

Analysis of the book of the dun cow

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



In Walter Wangerin Jr.'s beast fable, *The Book of the Dun Cow*, two roosters have the unusual distinction of being Lords of their own manor. Webster defines a Lord as a "person having great powers and authority, a ruler or master," whereas a manor is defined as "the district over which a lord holds authority and domain" (Webster). Chauntecleer is introduced to the reader as the leader or Lord of the Coop and the ruler over the animals in the surrounding land. On the other hand, Cockatrice takes over as leader of his Coop and land after he kills his father, Senex.

Chauntecleer and Cockatrice are two very different roosters who lead and rule their domain in stark contrast yet they are both labeled as Lords of the manor. Early on in the novel, Chauntecleer is portrayed as a short tempered, vain, and arrogant ruler who is not at all likeable. While he is proud and undoubtedly stubborn, he is also characterized as fair, compassionate, and just. With his noble bearing, Chauntecleer keeps a sense of order in his land and the animals' lives by crowing the canonical hours and occasional crows in his strong magnificent voice. His crows are compared to the clock of the community. Seven times a day, dutifully, with a deep sense of their importance, and by the immemorial command of the Divine, Chauntecleer crowed his canonical crows" (page 12). Crowing is his job and when he leads by his crows, the hens in his coop and the animals in his land are happy and unafraid, he is even able to make wrong things right. While Chauntecleer may be flawed as a leader, his harem of hens and other creatures like John, Wesley Weasel, and Mundo Cani Dog see him as their protector and ruler. He protects the lives of those around him and sees that justice is carried out.

As Lord he supports and protects his land and unites all his creatures whether fowl, rodent, or insect; animals large or small, wild or domestic to come join together to fight evil. East and upriver from Chauntecleer's land is another land ruled by another Lord, Cockatrice. A half rooster half serpent conceived as a result of an unnatural union of his rooster father, Senex, and the evil serpent Wyrme. Cockatrice rules his manor with threats and fear. Unlike his father, Senex, who always remembered the canonical crows to help unite his animals, Cockatrice never crows the canon. " So under him the day lost its meaning and its direction, and the animals lost any sense of time or purpose... They were tired all the day long, and at night they did not sleep" (page 82). Under his evil rule, the creatures suffer from disunity, distrust, and dishonor. Cockatrice shows no concern for the animals of his land and resorts to having the Toad speak for him. He humiliates the animals and is an enemy to the creatures rather than a Lord. He rapes the hens and forces them to bear his children and suffer a cruel indignity.

He swallows up thousands of children that hatch as Basilisk creatures and then vomits them back into the river. Rather than protect the creatures of his land, he orders his Basilisk children to kill everyone living until only he sits silently in his tree. Cockatrice leaves his land and flies west for he has no creatures to lord. By comparison, both Chauntecleer and Cockatrice are dominant roosters that command attention from the creatures in their communities. Likewise they are both offspring of past Lords of the Coop in their realm. Animals and creatures in their land and Coop hold a degree of fear of them.

While both are able to gather their subjects together, the outcomes from these gatherings are fatally different. In contrast, the two Lords are as different as good and evil. While Chauntecleer is a strong postured, slightly scruffy, handsome rooster with noble bearing; Cockatrice is frightening and menacing with his serpent looking tail and bloody eyes. In return for his leadership and constant abiding, Chauntecleer asks only for good food, loyalty, sleep, a little color in his life, and a morning sunbath. On the other hand, Cockatrice demands total subservience from his creatures even though he shows them no respect or care.

Chauntecleer rejoices and shares the pride of his three sons with his wife, Pertelote, with the creatures of the community while Cockatrice demands he have thousands of children by raping the hens to build an army of Basilisks who just by their touch cause death. As Lord of his land, Chauntecleer calls for all the creatures in his land to gather for a council so that he can prepare them for the upcoming battles with evil. In contrast, Cockatrice forbids the animals from gathering for meetings and even mere talking. Chauntecleer argues against revenge and hatred while Cockatrice is driven by this very evil.

In Wangerin's novel, both Chauntecleer and Cockatrice have the gift of speech; however they each individually choose their own path of good or evil, order or chaos, and eventually life or death. Not only do all of the animal creatures from Cockatrice's land perish, he too dies because of his self-destructive hatred. In the land of Chauntecleer, the creatures mourn the loss of their fellow animals killed in battle; however they look to their Lord of the

manor to rebuild their land so they can serve their overall purpose to be the last protection against the almighty evil, Wyrn.