them in Eleven, because there’s only one world there, not a Series. The Dright keeps it down to one world so he won’t have any rivals” (Christopher Chant 284-285). This inability to accept possible other selves and other worlds suggests a strong adversity to the unknown and uncontrollable. The Dright believes it is acceptable, even necessary, to control everything around him and tailor his world to fit his own desires, which also emphasizes his self-absorption and inability to empathize with others.

Thus, through studying Jones’ villains alongside her heroes, one can see that Jones’ heroes and villains respond very differently to the contrapuntal nature of their identities and the multiverse around them. Instead of embracing their identities and their
surroundings, they reject parts of themselves, or try to change themselves and the world around them. Gwendolen is not able to accept her mediocre magical power and therefore lies to Cat about his magic and even kills many of his lives for selfish reasons. The Witch of the Waste and her fire demon continually manipulate their surroundings to fit their needs. The Witch endeavours to build a perfect man for herself from pieces of multiple men, and her Fire Demon is secretly plotting to discard her heart and replace it with Howl’s so she can live longer. Finally, the Drift from Series Eleven manipulates his world so much that absolutely everything is controlled by magic. Finally, he allows only one world in his world Series to ensure he has no competitors. The importance Jones places on accepting the natural world is again reminiscent of the importance Lewis places on the upholding of the organic in *That Hideous Strength*. Thus, Jones’ villains are unable to embrace all the aspects of their identities, or the worlds around them, and these are the primary traits that lead them to corruption.
CONCLUSION:

Contrapuntal Identity in the Works of Diana Wynne Jones

“Various genres of fictions—poems, novels, films—challenge and confound accepted certainties by inviting readers and viewers to reconsider how we think about ourselves and those around us. Fiction does not postulate or form rules; if it is good, it presents the untidy textures of life in voices and intonations we recognize and understand.” (Lois LaCivita Nixon, “Aging: A Postmodern Lens” 157)

Through this examination of significant characters, both heroes and villains, we can conclude that for Jones, becoming heroic is intrinsically connected with coming to terms with one’s identity and the process of maturation. This is often the case in children’s and young adult fantasy. While Jones’ work shares much with that of other children’s fantasy writers, what distinguishes her work is its use of contrapuntal heroism: only after her protagonists have matured throughout the narrative and grown comfortable in their contrapuntal identities are they able to accomplish their heroic feats. Once her heroes embrace their contrapuntal selves, they complete their tasks with extreme ease. Jones’ heroes always possess the skills to accomplish these feats from the outset of her novels but must come to terms with themselves and their identities in order to use their powers effectively. For Polly, the process of maturation is fundamentally connected with her journey to independence. She has to become emotionally self-sufficient in order to save Tom and discover both sides of her memory. Once she has done this, she is able to
let go of Tom, which saves him. For Vierran, the need to come to terms with identity is very literal: she must discover who she is amid the confusion of the Bannus in order to help Mordion and Hume defeat the Reigners. Additionally, she must be mature enough to go back into Banners Wood to help Mordion and Hume even though she dreads seeing Mordion again. Once she understands her identity and begins to make choices for the right reasons, she becomes a hero and a key force for good. Roddy must figure out how to understand the Flower Witch’s flower files and use them effectively, but once she has become really motivated to use them against the powers of evil, she is able to raise the land with tremendous, almost uncanny ease. The potential for heroism is inherent in all of Jones’ heroes, but they must accept their multiple identities before they can act heroically and use their power to its potential.

Jones’ narratives are also deeply concerned with individuals’ ability to find and take control of their own power, a task that is related to the journey to heroism as well. As Butler articulates,

For Jones, whose work has always been characterized by an interest in power and its abuse, whether in the form of overt tyranny, possessiveness, parasitism, or emotional manipulation, a child is in some respects an ideal reader, for while children are quite capable of such abuses themselves (witness Gwendolen in Charmed Life), in general children have less power to determine their own lives or those of others than do adults. (Butler 267-268)
She notes that Jones presents her work “as an instrument of empowerment for children” (Butler 267-268), and quotes Nicolette Jones, who writes that, like many other children’s authors, Jones aims to

provide a space where children can relax and walk round their problems and think ‘Mum’s a silly fusspot and I don’t need to be quite so enslaved by her notions.’ Everybody ought to think for themselves... You need to extract yourself from the turmoil of other people’s interventions. (Butler 267-268)

Jones’ fiction provides a space for children to escape from their troubles and imagine others’ lives, not only to escape “silly fusspot” mothers, but to escape trauma, as with Jones' own experiences. However, while her novels may seem escapist, they are equally didactic. Through her stories, Jones encourages her readers to know and accept themselves in their multiple, perhaps conflicted, identities.

It is clear that what sets Jones’ heroes apart from her villains is how they react to multiplicity in the world around them and to themselves. Jones’ contrapuntal heroes, whether relative or relational, accept the world around them and themselves as they are and embrace the multifaceted, complex nature of themselves and their surroundings. Her villains, conversely, endeavour to manipulate their identities and the world around them to fit their desires and expectations, regardless of how it affects others. Through the comparison between the Witch of the Waste and Howl that Jones presents in Howl’s Moving Castle, it is evident that, for Jones, good intentions do not make interferences with the natural life-cycle acceptable. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the contract that corrupts the Witch of the Waste and her fire demon except that it interferes
with the natural life-cycle. This suggests that, for Jones, it is important to accept not only one’s contrapuntal identity and the world as it is, but also to respect the natural life-cycle and the transience of life and nature. Jones places great importance on characters’ ability to recognize and respect what is beyond their control.

As I have noted throughout my thesis, relative and relational heroes can be seen in many other contemporary fantasy novels, including the *Harry Potter* series. As previously noted, Harry is a good example of a relative hero, but in truth, he is both relative and relational in his heroism, while also possessing traits of a traditional hero. While Harry establishes his heroism through many interpersonal conflicts, his greatest heroic task is an inner struggle and success is only achieved once he fully understands all the aspects of his identity: “His job was to walk calmly into Death’s welcoming arms. Along the way, he was to dispose of Voldemort’s remaining links to life, ... neither would live, neither could survive” (Rowling 554). Rather than fighting someone in his final battle, he must sacrifice himself to kill the final piece of Voldemort’s soul, killing the villain, or shadow self, within him. Like Ged from *Earthsea*, Harry has a shadow self, a darkness inside of him. But it is not enough for Harry to merely accept it; rather, he must sacrifice himself in order to destroy it: in sacrificing himself, he is saved. Thus, in Rowling’s series, Harry must sacrifice his whole self, but in doing so, the positive aspects of his self are restored to him, and he returns a hero, finally able to live a normal life with a family of his own.

Harry is also a relational hero, however, because he needs the help of Ron and Hermione to defeat Voldemort, and works with them as a team throughout the novels. As Harald Thorsrud writes, “although their friendship is occasionally strained to near the
breaking point, they always reconcile. ... [T]hey care for something more than the pleasure or benefits to be had from hanging out together” (47). And while Harry is distinct from many other heroes, because he is both hero and villain (because he has a piece of Voldemort within him), something seen in Jones’ novels. For example, Christopher Chant works for the villain, Uncle Ralph, for much of the story, before he realizes what he is doing is wrong (The Lives of Christopher Chant). Jones’ heroes are not always heroic throughout the whole story; sometimes they have struggles they must push through as well. Ron and Hermione are both relational heroes because their heroism comes from their relationship with one another and with Harry. They are heroes because they remain with him every step of the way, putting themselves in danger and playing key roles in Voldemort’s defeat. Without them, Harry could not have defeated Voldemort. So, while Jones’ texts provide very important examples of these two hero types, examples of such heroes can be found in other contemporary fantasy as well.

Critics have studied the female hero, the female anti-hero, and the traditional hero-type, but using the concepts of relative and relational heroes gives critics an opportunity to look at both male and female heroes in a new light, shifting the focus from external conflict, and the defeat of one’s opponents through magic or violence, to the process of accepting one’s selves, which helps the relative or relational hero defeat his opponents with wit and acceptance rather than violence. Notably, Cat must discover his powerful enchanter-self in order to protect himself and Chrestomanci Castle from his evil sister, Gwendolen. Vierran must consult the voices in her head in order to realize where she is and who is in the Bannus field with Mordion. Conrad must realize that his “bad karma” does not exist in order to summon the walker on his own terms and defeat Mr
Amos. Finally, Millie must evoke the power of her other-self, the Goddess Asheth, to help Christopher retrieve Tacroy’s soul from the Dright, and Roddy must use her newfound wisdom gained from the Flower Witch to save Nick from the conspirators and raise the land. Jones also blurs gender boundaries with the use of names such as Roddy and Cat. For each of these characters, the importance is not placed on a physical fight but a process of maturation and acceptance of one’s selves. They must mature before they can defeat their opponents rather than maturing as a result of defeating their opponents.

As previously stated, the key trait that sets apart Jones’ heroes and villains is discernment—knowing when to act and when to accept. Her heroes are able to accept themselves and whatever happens to them and to work within their means to help those around them and themselves, while her villains lack the ability to accept life as it is and hurt others in their efforts to change circumstances. Jones’ novels, therefore, advocate not only acceptance of one’s own identity, but also acceptance of people, circumstances, and life’s imperfections in general. In her essay “Fantasy Books for Children,” Jones writes that many adults retain a strong connection with a fantasy book they read as a child, you will find your nine adults admitting that they acquired many of the rules they live by from this book that so impressed them. This may not necessarily mean rules of morality—though it may—but wider things like what ways of behaving are wise, or unwise; or how to spot a person who is going to let you down; or what frame of mind in which to face a disaster; or possibly the way you look at life in general. (Reflections 56)

And this happens to varying extents with most books children read. Stories children read have a great impact on the way they view the world, so it is beneficial for children to
have access to books which encourage critical thinking, and have well-crafted heroes for them to emulate.

Jones advocates that if young adults can accept the contrapuntal nature of their identity rather than trying to impose a singular identity on themselves, they can become heroes in their own right. Everyone has everything they need to be a hero right within themselves, they just need to accept themselves and the world around them before they can discover their own innate heroism.

This study aims to contribute to the body of criticism on Jones’ fiction, specifically related to Jones’ heroes. It also aims to contribute to the formation of new classifications for heroes that are especially useful when studying contemporary children’s and young adult fantasy: contrapuntal heroism, both relative and relational. Contrapuntal heroism, as outlined and engaged with in this thesis, is heroism that focuses on heroes with multiple identities which they must integrate in order to act heroically, making their heroic journeys inward ones of self-acceptance and empathy. Relative heroes’ heroism comes from acts that would not necessarily be considered heroic under different circumstances, while relational heroes’ heroism stems directly from their relationships with others. I believe that this terminology opens the space to recognize subtler heroes who might not be recognized otherwise. It is important to recognize these subtle heroes for their equally heroic feats, and as I have shown throughout this study, contrapuntal heroism can be found in other contemporary children’s and young adult fantasy as well. This new terminology may be useful to scholars in studying heroism in the works of other writers. Although Jones’ treatments of identity and heroism are not exactly postmodern, they build on the postmodern “decentered self,” rejecting the notion
that a person has only one essential self, and offering an alternative to the idea of one essential self: that if one accepts and embraces their contrapuntal selves, they will become heroes.
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